

2021 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

## **REGRESSIONS**

(Original)

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In these days when breaths are fleeting and tremors afflict the hands of those we love the most; in these days when the hours compete to see which one ends faster, and the end, which seemed impossible when I was ten, now becomes so latent within my soul, I close my eyes and try to stop the time, which goes with every blink. Then I breathe slowly, as if staying here forever depended on that, and at the end, when everything goes black, I wonder, what is life?

The answer is vague, I would like to know it, to be completely sure of it, but my heart that already rumbles within my ears forbids it. It might be because of the fear of the absence of my grandmother's kisses, it might be for the homesickness to see an empty chair in the dining room, it will be for the memory of my father's laughter, it must be, above all, because of the smell that comes from the kitchen, a particular smell, the smell of Mom's food. I might think that probably, living is no more than the sum of all the moments I've been through since one September afternoon welcomed me to this world; and it is, but it's not enough for me.

So, I see every stretch of my life going by in slow motion, the memories of a short existence clinging to a written destiny go before my eyes, I hear my mother whispering the song that made me sleep when nights and their eternal darkness was my only concern. I climb among the mango trees that have taught me to rise after every fall, I smell the wet earth when the rain bathes it and I hear it in the distance, between canaries and blackbirds, Grandpa's whistle as he grinded the corn. I swim in the sunlight in the cold-water river where the wind blew unknown melodies and silently sing the prayers I heard from a man one day, as I ask God to let me stay another time.

An overwhelming eagerness holds me in the back, I try to run but I can't, I'm stopped in

this time that takes everything there is, there's no way to win, you can't beat death, and when I'm starting to pale, prey to despair, appears before me the image of a naked baby crying, screaming and stealing all the air that exists in the room while wielding his little hands and opening his big bright black eyes telling life about his coming. Then, under the calm of his mother's bosom, he sleeps patiently, waiting to live. Everything returns to silence, my eyes cry and I'm not feeling sad anymore, peace invades every corner of my body and suddenly, a voice that sounds like mine tells me lowly to the ear, there is life.

Now I know the answer, even if it's inaccurate.

Life is myself, my joys and my fears, the worlds invented while I wait for sleep to tuck me in, eyes that closed forever, a lost love and friends on the street; life is my parents looking at each other fondly and my siblings arguing over the TV remote. Life is my grandparents' wrinkles and the finite laughter of a small child that floods the house with joy. Life is the bed where I sleep in every night, and the light beam coming through my window when it dawns, life is the blush that runs down my cheeks when I feel full, and the tears that fall down my face when I'm afraid. Life is my father's orchid growing in the yard and my cat's meows when he's hungry.

Then I understand it, the hopelessness that consumed me vanishes when I open my eyes and notice that it's my reflection that smiles at me. Life is the little things; we say at the same time.