

Sriyam

I was not alone - 2nd -

Love crosses every threshold



2nd Volume

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To my Angel

Thank you,

*for speaking to my heart of a Child
for being close to me as a Friend
for loving and supported me as a Dad
for learning me as a Friend - Wise person,
for holding me in your arms as an Angel.*

Thank you,

*for making me discover the World of Light and
Love.*

Thank you,

*for standing by me
as a Friend,
as a Dad,
as a Friend - Wise person,
enveloping me with your
Angel Light and Love.*

I love You.

Great Light

Angels

Essence of Light

Thank you,

*for loving, helping, protecting, leading me to
move in the world*

for guiding my Soul in the Path of Light,

for the gifts you give me every day,

for the miracles accompanying my life,

for helping me to become increasingly a Child,

for everything you do and create for me,

*for giving me the opportunity to collaborate
with You*

for nourishing the Hearts of Inner Children.

I love You.

*I*ntroduction

- Hello,

*Steven and I are back to go on telling our story.
Right, Steven? -*

- Yes, yes, I'm happy to do this for you.
You know, every day I sent you all my love for you.
I kept my promise. -

- *Good boy, Steven, I sent my love and joy together with you.*

*I saw that they formed a bright rainbow that linked our hearts,
as always happens when you send the 'things' to the one you
love. -*

Steven and Dave

Note by the author

The events being reported reproduce faithfully the reality, that is why the character's names have been changed.

Steven is a child and, as such, thinks, speaks, expresses its feelings and emotions.

He keeps this language even when he grows up.

Capital letter was used where we wanted to highlight the intrinsic value.

- Now, considering that Lucius has a girlfriend, I go out with other boys.

I get on well with everybody, especially with Leonard.

We have many things in common and I am fond of him.

He has the motorbike and, even though it is not allowed, I get on with him.

So, we went to the city, at the fun fair, where other friends of mine were waiting for us.

Leonard soon became a friend of them and we had fun together.

I like the city more and more: there are many amusements, many places to visit, and many girls.

For this reason, I come back with Leonard and the other friends on Sunday.

We also go to the ballroom where we meet Martin, John and my group. -

- Last Sunday, I met a girl much older than me, called Catherine.

She is very pretty, but nobody of my friends had the guts to ask her to dance.

I noticed that she was kind with everybody and danced with many boys.

Thus, I plucked up my courage and, to impress my friends, I said to them:

“Now, I ask her to dance with me.”

They laughed:

“She will answer no, she is too old for you!”

When I invited her, my legs were trembling: she did not answer, but she smiled and stood up.

I was a bit confused for the excitement, but I tried to be confident... while we were dancing a slow dance, I asked her:

“What is your name?”

“Catherine, and yours?”

“Steven”,

I added smiling at her.

She hugged me tightly, I felt her scent, my heart was pounding and I was not able to speak...

Finished dancing, I asked her if I could sit at her table, and she nodded with a smile.

She was very sweet and kind, so, after talking for a short time, I proposed her to meet again in the city.

When she answered yes again, I could not believe: It was so beautiful!

Sometimes, I looked at my friends who were wandering around: they were incredulous and amazed!

Before leaving, we arranged where and when to meet and, at the end, hesitant, I added:

“I have not a car yet.”

She smiled again:

“Do not worry, I have it.”

Then, I went back to my friends who were still amazed and I was flooded with jokes, but my only wish was to go back grandma’s home: I felt many strong emotions...! -

- Happy as ever, I got on Leonard's motorbike and we went back to the countryside. I kept telling myself: on Thursday, I will meet Catherine again!

This thought did not make me sleep: what an incredible Sunday! -

- Meeting Catherine fills me with a great joy.

Of course, grandma realized that... and she is happy to see me so joyful and smiling.

In two weeks, school starts again: this is the first time I am happy to go back to the city...! -

- Today, I met Catherine again! I went to the city by bus.

She was a bit late at the appointment, by a beautiful, yellow and sporty car.

I got on the car happy and excited... she drove confidently.

After a while, she stopped next to the bank of the river and we started talking of each other.

Then, she started to caress me: I felt very embarrassed...

She laughed:

“Steven, you are so young... I notice that you have never had a girlfriend.

I felt ashamed... then, we both burst into laughter and we left again. Throughout the trip, we went on joking and laughing.

Thus, I was no more ashamed and I was certain that she would never tease me...

I felt good and protected with her.

Before saying goodbye, we arranged to meet the following week.

I was so happy as to lose the bus that would take me to grandma's.

During the way back, I went on thinking her: I could not believe that a girl older than me, so beautiful and surrounded by many boys flirting with her, went out just with me! -

- I went back home, in the city, a week in advance!

I told grandma and dad that I had to prepare the books for school, but I wanted to meet Catherine. -

- I met Catherine again.

When we met, she proposed to me:

“Why do not we go to my friends’ house?”

Of course, I agreed: I was only interested in being with her...!
We stayed there the whole afternoon, but her friends did not come...!

When we left, I was happy and bewildered.

I went to visit my friend John to tell him what I was experiencing. -

- On Saturday, at lunch, dad asked me if I could reach him at the café in the afternoon.

I imagined soon that there was something new: when he wants to tell me something, he does it either in the car or at the café, but never at home!

In fact, he made me sit at his table and, after ordering, with a harsh tone, began:

“Steven, now you are grown up, you can go out whenever you want, here are the house keys. You know that I am always working at night, so I recommend you not to go out every evening and, when you go out, please do not go back home late.”

I took the keys saying:

“Ok.”

I was certain that he knew what was happening with aunt but, to know what he thought about that, I added:

“Do you know that Aunt Adele is not washing my clothes at all?”

He answered by a few words:

“Steven, we were lucky, you must be patient!”

Standing up, he gave me the pocket money:

“You can use this extra money to take your clothes to the laundry... and remember your father...”

(He has been telling me this sentence for a long time... and it bothers me a lot!)

However, I went out the cafe happily: hurrah, I can go out whenever I want having the house keys, and I am no more interested if I do not find lunch or dinner when I go back home late!

Yes, aunt makes me that too!

It is important for me to stay out as much as possible: I feel too bad in that house!

Now, I am free, I have my group of friends and the cafe where we meet.

The most beautiful thing is that I will meet Catherine again... -

- The college reopened.

I started school with commitment and goodwill: I want to succeed at any cost! I really want to get the lower secondary school diploma!

Many friends of mine attend the higher school and when we talk of studies, I feel ashamed of being less cultured. -

- We are still at the beginning of the school year and I have already had good marks at school, while at the turning workshop, things are not going well.

I do not like that job and I am not able to do it.

Every day, I ask mum to help me to find a job that I like. -

- Many things happened to me during the first months of school.

Now, I feel much more grown up.

Having the house keys, I can go out and go back home whenever I want.

I feel better because I meet Aunt Adele only when I eat and for a few minutes...! -

- Since I met Catherine, I am feeling many emotions that make me feel confused and bewildered.

She is always in my thought...

After my return to the city, we met many times.

One evening, we went to a park: she took my hands and, looking at my eyes, she said to me:

“Steven, you know that I am much older than you are, and I have to tell you something: I am married and I have a daughter.

Thus, we'd better not to meet again, even if I am sorry because you are a good boy.”

I felt a strong pain in my chest.

My mouth dried up and I could not speak: I burst into tears, sobbing loudly.

She was silent for a few minutes and then she tried to calm me down.

Seeing that I did not stop crying, she made me sit on a bench.

Only after a while, I could speak, and, among my sobs, I implored her:

“Catherine, do not leave me, let me stay with you, I am not interested in anything else. I love you, do not leave me, please...”

She moved too: maybe she did not expect that I felt so bad and I loved her so much.

Holding me in her arms sweetly, she explained to me her reasons.

We talked for a long time; at the end, she said:

“Ok Steven, we will meet again, but only as friends.”

After these words, I was calmed and reassured. -

- I went back home late.

I opened the door silently and went to bed.

I started to cry again, I tried to choke back the tears under my pillow because I did not want to wake Flavius.

The pain in my chest was strong, as if something was broken.
I could not resign myself and I kept saying:

“Catherine does not love me anymore, she will leave me, is married, cannot stay with me.” -

- It's morning, Flavius has already got up.

I feel very bad and exhausted.

What do I do? I know that what Catherine says is right: I am too young for her and then she is married. It is not good to see her.

If I think of leaving her, I feel like dying!

My stomach knots up to make me feel pain, I feel pain in my heart and my chest. -

- “Mum, help me, I feel confused, I do not know what to do.

No, I know what I should do... but I cannot see Catherine anymore.

I feel alone, mum!

I have not the courage to talk to anybody, mum, help me...” -

- Steven, be quiet. I am here with you.

You are not alone. I love you.

I understand what you are feeling.

Come on baby, go on talking to your mum.

Ask for help to you Angel friend.

They will help you to do the right thing, even if now you cannot understand what your heart is suggesting to you.

Try to be prudent, you are experiencing a difficult situation. -

- Catherine kept her word: sometimes we go out together. She told me about her a bit more and I understood by myself what she did not tell...

She loves her husband no more, but they do not want to separate because their child is too young.

Thus, they decided to live two different lives, while living under the same roof.

Catherine likes dancing and having fun.

She takes her child to her mum, so she can stay out until late.

When we go out together, we go dancing and she introduces me to her friends, as I were a friend of her.

She dances with many men and told me that she fell in love with one of them...

I feel very bad both when she dances with other men, and when she tells me about the man she loves, but I pretend nothing has happened and I am silent: I am afraid that she tells me that she does not want to see me again...

Going to ballrooms, nightclubs, cafes, I am discovering and seeing things that I had only heard of until then.

Many friends of her are good, but some of them are particular. Catherine told me that they are criminals.

When she takes me to some places, I do not feel good: there are only adults, but I am only a boy!

I know that I could be at home... but just to be with her, I follow her everywhere.

Sometimes, some of her friends tease me.

I am silent, but she defends me strongly and says:

“Leave my friend in peace!”

So, they calm down.

Every now and then, we get on the car of a friend of her to go to some ballrooms outside the city.

They have powerful cars and drive at full speed. .

I close my eyes for fear, I feel my heart in my mouth and the shivers in my legs.

They brag, but I do not have fun at all! -

- Last night, I had an encounter that troubled me.

Left the ballroom, Catherine took me to a new place to meet other friends of her.

When I went in, I was surprised: there was Richard, my cousin, who is 4 years older than I am.

His dad works with my dad, and the latter always recommended me to stay away from him.

A few years ago, he ran away from home and they found him in a far city.

He had got into mischief and stolen money, so he was sent to a 'Community Home'.

When he left this home, he continued making troubles.

Since then, dad forbidden me to talk with him, but if I meet him, we talk and chat together because he is very nice.

He is tall, strong, self-confident and makes himself respected by everybody.

When he sees me, he stops me and offers me something to eat or drink

He introduces me to his friends with a smile:

“This is Steven, a cousin of mine.”

I like staying with him: he makes me understand that he loves me in different ways.

That is why I disobeyed dad.

I have not met him for a long time.

Richard, when he saw me, smiled at me and asked:

“What are you doing here?”

I answered him by pointing to Catherine:

“I am with her.”

He soon turned to Catherine and spoke to her with a harsh tone:

“Do you know that he is a cousin of mine?”

“No, I did not know, he is only a friend of mine...”

She replied.

He went on with determination.

All other men sat at the table were speechless.

Fortunately, after a while, Richard smiled again! Then, he made us sit among them, and asked us what he could offer to us.

Although it was very late, we ordered something to eat and stayed with them.

Richard sat next to me.

As always, I had a few things to say, so I listened to them quietly.

They all were older than I was and there were also ‘strange’ people.

When we stopped eating, Richard invited me to go out for a while with him:

“Steven, let’s go out for a while, I want to talk with you.”

Outside the place, he went on with finality:

“Steven, what are you doing with that woman? Do not you know what kind of life she is doing? She is not the girl for you. She is married and has a child. I do not want to see you with her anymore!”

I lowered my head: I did not know what to say... I stood silent.

Richard spoke firmly.

Seeing me like that, he put his arm on my shoulder, and added sweetly:

“Now, let’s go in, it is late, I take you home with a friend of mine.”

When we went in, Catherine looked at us: Richard signaled to her that he would take me home and she came with us.

Richard started smiling again and while driving the beautiful car of his friend, he joked with Catherine and me.

Arrived, after saying goodbye to Catherine, I thanked Richard for what he offered me, as well as his friend for the lift.

I went in home soon. It was very late, but fortunately, dad was not at home.

I was feeling Richard's words resounding:

“She is not the girl for you. Do not you know what kind of life she is doing?”

I prefer not thinking about that! I feel that my heart sinks if I cannot meet Catherine anymore...

Before falling asleep, I recall Richard's face and feel a sweet emotion: he talked to me as he was my dad... he worried about me and does not want that I feel bad... despite he has never lived with me and we rarely meet...! Good night Richard, I love you. -

- Be careful Steven, the circle you are going to is very dangerous.

You are a good boy, very sensitive and with good values.

But your heart is so empty and wounded, so a part of you is fragile, weak and desperate.

Steven, you are pursuing love, because you know that love exists, since you received it by Susan, grandma, uncles and some friends of yours.

You realized that they did their best to give love to you and you are grateful for that, but you feel that it was only a drop, while your heart needs an ocean...

The people you are meeting are very different from you.

For sure, they suffered too and did not receive love, but now they are trying to fill their void with something different from what you are searching for.

That is why they cannot give you what you wish.

Your need for love is so strong that now you do not understand clearly your feelings and you are deluding yourself of receiving attentions and love.

Steven, I give you an example to make you understand better.

Now, you are like a clay pot and you can be easily moulded.

You could become a good, correct, sweet and respectful man.

You could also become hard, close yourself to love and, maybe, turn into dangerous and bad streets.

Everything depends on you, who is besides you, the places where you go to, what you have into your heart.

The people you are seeing now cannot give you the love that can heal your heart, nor the sweetness and tenderness that you wish.

Do not judge them: you do not know what led them to lead that kind of life. They pretend to be good, but, in reality, they are deceiving themselves...

Do not be betrayed by their smiles, confidence and words.

They try to hide their sufferings by reacting like that.

Love them, respect them, but do not be affected by them. -

- Hi Dave, this night I had a very beautiful dream and I can remember it.

I dreamt about you, Dave. You talked about Catherine, Richard, their friends, love and me.

You explained to me many important things that I could not understand, and advised me.

So, I could understand more the people I met in the last few months.

Now, I feel more comfortable.

Tell me Dave, was it just a dream or was you really talking to me? -

- My boy, I feel and see your heart.

When you are lost in pain and do not call me because you are stunned, I speak to you by means of the dreams, while you are sleeping.

This is possible because, even though you do not realize that, you allow me that.

You are a simple and good boy, and your intentions are full of love.

Keep on this way, Steven.

Remember that when you need, I will always be in your dreams.

I am happy that my words cheered your heart up.

I love you, Steven. –

- Dave, you are fantastic, thanks for your love. -

- The cafe that my friends and I chose as a meeting point is called Royal; it opened recently.

Martin found it and everyone of use liked it.
After a week of 'trial', we decided to meet always there.
It lies on the ground floor of a huge block of flats: it is very roomy and has big windows allowing us to look outside, while sitting on the sofas and armchairs.
There are also a billiards and two pinball machines.
It is a suitable place to be with other people.
Opposite, there is a large square and the street leading to the city centre.
Nearby, there is also the cafe where dad goes, but we never meet.
The Royal is managed by Cyrus, Sabine and their parents: Cyrus is about 30 years old, Sabine a bit older than we are.
In the evening, I am among the first who reach there.
I drink something and sit on the sofa to read a newspaper.
In this period, I do not feel good because I always think of Catherine. When I phone her to meet, she finds many justifications in order not to see me.
Now, we meet a few times, and I feel that she will decide soon not to see me anymore.

I know that it is right, but I have difficulties in accepting that.
I have so much sadness in my heart... I cannot get rid of that any way...

William, the cafe's owner, often looks and smiles at me.
He is a very amusing person; maybe he is almost 60 years old: he is thin, not very tall, with two sharp eyes that look at everything and everyone.
We chat a lot together.

A few evenings ago, I felt sadder than usual and stared at the window: I was vacant!

Suddenly, William called me:

“Steven come here and let’s chat together.”

At that time, there are no customers at the cafe.

After a few minutes talking with him, I burst into tears:

“William, I can’t stand it anymore. I love Catherine very much. If I go on feeling bad like this, I throw myself under a tram...”

He stood silent for a while, gazing at me and then he fell about laughing.

I could not understand... William never behaved like that with me!

He always listened to me seriously.

Surely, he saw some funny expressions on my face because he went on laughing behind the counter.

I looked at him amazed.

When he composed himself, he said to me:

“Steven, sorry, you note that you are just young! How can you think of throwing yourself under a tram due to a woman?

You are a clever and handsome boy, she is much older than you are...

Do not worry, Steven! After a brief period, everything is over, and you see how many girls you will find!

When you think again about her and what you told me, you will feel like laughing.”

Then, he came out from behind the counter, caressed me and went on saying:

“Steven, life is not easy and I learnt to joke about it.

Do not be upset if I started to laugh, I did not want to hurt your feelings at all.”

“I am sure, William, I feel that you love me.”

I answered assuring him with a smile.

While I was ending to tell that, I saw John coming in, I quickly dried my tears and went to greet him.

William’s laughter made me ‘wake up’: my mind was clearer and my mood was good again.

William was looking upon me with favour and smiling... -

- This year, for the first time, I did not go to grandma’s house to spend Christmas holidays.

Of course, I visited her. She was so happy to see me and assured me:

“Steven, I am happy that you now remain in the city with your friends.

Susan always comes to visit me together with George and makes me informed about you.

I know that you have difficulties in living in that house, but be patient a bit more.

I knew that now you have the house keys, so you can go out whenever you want. But please: pay attention to your friends!

Go on visiting Susan and love each other.

Whenever you can, come and visit us: your uncles and I will be always happy to see you.” -

- it is a very cold winter and, when it is snowing, Martin and I go to the college by bus.
He is a very good friend!
I will always be grateful to him for introducing me his friends.
We are a good group and we love one another. -

- I am at the college, it's lunch break: I feel very bad and afraid.
I was starting eating and suddenly I felt bad.
I ran out of the dining hall.
My heart is pounding, I am sweating, I am upset.
I ran behind the sheds of turning and typography. When I feel bad, I always hide because I fear that someone sees me: I feel very ashamed!

I am walking back and forth, but my bad feelings do not stop:

- "Mum, help me, I am afraid! I do not know what is happening to me... I feel alone!
Please, stand by me. Let me go through this turmoil, I feel too bad.
Mum, help me." -

- This morning, once arrived at the college, Martin told me something very bad. He was leaning against the wall of the corridor, near the church, and was staring down.

When he raised his head to greet me, I realized that something bad happened to him: he was pale, red eyes.

He whispered with a quiet voice:

“Ferdinand is dead.”

I hoped not to hear... I did not say even a word...

“Last night, he took his dad’s car when he was out for business. He went out of the road and died soon. Lawrence woke me up at dawn, he is despaired.”

I felt many things: pain, fear and anxiety.

Suddenly, I felt tired: I could barely stand out.

Silently, we went in the church and listened to the Mass.

At the workshop, we went to the toilet many times to cry.

At lunch, neither wanted to eat.

After a few minutes, we went out the dining hall and we went beyond the football fields, in the orchards.

We sat under some trees: we did not want to hear talk or shout.

We hugged and took our hands.

Both of us wondered:

“Why did he do that?”

Ferdinand was not 18 years old yet and did not have a driving license.

He never told anybody that he wanted to drive.

Now, we had the doubt that it was not the first time he took his dad's car when he was out.

Why did he do that? -

- I preferred not to see Ferdinand before burial.

At the funeral, I hugged Lawrence and shook hands with his dad.

Then, I moved a bit away.

From a distance, I could see them hugged and supporting each other: there were only two of them.

Now, I was sorry for not telling Ferdinand that I knew what someone feels when his mum is dead.

Maybe, if we talked together, he would not do some things and we could help each other.

Perhaps, all this should happen anyway!

Now, I can do anything no longer...!

This makes me feel even worse...

While coming back home from the funeral, I recall Dave's words:

“Steven, your mum is in Heaven, she watches over you and protect you from there.”

This thought emerged: maybe, Ferdinand met my mum; maybe, they are looking at me together...

I look up to Heaven, smile and say:

“Ferdinand, surely you reached your mum, now you are happy... I am sorry for not talking to you as I wished. Forgive me!

I know that you can understand me now... Stand by me you too, as my mum does.

Help me, without you I feel even more alone...

Life is scaring me.” -

- This evening, we did not meet at the cafe...

We want to cry only! -

- Steven, Steven, you did well to listen to Lawrence when he told you not to talk to Ferdinand about his mother, because it is right to respect the way in which a family chooses to live and overcome a so deep pain as the death of a loved one is. Now, you have further confirmation that you cannot stifle the pain with silence. It is that what you feel in your heart and makes you doubt whether it was right to shut up with Ferdinand.

You respected the choice of his family but you did not know what was actually his choice or his need.

For this reason, Steven, when you encounter people who suffer and experience the same pain, approach to them with respect.

Then, at the right moment, with sweetness and discretion, make them realize that you can understand their pain because you suffered too.

Make them feel your desire to help them as they wish, even listening to them or hugging them.

Thus, you can give them the opportunity to open their heart, whenever they want, and you will be happy because you gave them your love and availability. -

- I do not go out with Catherine anymore!

Sometimes, when his husband is at work, she invites me to her house and we chat for a short time.

While talking, she dresses up and advise me on how to dress...

She receives many phone calls: she laughs and jokes with everybody.

I feel bad, I am jealous... I would like that she was my friend only, that she loved me only... But it is not like that!

When I see her together with some men, I feel very bad!

I am doing my best not to call her anymore!

I recall William again, falling about laughing behind the counter ...

I recall Richard saying:

“She is not the girl for you, I do not want to see you with her anymore

I think that, when I am at her house, she could avoid make me listen to her stupid phone calls...

I feel ashamed, ludicrous... sometimes I feel very angry with her!

At the café, when I look at William, I recall his words:

“Come on Steven, after a short period, you will laugh as I am doing when you think of her.”

This is helping me not to call her anymore: if I do not see her, I am happier and smiling. -

- I felt again that sudden ill that I felt a short time ago at the college.

It always happens when I am at the dining hall, sat at the table, while I am about to start eating.

So, I stand up quickly and tell Martin that I go out because I do not want to eat.

He understood that I do not feel good, but he only says:

“You are pale.”

I run quickly towards the sheds, call my mum and tell her to help me.

I have a walk and, after about half an hour, the malaise is over.

I return to Martin with my legs still trembling and my sweaty shirt.

I recall Susan: when she felt bad, she used to become pale and trembled.

This memory increases my fear...

When Martin sees me, he assures me:

“Now you are better, the color came back to your face.”

Hearing his words, I take courage and we start laughing again.

It is great having a friend as Martin is, who understands me and does not make comments!

In these moments, his presence helps me a lot and makes me feel less alone.

Thank you, Martin, for your affection. -

- Steven, the malaise you are feeling are reactions from your body for what you experienced in these years.

Many strong feelings and emotions piled up into your heart: they are imprinted in your body too, and now, your body is showing its tiredness and suffering by means of this malaise.

Come on Steven, bite the bullet.

Keep set out how you are doing.

Always be loving with everybody: there are people waiting for you, ready to give you their love and warm your heart. -

- Now that Ferdinand went to Heaven, we do not go to Lawrence's house anymore and he comes a few times to the café.

Once, he used to come often to the cafe to stay more together with his brother.

The last time we saw him, he said to us:

“Boys, I am sorry if we meet a few times, but I feel the need to spend more time with my girlfriend.”

John answered on behalf of us:

“Lawrence, we are happy that you are with your girlfriend. We are here, so when you want to come, we will be happy to stay with you.” -

- We talk less and less about Ferdinand and avoid recalling the time we spent together with him.
We miss him very much and we are still shaken: we fear pain and death a lot. -

- I do not meet Catherine anymore, nor I call her: I am tired of feeling bad, mortified, and of pleading her for staying with her. Going to the places where she usually goes does not make me feel bad anymore.
I stay away from her...
And I started to look at girls again...
Now I can understand why I did not consider them when I went out with Catherine.
I searched also for a mum in Catherine: indeed, sometimes, she behaved as a mum with me.
No other girl could give me that.
I liked also her carefree attitude and her will to live.
What led me to love her was her sweetness, kindness, will to talk with me a lot, her advice and the discovery of new things.

Sometimes, she behaved as a sister, other time sas a mum, always protecting me.

Thinking about that... maybe, that night, at the park, when she told me that she did not want to see me again, she wanted to avoid that I felt bad...

I guess I tried to search a mum in her... but, surely, Catherine was not a good mum with me... as she is not with her child.

At least, I realized that!

And I also realized that it is better not to meet her anymore.

I do not want to feel bad! -

- Sonny, I am happy that you realized that.

You are so sensitive that you feel some things even though you do not understand them fully.

It really happened like this: you were searching the love of a mum in Catherine, which is the thing you miss more.

This need led you to search for a girl much older than you are, instead of a girl of your same age, as it is natural.

When she made you understand that you were too young for her, you were disconsolate because you experienced again the abandonment you lived when your mum went to Heaven.

If when you are a child, you do not receive the love and everything else you need for, then you keep on searching for that until your heart heals.

Note how much that need led you to accept any compromise,, running the risk to experience dangerous situations.

For this reason, always be careful to do what the heart suggests you, instead of doing what your needs drive you to choose. -

- Today, I met again Patrick, my cousin, son a brother of my dad. He is old as I am, and his dad died when he was 11 years old.

Now, he lives with his mum Virginia and brother Guy.

Sometimes, when I was a child, Patrick came to visit us with his mum.

While Aunt Virginia was drinking the coffee with Aunt Adele, he and I used to go to my bedroom.

He told me that he had many friends and always played in the courtyard.

Each 10 minutes, his mum called him:

“Patrick, Patrick, where are you? Be good, please!”

He, laughing and puffing, said to me:

“I fed up of being always called”,

then, he ran to her.

Aunt Virginia caressed him a lot and said:

“Good boy, Patrick, you are good and obedient.”

Aunt Adele was silent. I looked at them and I was about to cry...

How beautiful was having a mum like Aunt Virginia and receiving those cuddles!

Patrick complained that his mum was too solicitous, but I understood that he was happy...

Seeing them together was beautiful!

Then, I do not know what happened between her and Aunt Adele, but suddenly Aunt Virginia did not come to visit us anymore.

Thus, I did not see Patrick anymore. I was very sorry, because he was nice and funny.

A few years later, while having lunch, I heard a brief talk between dad and Aunt Adele and they were not speaking well of Aunt Virginia.

They did not say her name, but I understood that they were talking of her, even though I did not understand what had happened.

Today, when I saw him, Patrick was on his white scooter, in front of Rosy's cafe. We looked at each other for a while and then we said hello with joy.

"Steven, how nice to see you again, do you remember when I used to come and visit you?"

"Yes, Patrick, and I remember when we laughed when we whistled to the people crossing the street by foot or bike from the window of my room.

We looked at each other and burst to laughing.

We always did like that when we were children: it was enough to look at each other to begin laughing outloud.

Patrick is grown up and is taller than I am. His blond hair is long till the shoulders and he is always smiling, as always.

Patrick invited me to go in the cafe and play the pinball machine with him.

After playing, he asked me which cafe I used to go to, and we arranged an appointment there to have a walk together. -

- Patrick came to the cafe to stay with me.

My friends already knew him because he lives in the same area, but they did not know that he is my cousin.

They know him as a joker person and say that he drives his scooter crazily so nobody wants to get up with him.

We went for a walk all together. While walking, Patrick said to me:

“Steven, I told my mum that I met you. She would like to see you, so if you want to come to our house we will be happy.”

I thanked him a lot and promised him that I would go there soon. -

- Aunt Virginia welcomed me very happily.

After telling me that she was happy that I saw Patrick, she asked me how I am.

It is difficult to answer this question without moving...

I move even more if an adult woman, who could be my mum, questions me.

I can't help it.

With my red eyes and a quivering voice, I answered:

“Aunt Virginia, things are not going well. I do not get on well with Aunt Adele, I do not talk to her anymore. I explained dad the problems that I have with her, but he only answered to be patient. He also gave me the house keys. He gives me money, So I can take some of my clothes to the laundry, considering that Susan washes the others.”

Without realizing it, I spoke for an hour explaining what I was living.

I was like a river in full spate that burst its banks. Suddenly, my emotion turned into tears.

Aunt Virginia stood by me, while Patrick went near the sofa.

They listened to me silently. Sometimes, aunt stopped me to ask some explanations.

When I ended crying, Patrick went to the toilet and Aunt Virginia comforted me:

“I understand you Steven, I knew everything and that Susan and you were feeling bad. Now, you are grown up, have the house keys, and your dad gives you some money.

This year, you will take the lower secondary school diploma, find a job and do your life.

Now, think of having fun and feeling good.

My house is always open for you. Come on! I go and make a good coffee...”

I did not understand what had happened to me. I did not want to say all those things, nor crying, but in that house I felt so good that everything came out naturally.

Aunt Virginia was like my mum and Patrick like my brother.

Everything was different: I felt light, emptied, and I was much better. I would not have wanted to go out from that house. When it was time to leave, I said goodbye to aunt with a big hug, promising her that I would return soon. -

- Susan lives in the city centre.

She works no longer, since she get married. It was George's desire and my sister is happy to devote herself to him and their house.

George works the shifts and sometimes, when I go and visit them, he is not at home.

Susan is always happy to see me and asks to me:

“Tell me Steven, how are you?”

Thus, I tell her about school and my friends.

When we start talking of dad, she soon becomes dark in her face and feels bad.

I realized that she is still very angry with him.

She does not even mention Aunt Adele...

When we talk of dad, I feel bad too.

I do not know what to do: I feel that Susan wants to talk of him and I have not the guts to tell her that I feel bad, so I find an excuse and go back.

Before leaving, we console each other for what we suffered when we were children and say goodbye sighing... -

- It is a long time I do not go out with Flavius.
His cousin and he go to the cafe near our house.
Sometimes, we meet in the same pizzeria or ballroom: he is
with his friends, and I am with mine.
We say hello quickly without adding anymore, as we were two
strangers.
I am sorry for that. -

- Dad is away for the whole week.
So, when Flavius does not go to his aunt, we have dinner
together. .
Aunt Adele never eats with us. She stands out near Flavius and
speak slowly with him.
He tells her about his job and his friends.
He is very witty and he speaks of himself by saying that he is
good and smart.
Aunt Adele never looks away from him and sometimes says:

“You did well, Flavius! You were good, Flavius!”

And he smiles satisfied.

It is important for him what his mum tells him.

I never heard him disobeying her or answering rudely and he
always go back home at the time agreed with her. He always
listens carefully to her advice on how to behave with some
people and in certain places.

He always tells her what he does, where he goes and with
whom.

I think that Aunt Adele never reproached him. It is enough a
glance for them to understand each other.

At the table, they go on talking each other as if I were not there
with them, nor they look at me.

When this happened, I used to feel bad even when I was a child.

At the beginning, I tried to intervene with some jokes, hoping that they talked with me too, but they ignored me and kept on talking each other.

When I resigned myself, I used to eat in silence.

I felt like the 'Ugly Duckling'.

I had the lump in my throat, I swallowed food together with tears, I felt alone and afraid.

Now, I eat quickly and I go out after a short time...

I bother hearing to the usual speeches by Flavius and Aunt Adele who always agrees with him.

I go out from the kitchen silently and when I am on the street, I breathe deeply.

Thus, my discomfort decreases. -

- I recall when Aunt Adele and Flavius are at the table and I think how they are different when there is dad too.

Flavius is no more witty and proud and is silent.

Aunt Adele as well. She sits at the table with us and is ready to serve dad when he nods.

I feel better in that silence: at least, we are all equal! -

- I feel the need to walk alone.

I think of Flavius.

He is not a bad boy, but he is always cold and detached with me.

We never quarreled but, when he is close to me, I do not feel good.

I think: we have been sleeping in the same room for many years, and we have not been able to become friends. We talk each other not so much, and if it happens, we only talk nonsense.

When we meet outside home, we barely say hello.

I feel very sad for that... but I also feel anger towards dad and Aunt Adele.

Ours is not a family! It is a theatre where everybody puts on a sad act. And I feel very bad...! -

- Yesterday, I went to visit Susan and George.

They were as much smiling as the day of their wedding.

When I sat, Susan said:

“Steven, I am pregnant, we are very happy.”

She hugged me with excitement while George was looking at us smiling with his eyes bright.

I held her tightly and gave her a kiss.

Then, I smiled at both of them:

“I am very happy for you, now you will be happier!”

I had lunch at their house to celebrate the good news.

When I went back, I was so happy to see them so in love and happy, full of attentions for each other.

Finally, Susan found some peace...

George is really the perfect man for her! -

- Flavius took the driving license.

While I was having lunch, he came in and said to Aunt Adele:

“Mum, hurrah, I did it, I have the driving license.”

Of course, Aunt Adele answered:

“Good boy, Flavius, now come and eat...”

Dad was not there, so Flavius explained in detail how the driving test was.

As always, they talked only to each other... as if I was not there...!

I was amazed: I did not know even that Flavius was enrolled in the driving school!

“Why did they hide that to me?”

I felt very sad: they even hide beautiful things...!

“Why?”

I could not find an explanation...!

I have to resign myself: I will never hear of a sincere speech in this house, I will never receive a word of affection and consideration!

Now, I can understand why I do not feel good when Flavius is close to me!

I hoped that one day, we could talk each other as friends...

We are almost of the same age! Flavius does not want to share anything with me!

I feel like living with some enemies...

I thought of dad and I felt very angry: he knew that, he could tell me that!

“What was wrong? Why are there so many secrets?”

I feel so much anguish... anxiety...

I do not want to feel bad like this anymore: from now then, I will be even more silent and I will stay out as much as possible!

I soon go out: I feel so alone! -

- Come on Steven, I feel that you are suffering much.

You are experiencing a difficult situation, but soon you will meet many people who love, protect and esteem you.

Hang on, sonny. I am close to you. I love you. -

- The morning air is tepid again.

The fields on the sides of the road leading to the College stretch as far as the eye can see.

I watch them stunned by my bike; I feel them alive and ready to give their fruits.

This recalls me that exams are coming and the college is about to end. -

- Secondary school exam was not difficult and I took the diploma.

The turning exams were not good and I did not get the employment certificate. I do not suffer for this failure: I do not like the work of turner and I am not able to do it. -

- I informed dad about the exam results.

I was a bit afraid because I knew that the secondary school diploma was not enough.

The usual scene was repeated: he listened to my words with a serious face and intense look, and then, shaking his head, he whispered:

“All right.”

Thus, he started eating.

I hoped that this time he would propose me to stay a bit with him to talk about my future.

Before speaking, I really wanted to ask him some advice:

“Dad, what can I do now? Could you help me?”

Instead, seeing his so serious and silent, I had not the guts to ask him anything.

I realized that it is not only his seriousness and silence blocking me, but it is something more coming from him and taking me away.

I felt so fear, despair, shivers in my legs, and a voice inside me saying:

“You are alone, Steven! What will be your future? Who will help you?”

I was short of breath and so I went out in a hurry. Only now, here in the street, I resume breathing regularly. -

- “Mum, I feel bad, I feel more and more alone, I fear about my future, I do not know what I will do, how I will live... I hope that you, mommy, can help me...!” -

- *You heard well, Steven.*

Indeed, what blocks you the most is the energy that you dad radiates, not only his look.

The energy radiated by a person for a thought or a feeling, is called ‘vibration’.

They are invisible waves radiated by everybody.

You can feel and understand them with your heart, above all.

To learn how to recognize them, you can play this game with a friend.

Sit, facing each other.

Then, you close your eyes and breathe deeply.

Follow the movement of your breath until you feel very comfortable.

Thus, listen to your heartbeat.

Then, ask your friend to think of something nice and pleasant, and listen to the waves coming from him.

Then, ask him to think of a sad thing that happened to him and go on listening his energy into your heart: you will feel that it is different from before.

After that, ask him to pretend being angry with you and, after a while, to express thoughts of love, while you are still listening to what you feel.

You will see how his energy will change depending on what he thinks or imagines.

You can also play this game asking him to express with his words what he expressed with his thoughts before: joy, sadness, anger and love.

Ask him to alternate those feelings while you still listen to them with your eyes closed, paying attention to what comes from him.

Try to play that game looking at your friend's eyes, you feel what is in your heart: you will get confirmation of how his energy changes.

These different 'waves' that you feel are 'vibrations'.

If you focus on them and try to recognize them, you can realize that what a person says does not always corresponds to his/her thoughts and feelings.

Thus, Steven, from now on, try to focus less on words and more on what you feel in your heart.

Remember to look always at the eyes of the person who is talking.

Men can say what they do not think, control the movements of their body to hide their feelings, but their eyes will always express what they feel in their heart.

Steven, be loving with everybody, and listen to what happens in your body.

If when you talk with a person, you feel joy, comfortable and strong, it means that his/her vibrations are good for you.

Instead, if you lose your joy, peace and feel weak, it means that there is a bad vibration near you and you should be careful.

Do that without judging anybody, but with love and respect.

With the passing of time, you will clearly understand that vibrations, although are invisible, are real and always show the reality, even when someone tries to hide it with words.

Stay calm Steven, your mum is near you and protect you. She will help you for your future job.

Always ask help to her and your Angel friend, being sure that they will always help and protect you.

Thus, you do not feel anxiety while you think of your future.. -

- Today, at lunch, suddenly dad said:

“Steven, now you have time to look for a job, think of what you could like.”

There were also Aunt Adele and Flavius at the table.

I had the lump in my throat and I wanted to cry:

“Dad, why do not you understand that I need you, your advice, your guide to face life?!”

If only you knew how I feel weak and insecure!

I fear the world, people and difficulties in life. That is why, I fear of doing any kind of job. You are a strong and confident man.

Please, talk with me, let’s find together a solution.”

Instead, dad went on eating silently... without looking at me... or adding anything...

I did not want that Aunt Adele and Flavius realized that I was feeling bad, so I Plucked up my courage and whispered:

“Ok. I will search for it”,

then, I went on eating, even though I did not want to eat anymore: my only wish was to run away...

When we have these rare and brief talks at the table, it seems that the silence that follows is even more intense.

I guess that dad understood that I was not feeling good, because, after a while, he added:

“Maybe, as a beginning, try to find a job in the warehouses where they pick up fruits.

Now, it is the right time, I know that they always search for boys.”

I nodded.

I ended to eat quickly, I stood up and I said to dad:

“Now, I go out.”

He shook his head and said hello.

Despite I was in the open air, my discomfort was still strong.

Nervousness, fear, anger, alternated inside me.

“Dad, why did you talk about such an important thing for me, in front of Aunt Adele and Flavius? You know that they do not love me and we do not even say hello.

I felt as a slacker, one wanting neither to study nor to work.

Do you want them teasing me? I need you, dad!

You always ask me if I have money, but now I need your advice.

I fear life, the world, everything.

Dad, talk with me, please...” -

- A week is over, but I have not gone to look for a job at the fruit shops yet.

I feel ashamed to introduce myself without anybody accompanying me. If they ask me why my dad has not come with me, I do not know what to answer.

So, I feel even angrier with him: I do not know how to solve this situation.

“Why does he not come with me in such an important moment? Why does he not want to help me even now?”

For sure, if he came with me, finding a job would be easier.

I cannot resign myself to that! I cannot calm down...

I spend my days wandering the city, I feel alone, sad, afraid.

Fortunately, my friends always invite me to their home.

In this period, I often visit Patrick and Sebastian families.

All three of us are searching for a job.

Patrick was successful, so he has only one year left at school.

Now, he is searching for a seasonal job for summer.

Sebastian failed at school and he does not want to study anymore.

He is a good and kind boy.

He is an only child and lives near the house of my cousins Guy and Patrick.

When Martin introduced him to me, I was soon impressed by his carelessness and confidence.

His motto is:

“No problem!”

He lives with his mum Leah, dad Eugene and paternal grandfather Gustavus.

Seeing his family, I could understand his character more.

His parents and grandparents overwhelm him with kindness.

There is a lot of peace and harmony at his house; you feel like protected.

Sebastian could not be otherwise:

“No problem!”

I told them about mum, Aunt Adele, dad, and how living at my house is so difficult.

I added:

“I love my dad and I miss him so much. If he did another job, instead of the lorry driver, maybe we would stay together more, so, the situation would change at home.”

Leah and Eugene listened to me carefully expressing sympathy and understanding.

Then, they commented:

“Steven, living like that is not easy, you are very good. But, even you dad position is not easy.

Of course, he loves you and tries to give you everything under the material aspect.

It is normal that you want him stay closer to you.

Think Steven, parenting is not easy.

He lost your mum when he was young and you were a child, so he was in a dramatic situation.

Try to understand him and love him.”

While standing up, Leah caressed me:

“Come on Steven, you have a long life ahead, and you can be happy. We would like you to stay here at lunch.”

I accepted soon, happy to spend more time with them.

Grandpa Gustavus was in a corner of the room.

He listened to everything silently, looked at me with sweetness and smiled.

I felt a strong emotion: I have never met my grandfathers (only my grandmothers) and I imagined how much they would love me if I met them... -

- Sebastian, Patrick and I get on well and have a lot of fun together.

Patrick has a girlfriend: she is the child of ‘Rosi’ cafe’s owner. However, he likes going out with his friends and neglects her a bit.

Sebastian has many girls chasing him, but he does not want a girlfriend.

Instead, I would like to have a girlfriend... and I am searching for her...

With summer getting near, we are excited to be able to move more, visiting new places and meeting many people.

Nobody of us is 18 years old, so we do not have a driving license.

Often, we take the train and reach the big city near ours.
Many times, we compare boys and girls of the two cities: those in the big city are more fashionable in everything and have a different attitude and way of speaking.
When we chat with them, we feel that they give themselves airs... but we become nice soon and make friends with them quickly. -

- This week, I met Hadrian, a classmate of mine from the elementary school.

I have not met him for a long time.

He lives near me, but he attends the cafe where Fulvius goes.

When he was accompanied by his mother at the 5th year of the elementary school, the teacher said:

“Guys, this is Hadrian. He comes from the countryside. Now, his family moved here in the city; he is a new classmate of yours”,

and he let him sit at the desk near mine.

I was amazed by his figure: he was tall and strong, he looked like a ‘big man’.

We became friends quickly and we loved each other.

We used to talk a lot about our beloved countryside.

Without saying it, we both realized that we felt as countrymen, and we were happy.

Today, Hadrian, when he saw me, said hello happily:

“Hi Steven, how are you? It has been a long time you are not coming to the cafe. Are not you going out with Flavius anymore?”

“I am fine Hadrian, I am happy to see you again. I do not go out with Flavius anymore; we are very different from one another.

We preferred to go out with different groups.”

“That’s normal, I change group very often because I like going out with everybody.

Tell me Steven, did you find a job as a turner?”

“No Hadrian, I am not able to do the tuner, I do not like it. I am searching for another job.”

“I am happy to have stopped my studies because I like working as a mechanic on cars”.

You know Steven, I have already a driving license and a car, if you wish, sometimes, we could go together to the ballrooms at the sea or in the near cities.”

I accepted joyful, and I asked him if even Sebastian and Patrick could come with us.

Hadrian, happily, cried out:

“Of course, the more we are the best will be and we will have fun even more.”

After arranging the appointment, we said goodbye and I soon told Sebastian and Patrick the good news.

Now, we can easily reach the open-air dance floors at the sea and the distant countries.

Hadrian’s proposal came at the right moment.

John, the only one in our group having a car, got engaged, so he comes a few times at the cafe. -

- Susan still washes my clothes. I try to give her as less clothes as possible because I do not want to overwork her or exploit her availability.

I do my best to be always neat and clean and, fortunately, I have some money so I can take some of my clothes to the laundry. -

- *Good boy Steven, you do well not to exploit Susan's availability.*

Now, she has her family and her commitments. Moreover, she knows that your dad gives you some money in order to wash some clothes at the laundry, and this can upset her because she has never received the same attentions.

Your sensitivity is helping you to behave properly with her. -

- Susan and George welcome me with joy and love but, after a while, she begins talking about dad and I do not feel good.

The speech is often the same:

“You know Steven, dad comes here every Saturday, he brings a bag full of food (chosen by him...), asks me how I am and, after five minutes, he goes back.

It is a shame, he does not care about me, he never asks me if I need something.

When I think that I had to leave that house... due to that woman... that I got sick...

I did never receive anything from him, even when I got married...”

And so on.

While she speaks, I am also angry with dad and Aunt Adele and begin to feel tired.

I listen to her for a short time trying to assure her, but when I feel too tired, I say goodbye and go out.

I remain confused and angry... I make an effort not to think about that, and I go to Sebastian or Patrick house. -

- When I am with Aunt Virginia, I feel better soon.

I like her very much, she is clever, strong and brave.

Surely, she faced many difficulties in bringing up Patrick and Guy by herself, after her husband’s death.

She is also lame, but it seems that it is not a big problem for her. I always saw her lame but I never asked her why.

Their house is small and plain, but their children always had everything they needed.

I like to hear her giving her children advice and suggestions for everything.

I would like to receive them too...! I would feel confident as Patrick is, and, of course, I would not cry so much and my legs trembling...

Aunt Virginia speaks firmly as dad does, always looking straight into the eyes.

She often encourages her youngest child:

“Patrick, if someone teases you or says something bad, do not be afraid and react. Please, make yourself respected.”

He learnt his mother’s lesson and he puts them into practice at the cafe.

He is jocular, self-confident, with a wry smile on his face and always ready to put his sharp tongue into operation.

For this reason, adults and children are always careful in speaking with him and respect him.

It is nice to look at Gerard’s face, the cafe’s owner, when he sees Patrick coming: he does not like him...

His face turns red and begins to be excited. The funny thing is that Pamela, his daughter, is Patrick’s girlfriend: Gerard does not resign himself...

Patrick will take a diploma in a year, while Guy stopped school because he did not like to study.

Now, he has a job at a fruit and vegetable company and earns a good salary. -

- Today, I visited Octavius, my barber.

He is a young boy, nice and I feel that he is very good.
Knowing that I ended school, he asked to me:

“Steven, did you already find a job?”

I said no and that I am looking for.

“Steven, which job do you like?”

I thought for a while and, for the first time, I was sure about the answer:

“The agent. I would like to meet many people.”

“You know, Steven, sometimes, some clients of mine ask me if I know some boys who are looking for a job. There are some agents among them, I will keep you informed.”

I went out the shop thanking him for his concern. He said goodbye smiling by saying:

“I did not do anything special, they asked me.”

I do not understand why but, even though I am not sure of finding a job, my heart is joyful.

Dad did not ask me anything else about that, I hope he will... so now I can tell him what kind of job I would like to do.

There is a hope in my heart: soon, I will get the job I like, so I will not be ashamed to find for it by myself.

Maybe, that is why I am happy. -

- In this period, there is the Football World Cup. Patrick invited me to watch the National team match at his home.

I accepted happily because I feel good at his home.

The match started late.

Aunt Virginia went to her room after cooking a delicious cake for us.

The football match was amazing: many goals and strong feelings.

There was a beautiful atmosphere at home and even Guy, who is very quiet and silent, was speaking a lot jumping from the chair and dancing around with joy.

Until then, I was not intimate enough with him.

The first time, I thought that it was like that because he is much older than me.

Later, I realized that what troubled me was his constant silence, as it happens at home with dad!

Instead, that evening, I felt Guy as my elder brother.

How beautiful! Football makes us feel happy children who want to play together and it helps us to love each other even more.

For a moment, I felt as a little child, at the stadium, with my dad, crying and dancing around with joy.

Even dad became a happy child thanks to the football...!

Guy was carried away when, at the end of the match, he let us hugging him for a long time.

Aunt Virginia, despite the racket, remained at her room, but when she heard that the match was over, she opened the door to have a peep.

Her face was smiling and happy, not for the win of the National team, but for us when we hugged each other!

I went back home late. On the city streets, fans were having fun for the win sounding the horn and flying the flag.

Lights were on at every house: they were celebrating the win.

Only at my home, everything was dark: dad was at work! Who knows if he stopped at some places to watch the match...

I felt very sad: I wanted to be with him for experiencing what I lived watching the match at Aunt Virginia's house! I felt alone more than ever!

Aunt Adele was at her bedroom. Flavius was sleeping; he does not like football.

Before falling asleep, I thought about the beautiful evening spent and the feelings experienced.

I could not imagine receiving hugs and loving words from Guy.

My thoughts turned to mum:

“Thanks mum, I spent a beautiful evening with a family loving me.” -

- Yes, Steven, you have not a true family, but there are many people welcoming you at their house, giving you the warmth and love of a family.

Thanks to your expressions of gratitude and joy, it could happen always.

Good boy Steven, you are doing well for not being carried away by very different feelings that might weigh down your heart and close the door to joy and love. -

- Flavius has a beautiful car, a blue FIAT 128 coupé.

I knew it today at lunch. Dad and I was sitting at the table while Flavius came: he said hello smiling and sat at the table with us.

Aunt Adele served him the pasta and, after a few minutes, dad asked her:

“Well Flavius, how is your car?”

I thought that dad was talking about his car because sometimes he lends it to him.

When Flavius replied:

“It is very good dad, it is just a beautiful car, I am very happy”,

I realized that dad bought a new car for him.

I began to sweat and be nervous, but I controlled myself soon, going on eating and pretending nothing happened.

The anger and bitterness inside me were increasing:

I felt smothering and I wanted to flee there...

Dad always understand what I feel: suddenly, he turned to me smiling.

Then, returning serious, exclaimed firmly:

“As I always said, I do not want to see motorcycles here, they are too dangerous. If you have a driving license, you will get a car.”

His look was turned to me... then, he went on smiling at me.

As usual, he does not say things directly, he makes general speeches, or gives examples of other people, thus I cannot ask anything clearly.

When he talks to me looking at me like that, I am like mesmerized, I can only say:

“Ok, dad”,

and smile.

Later, I feel like a heavy burden on my body, as if a mountain is crushing me.

What makes me feel ashamed is that I am always about to cry and my legs trembling.

Aunt Adele was impenetrable, with a serious look. She was indifferent to those speeches; she continued to go back and forth between the table and the kitchen.

After having lunch, while I was standing up, Flavius, turned to me smiling:

“Steven, do you want to see my new car?”

With difficulty, I answered:

“Yes Flavius, stop eating and let’s go.”

I did not tell the truth: I did not want to see the car, but I could not say anything else.

I looked at the car showing a false interest, but this farce lasted a short time: we both knew that we were not interested in doing that, but we understood that we had to behave like that...

There is a not expressed language at our house; dad and Aunt Adele show it in different ways: through silence, looks, posture, and a few times through a smile or a complacent look...

Flavius and I know it very well! We said goodbye coldly and I walked towards the city centre.

I thought and thought again: in this kind of family, they hide even good things.

If today Flavius did not come home in advance, who knows when I would be informed about the car! Why?

I feel so alone, I always hope that dad talks to me.

Even a chat would be enough.

Instead, still mysteries, cheating, shows and falseness. -

- “Dad, I need you but I fear of you more and more, more now than as a child.

I am very angry for not being able to talk to you. When I try, you send me away through your curt answer, peremptory way and a serious look, and the usual sentence:

- I do not even want to hear about this. –

Dad, I would like to hear you saying that you love me, that I am important for you, that I am good and skillful.

Instead, your silence and absence make me feel that I am not worth anything, and I am a burden for you.

What is the truth, dad?

Even if I have not a job yet, I think I am able.

I feel that I will find soon a suitable job for me.

If many people love me and invite me at their house, it means that I am good.

How I wish your hug, approval and appreciation!

But you always avoid me...

I keep hoping that now, being grown up, you start talking about mum.

I always fear of asking you... now, I dare not to do that.

Dad, I have only you, do not leave me in silence, assure me about my future.

I feel that I cannot live in this house for much time.

I feel confused, in my head and my heart. I love you, dad, but I feel anger and a desire to rebel.

I am afraid, I feel alone, because I have neither a mum nor a dad close to me.” -

- I understand, Steven, your confusion and fear.

Now, you are suffering even more because, visiting the families of your friends, you see that they receive love and attentions and you do not.

You see that their parents give them help, support and love.

They are close to them in facing the everyday life, and their dialogue is natural.

You feel a void and pain inside you.

You feel that the love you are receiving from other people is not the same as the love that your parents would give you.

Steven, you are so good, because you are always open to love.

Your sensitivity and attitude feed your heart a bit.

Keep on loving your dad, even though you fear him and have conflicting feelings towards him.

Now, you cannot understand his pain and attitude yet.

Trust the love that's in your heart, and stay open to him.

Ask for help to your mum, tell her everything and she will bring peace into your heart.

Always be open to love: many beautiful things will happen to you. -

- The shop of Octavius, the barber, is very near to my house. When I go out to reach my friends, I always look at the shop window to say hello to him, and yesterday I did it.

Besides smiling at me, he gestured for me to go in.

I realized soon that he had to tell me something new about the job, so my heart started pounding.

Octavius asked one of his clients to wait for a while, and he went to his private room.

He came out soon and he gave me a business card kindly:

“Here is Steven. This man is searching for a boy to start the insurer profession.

He can meet you next Thursday, in the morning. I hope it is useful for you.”

I would like to hug him, but since there was a client of him and being not so familiar with him, I was only able to say:

“I do not know how to thank you, Octavius, *I am very happy.*”

He returned to his work, turned to me and assured me:

“You will see, Steven, that everything will be okay, then tell me.”

I came out, amazed, and read the name: Lucian Glanville, agency inspector.

I was having such a strong feeling that I was dazed.

A thousand thoughts came out:

“Who knows how is this man... Will he like me? Or maybe will he see me inexperienced?”

If I move at the meeting with him, he will think that I am not ready to meet many people.

Will he understand my insecurity, knowing that an insurer must show confidence and nonchalance?

Am I able to do that job?

Yes, I can do it, I will do my best.”

“Mum, I know that you will help me...”

This thought made me calm down soon and I smiled again: I will meet many people, have my money, be independent, so I can leave my house.

Sebastian was waiting for me in front of the house door.

I yelled from a distance:

“Sebastian, I have a wonderful piece of news, maybe I found a job”,

and I explained everything to him.

Smiling, he showed me his joy:

“Hurrah! I am happy for you! I have a good piece of news too. Yesterday evening, I talked with my parents and decided to resume school. My dad found a job for me during these summer months: I will work at a sugar mill.”

We both began laughing happily.

After a short time, Patrick came there:

“Guys, guys, I have something nice to say. Yesterday, Guy and my mother told me that the sugar mill needs some people for 2 or 3 months, I went there and I am already hired.”

Sebastian and I looked at each other amazed and, while laughing, we told him what happened to us.

We were all joyful.

“Hurrah, hurrah! What fantastic things!”

We spent a happy day: we went to the cafe, public gardens, the fan fair, and we met girls.

In the evening, we said goodbye with enthusiasm.

While going back home, I started to think of my future job again.

I would like that dad was at home to tell him the good news.

Suddenly, I felt sad, and I recalled the image of Sebastian and Patrick.

I saw Sebastian happy and he said:

“My dad found a job to me for the summer months”,

and Patrick added:

“Guy and mum told me that the sugar mill needs some people...”

They are not alone as I am... someone cares of them...and I was about to cry while thinking of dad and his usual serious and silent face.

I plucked up my courage and tried to forget these thoughts.

I recalled Octavius face, his kindness, his concern for me, and my heart became happy again: if Octavius, who has been knowing me for a short time, worked for me and told my name to another person, it means that I am worth and a good boy for him.

I felt proud of me: I look forward to tell that to dad, so he will realize that other people care about me and love me. -

- Dad came back home and we had lunch together.

His mood was the same as usual.

A 'hello' when he came in the kitchen, head bowed, serious and silent.

When I am at the table with him and Aunt Adele, I fear that he reproaches me or tells me that I did something wrong, in front of aunt and Flavius.

This has not happened yet, however I am not quiet.

Usually, I eat very tense and quickly to stand up as soon as possible and go out.

Today, I realized that, when I have to speak in front of them, in that room, with that silence, my fear turns into panic.

I was sure to be able to show dad my enthusiasm and joy for the job.

When i started talking, I lost my strength and I was about to cry...

I stammered a few words:

“Dad, thanks to the barber, I was able to find a job that I like. I will be an insurer. I have already an appointment, on Monday morning, with the agency inspector who has his office in the city centre.”

My heart was pounding, I began sweating and my face went red.

Dad looked at me and answered:

“All right, go there and tell me”,

and resumed eating.

The silence fell again and I felt a great shame.

It was like a voice, coming from somewhere in the room, telling me:

“What a insurer... what do you want to do? You’re not worth it! You had difficulties even in taking the lower secondary school diploma... never mind!”

And everything ended with an ironic laugh.

Then, suddenly, the fear became clear and I understood it:

“Steven, do not worry, you thought that because you fear that dad says to you:

- No, Steven, be an insurer is not good for you, as he answered when you showed him your desire to become a lorry driver-.”

I ended lunch soon and I went out.

Tensions immediately decreased.

I sighed:

“Steven, nothing but pride... when you talk to your dad in front of your aunt, you're overwhelmed by a thousand emotions and feelings.

They are so serious and harsh that you lose your power and become breathless, as much as to be exhausted as you are now.”

I will do my best to become soon more and more self-confident and not ashamed when talking of myself, neither in front of them, nor with other people. -

- This morning, at ten o'clock, I went to the job appointment. I was very excited and I begged mum to help me so to make a good impression to Mr. Lucian. The office is at the second floor of a large building. I rang the bell and just Mr. Glanville came at the door.

I introduced myself smiling:

“My name is Steven, I have an appointment with Mr. Lucian.”

“It’s me, come in, I was waiting for you.

We are alone, the secretary went on vacation as well as the general agent, Mr. Alan Manley; this is a quiet period.”

While he was talking to me, he accompanied me to a room and let me sit at a chair:

“Well, Steven, Octavius told me that you like the agent job and that you are a good boy. Do you want to become an insurer?”

I liked Lucian: I was at ease with him, and my tension was decreasing.

Maybe, he is the same age as Octavius, smiling and, above all, talks to me as an elder brother.

“Mr. Lucian, I look forward to learn such a job, I am sure that I will like it.”

“Well, Steven, if you want, you can start even from tomorrow morning and we visit clients together. I think that we will realize if this job is good for you in a week.”

I had a strong feeling:

“I am happy Mr. Lucian that I can start tomorrow, together with you.”

“He had realized that I was excited, and he smiled even more. Putting a hand on my shoulder, he concluded:

"Tomorrow morning at nine o'clock I'll come and get you home. See you tomorrow, Steven.”

Going down the stairs of the building, I immediately thanked my mom:

"Thanks, Mom, I'm certain that you helped you. I am immensely happy."

If Mr. Lucian takes me with him, I will easily learn to do the insurer.

I really like him: he is kind, smiling, and I feel he is good.

“Thanks, Mom, I love you so much.” -

- The past week, with Mr. Lucian, went by quickly.

I am excited about this job.

He already told me that, in his opinion, I will not have difficulties in doing it, thus, next week, he will introduce me to Mr. Manley for the recruitment.

He also asked me to be on familiar speaking terms with him: now, I really consider him as an elder brother.

So, it was easy for me to tell him about my family situation and the reasons why I cannot invite him at home.

As in the other cases when other people come to take me at home, I wait for them directly on the street.

Lucian was a bit surprised about my situation and assured me:

“Steven, you'll see that entering the world of work, your situation will change. I am sure that your father loves you and definitely will help you find the right solution for you.” -

- Lucian fixed the appointment with the general agent Mr. Alan Manley for the recruitment: I am excited and hopeful... -

- This time, dad accompanied me and I am happy about that: I feel quieter and more confident with him.

After introducing ourselves, dad took the floor:

“Mr. Manley, in a few weeks my son is coming of age, he is a good boy.

He was very unlucky, because he lost his mum when he was just six.

I am doing my best so that he can enter the world of work, since his studies were not good. Once he gets the driving license, I will buy a car for him. Steven told me that he likes very much this job and Mr. Lucian told him that it is suitable for him. I will be happy if he could do this job.”

Mr. Manley, smiling, looked at dad carefully and, at the end of his speech, he replied:

“Mr. Lucian told me about Steven and I agree for his recruitment.”

Then, turning to me, he went on saying:

“Steven, in these months of wait for taking the driving license and having a car, you can deal with some cases here in the office and go out with Lucian to learn selling.

For now, you will have a minimum wage, but when you are ready to make the policies and go out alone, we will review the contract. Do you agree?

“All right”,

I replied soon.

Mr. Manley and dad looked at each other and smiled.

Then, we said goodbye.

Dad was happy and smiling: how different is when we are just us alone!

Although keeping his brisk, serious and self-confident way, something changes in him.

So, after his short speeches, I can feel that he loves me.

In particular, I can read it into his eyes when he looks at me.

After leaving the office, we stopped at the cafe to drink something together.

As usual, he repeated:

“Be good, Steven, I will do everything for you.”

These words fill me with joy and pride: I feel important for my dad! However, there is a bit of sadness into my heart...

I would like to be able to say:

“Dad, I would like that you always behave like this, but, when we are at home with Aunt Adele and Flavius, you do not tell me even a word.

I would like that you let me to express my opinions on everything.

Instead, you allow me to talk only of few things: some general speeches, stupid issues, sports and nothing more.

Dad, I look forward to open my heart to you on everything, with no limits... Now, it is like you are locking me in a room alone... this makes me suffer.”

I soon removed these sad thoughts from my mind by thinking that tomorrow I will start working: it seems a dream! I am happy and excited. -

- The office employee is called Irene, she is a young girl, one year older than I am.

When I am at the office in the morning, I help her to do some shopping and arrange the archives.

Every afternoon, I go out with Lucian and I am learning many things.

He is an indefatigable and determined seller and he inspires confidence.

He talks resolutely, but he is kind, you can realize that from the tone of his voice.

You easily understand that he is a good and honest person.

I think that this is the reason why he satisfies even the most reluctant clients to underwrite the insurance policies he proposes to them. -

- I am attending the driving school regularly; I want to get the driving license as soon as possible, since dad told me that he would buy a car for me.

I look forward... especially because now I have a girlfriend...

I met her at a ballroom and she lives in a country near the city.

Sometimes, on Sunday, I go and visit her, and I already know her parents and sister.

I have to ask the lift to my friends to reach there, so I cannot go many times. -

- Some Sundays I go and visit grandma Celestine and my uncles Francis and Roland.

Grandma Celestine always asks me how I feel, so I tell her about my life in the city and my job.

She is always surprised, maybe because her lifestyle is very different from that in the city.

At the end, she smiles and says:

“The important thing is that you feel good.” -

- Hurrah, I got the driving license! Hurrah, I have a new car!

It is a white FIAT 500 L.

Dad and I went together to the car dealer.

After recommending me to go slowly and to check always the water and the oil, he said the same sentence as usual:

“Remember your father.”

When I hear this sentence, it is like receiving a punch in the stomach, but now I do not want to think about that: I am very happy to have my own car!

Now, I am independent!

Lucian told Mr. Manley that I am ready to visit clients.

Mr. Manley stroke an agreement with the holders of some car dealing companies and private sellers, to propose an insurance at the time of sale, and he gave me the task to reach the agreement.

When he called me to his office to tell me that, I was very excited: now, I have to show that I am worth and put into practice what Lucian taught to me.

I am not still much self-confident, especially when the dealers of the most important concessionary firm in the city call me.

I realized that they are not so happy if I go to talk to them: I am too young and unskilled in their opinion...

Sellers get a remuneration for each policy reached, and, of course, they would prefer Lucian or Mr. Manley...

That is why I prefer going to private sellers: they are quieter and their clients are more available.

I am realizing that being an insurer is not easy.

It is essential to have determination, enthusiasm and calm in any moment.

However, I do not resign myself, I like being in touch with people because I have many feelings.

Then, with the help of vendors, I usually can take out the policy. -

- Dave, what you told me has happened: I am not a turner! When you advised me not to think too much about my future job, I tried to do that as less as possible, but sometimes I was about to say:

“Steven, the only job you feel you can do is the lorry driver but your dad does not agree... what will you do?”

Dave, I understood an important thing: you cannot know what could happen in the future.

Thank you Dave, I try to remember your words always. -

- “Thank you, mum, if now I am an insurer it is thank to you. I know that you saw how much I was despaired sometimes, because I did not know what to do...

I love you very much, mum.” -

- Steven, I am happy that you realized that.

This is the solution to live your life happily, enjoying everything the life offers.

Know that doing this will not always be easy: the mind constantly brings to the past or the future, never in the present.

If you go back in the past, you can regret some moments that you experienced, leading you to act to re-create them.

If you live the same situations, you cannot have the same feelings, because you are not the same as in the past.

Furthermore, thinking about the past, you can recall some bitterness or pain and suffering you had experienced.

You can feel some guilt for what you have not loved or given to others.

You can harbour a grudge towards those who have not loved you or what you suffered.

It is good to look at the past only to understand and learn from the past experience.

You can think of the past to heal your heart, forgive others and yourself.

You can do that with those who can help and support you.

While, if you think about the future, you can have fears and anxiety for what could happen.

You can have some expectations that, if you fail in achieving them, make you feel bad.

Thinking about the future can lead you to have some certainties that are not real, since there are no certainties in life.

That is why, ask your mum and your Angel to help you live in the present. -

- Dad work is going well.

Last Saturday, we met at the cafe where he usually goes, and said to me:

“Steven, I bought another lorry in partnership with a friend of mine, there is a lot of work.

You go on behaving well and respect everyone and everything. Fill up your car at my preferred petrol station and, at the end of the month, I will pay the bill.”

Of course, I was happy.

I was sure to stay a short time with him and talk with him about me.

After saying that, he made me realize that he did not want to talk about anything else and we chatted on football.

I preferred to say him goodbye, and go out...! -

- Mr. Manley asked me to go with him and visit a client; I was surprised because it was the first time.

I am always in awe of him, because he is authoritarian and, with his imposing figure, he is respected by everybody.

He behaves as a great professional, and he is Lucian exact opposite, because the latter is always great pal with everyone.

While we were in the car, he said:

“Steven, pay attention to my behaviour with this client, and remember that you have to change your attitude, depending on who is in front of you.”

In fact, the client I had already met with Lucian, had a different attitude with him.

I could not believe: the parties were reversed, Mr. Manley looked like a client and vice versa.

He asked many questions to the client and, at the end, he reached a new agreement...

Coming back to the office, he explained to me other things about selling.

I am very fascinated by him, his way of speaking, his ability to convince other people, his good looks and personal care.

He shows a great confidence and a bit of impudence.

He is a role model for me. -

- Be careful, Steven, it is good to learn your job and the attitude you should have, but without pretending or fooling with the skills required by the selling.

You can use them to relate with the people you meet, but be careful not to use them to induce someone to do what you want.

In this job, this limit is subtle.

Remember that if you go beyond this limit to earn more, it could become an attitude you will use with everybody.

Your heart is simple and clear, always protect it!

Appreciate Mr. Manley, learn the necessary things for your job, but do not consider him as a role model.

Everybody has his/her own beauty and different capabilities thus it is right that everybody expresses his/her Light and uses his/her talents.

Otherwise, you are not yourself and this creates difficulties and suffering.

Moreover, if you choose to imitate someone, you run the risk of deceiving yourself and others. -

- Now, having a car makes me feel closer to Sebastian and Patrick.

In our free time, we take long paths by car and go to dance in many different and distant places.

My home is no longer a nightmare. I go back just to have lunch, and at night to sleep. I do not speak anymore, neither with Aunt Adele, nor with Flavius.

I explained dad that I have two excellent friends: Sebastian and Patrick. Thus, if I do not go back home for lunch or dinner, it means that I am with them.

In particular, Sebastian's house became a shelter for me.

Sometimes, when I feel sad, I go there also during work break and, while waiting for Sebastian, I talk with his grandpa Gustavus.

He gives me a great peace of mind and, after a few minutes talking with him, I feel sad no longer.

I sit near his big chair and ask me to talk about the First World War.

Grandpa Gustavus likes talking with me and about the World War.

He answered to all my questions so calmly and gently.

A few days ago, I asked him:

“Mr. Gustavus, how did you resist so long in the trenches? How did you have the courage to go out there and fight?”

He smiled and caressed my head:

“Dear Steven, we were used to be in the trenches for many weeks and, even though it could seem impossible, those who were not killed by the enemies, resigned to stay there.

I realized that we, the men, sometimes, have a strong power that allows us to live and overcome dramatic situations in desperate conditions.

I assure you that we had a lot of fear, and we did not have the courage to confront the enemy face to face, with the bayonet.

But, soldiers must obey in war.

A few days before, we understood that it was coming the moment when we had to get out of the trenches and advance.

You realized that because food rations were increased and they gave us a big amount of chocolate, cognac and cigarettes.

That wealth had only a meaning: it was the time for the assault! Everybody tried to hide his fears and go ahead.

The days before the assault were terrible... they never passed... the wait increased the anxiety and the fear of death.

We knew that, in the trenches, we could die at any moment but, in the assault, we all knew that dying was easier than surviving...

Steven, I do not want to impress you with these words, but I would like to help you understand that there is an unconceivable power in each of us allowing to withstand cruel things and survive in dramatic conditions that you could not think about before.

This always happens in life: if a person knew in advance what he/she had to experience, how much he/she suffers in certain situations, he/she would be so sure not to succeed or have the necessary power and stamina.

Instead, when required, we bring out our character and resources that we could never imagine before.

Steven, remember that: in life, everybody must struggle and has the power to succeed.”

His voice is always calm and his eyes bright when he talks about that.

At the end, he said:

“Fortunately, Steven, those periods are far and belong to the past. Now, everyone has what he/she wish and you can have fun.”

I shook his hands and expressed my appreciation to him because he was a real soldier.

He smiled at me and caressed me again.

Grandpa Gustavus stories moved me a lot and, in the following days, I thought about the suffering he experienced in that period, together with thousands of other people.

I think that this suffering could be avoided if there were no wars... -

- Yes, Steven, and how many sufferings the man causes due to his behavior or because he does not do what necessary.

He commits that in order to get power, benefits, wealth, success and other things.

He could avoid many pains by simply loving. -

- Dave, as I told you, I think a lot on what grandpa Gustavus tells me.

I realized that he knows many things but, above all, I feel that what he says is very important for me. -

- *It is the wisdom of experience, Steven, coming out from all experiences that we lived to draw some lessons.*

If you observe what you live, what you feel, what others tell you, you will become a 'wise' as grandpa Gustavus is, and then you can help other young people by simply sharing your life and experience with them.

I am sure it will happen, because you are able to observe and reflect even through your heart, not only through your mind.

The true wisdom is that coming out from the heart. -

- Dave, there is something I cannot understand.

Grandpa Gustavus told me that during the war they did not have the courage, but the power... I have always believed that soldiers should have courage... -

- *It is true, they have.*

What grandpa Gustavus wants to tell you is that even soldiers, as everybody else, have fears.

It is normal to be afraid in difficult situations, as well as the fear of death.

But the power that lies inside every man helps him to overcome that fear and react.

Courage comes out in this way.

First, we accept our fears knowing that they are natural, then we recognize our power, thus we act with determination and courage.

When we are aware of having the necessary power to tackle some situations, the courage comes out. -

- If I do not have the courage to talk with dad, as I would do, does it mean that I have not the necessary power...? -

- No Steven, it is not like that.

Recall grandpa Gustavus's words:

"All men have the power inside them to live what life requires."

Thus, you too have the necessary power to face everything. -

- Then, courage does not come out from my power... -

- This can never happen, in anybody.

Courage always come out from the power, so if everybody has power, everybody can act with courage.

If this does not happen, it's because they choose otherwise for some reasons that you will understand by observing your life and the life of other people.

Of course, if you do that by your heart, without judging anybody or anything. -

- I do not know why, but I have not been wishing to see my girlfriend for a short time.

Now that I have a car and I could see her whenever I want, I have no desire.

Although meeting for a few months, I am sorry to tell that to her, I do not want her to suffer.

I have no longer gone to visit her, nor given her some explanations, for the fear of being reproached by her parents.

My friends met her and told me that she is very angry with me, as well as her parents.

They are right: I am ashamed of not having the courage to tell her the truth and for disappearing like this.

Now, I realize that I was not honest and fair with her and her family... so I made her suffer more, and her family too... -

- Steven, it is always necessary to face every situation, to feel good and in peace.

It is true that, sometimes, the truth hurts, but concealing it or telling lies hurts even more.

The truth can create some difficulties and can make you lose people, benefits and things.

But it makes you free and freedom is invaluable.

Truth is an expression of respect and love.

Take it with tact and kindness and always accept the reactions it can cause.

Who received the truth will thank you.

Remember that you can get away from some situations and hide the truth, but you cannot get away from yourself, nor deceive your heart. -

- Even Patrick and Sebastian have a girlfriend no longer, so we are organizing to spend Christmas holidays together. We are excited by the frenzy of people in doing shopping and organizing the holidays: everybody thinks of having fun. This atmosphere is widespread all over the city. -

- We spent New Year's Eve in a neighboring country, where recently we met new girls. One of them has provided a home for the holiday and we had a lot of fun. There was a bit of sadness into my heart: I was thinking about the girl I left that way and that, maybe, she did not spend Christmas holidays well because of me... -

- Susan is giving birth to her child in about two months. Now, when I visit her, I do not listen to the usual talks about dad, but

I always assure her, I wish her all the best for the baby and I go back.

Although these comments continue to trouble me, now I can easily put them aside.

I am living happy moments with my friends and I have two families loving me, I have a job, a car and some money.

I am too happy to heed the usual complaints of Susan towards dad. -

- Today, dad came home with his eyes bright: I felt bad because I have never seen him like that.

Whit his voice broken by tears, he murmured:

“Uncle Valerius is dead.”

I was shocked: Uncle Valerius is dead, how is it possible?

Dad added:

“He had a heart attack”,

then, he was silent.

I was really shocked: for the death of my uncle and for dad’s mood.

It was the first time!

I went out soon.

I went on thinking: Uncle Valerius is no more among us.

Then, I thought of my dad and his tears. I could not understand... and I wondered: if dad is crying for Uncle Valerius, it means that he loved him. Then, why did they talk each other with difficulties?

Ah! How many things they do not tell me...!

Even Grandma Celestina does not tell me all the truth!

I cannot understand too many things!

A long time ago, grandma told me:

“During the war, the family of my husband’s sister moved to our house because they had nothing to eat. On that occasion, your dad met your mum.”

In fact, this ‘sister of my grandpa’ was also my grandmother because she was the mum of my dad ...

Then, I realized that my parents were cousins.

When I commented that, grandma closed her speech soon.

Nobody told me that my parents were relatives.

The way grandma stopped her speech made me realize that a marriage between relatives is not good.

Grandma Celestina was always vague in telling me about the meeting between my parents, but once she said:

“Your dad’s family was composed of 21 children.”

Seeing that I was shocked, she went on:

“Steven, in the past, they used to give birth to many children. It was natural; all families were numerous.

They used to receive some incentives from the government, which stated that many arms to work the land would give welfare to the family and the nation.

Your dad was orphaned when he was a child, as well as his six brothers.

His mum, your grandmother, remarried a man who was, in turn, widower and had seven children.

Then, they had other seven children together.

Thus, in all, they had twenty-one children...”

Then, I started to laugh:

“It was a tribe more than a family...”

“Yes”,

Grandma Celestina observed.

“Sometimes, they even cannot find a child... and they had to search for hours... that is why they found themselves without anything to eat. So, your grandpa and I hosted them.

In short time, we too ended our livelihood, so we all went hungry.”

Who knows 'at that time' how many things have happened among all those people who were living together in such a desperate situation ...

Who knows how many and what feelings were born between them!

Having seen dad crying for the death of Uncle Valerius, I think that once, grandma, uncles and dad, had a good relationship and loved one another.

I would like that somebody explained me what changed their relationship later!

Maybe, love was still in their heart, since the pain and the tears of dad. -

- Steven, your remark is right: many feelings, not only feelings of love, were born between these two families...

Their union was not a free choice, so when you are obliged to do something against your will, inevitably some difficulties can arise.

These difficulties increase when you live in situations of deprivation and hardship, as they lived.

If later, they kept their misunderstandings in their heart without solving that and forgiving one another, there could never be a peaceful dialogue.

In life, it is essential to clarify all things and forgive.

Only by doing that you can solve any difficulties and live happily.

Moreover, this allows to have peace into your heart and avoid further sufferings.

It is beneficial also to your health, because any bad feelings could create a disease, sooner or later.

Often, someone recover his health after solving his difficulties and forgiving others.

The death of a loved person makes us understand that love is the most important thing, and we never have to allow anybody to prevent its expression. -

- A few weeks have passed since Uncle Valerius death and Susan gave her child his same name.

George and Susan are very close to Grandma Celestina and visit her often with their child.

Poor grandma, she lost three children of her: my mum, Uncle Valerius and another child of her died during the war when he was eighteen.

Who knows how much she is suffering...! -

- Dave, I feel more insecure than usual in this period.

Uncle Valerius death shocked me.

I did everything to take my mind off things, but I feel weak and my legs trembling as time ago.

I talked with Sebastian and Patrick about the meaning of life and death but, although we discussed for hours, we did not come up with nothing.

It is a great mystery for us!

However, I like talking with them about these things, even though I cannot express my malaise even to them. -

- Steven, Uncle Valerius death has reopened the wound for the loss of your mother, in addition to your pain for his death.

If you think, your bad feelings increase when you know about the death of someone, be it a person dear to you or a person you do not know.

Now that you are affected again, it is normal to have those feelings that create more fear.

The insecurity that always accompanies them is a sign of that.

Even your dad lived Uncle Valerius death as you did.

Despite his reaction is different, his pain is very strong, because the wound for the loss of your mum was reopened even for him, since he still loves her and miss her very much.

Do not fear of opening your heart to your friends, tell them your fears, pains, needs and feelings.

Do not be ashamed, they are natural.

So, they will decrease and you feel better. -

- Unfortunately, what dad feared has happened: I went out of the road by my car! Patrick and Sebastian were with me.

It happened late at night, after leaving the ballroom.

I only remember that my car got out of control at a corner, I lost the control of the steering wheel and I saw the 'big plane' in front of me... then, anything else!

When I recovered consciousness, I was in a ditch.

I heard the voice of a man asking Sebastian, who was inside the broken car, how many we were.

Sebastian kept repeating:

“We are three, three...”

Patrick was 'thrown' even farther than me and that man found him only when he heard his moaning.

Patrick had a strong pain in his leg, while Sebastian and I did not feel anything.

“It is a real miracle”,

our rescuer said while taking us to the hospital.

I think he was right! -

- “Mum, you helped and protected me once again...

Thank you mum, always stand by me, I love you so much.” -

- Sebastian and I stayed at the hospital for three days, while Patrick for a week, because he has a broken foot.

When I saw dad coming in the room of the hospital, I realized his fears from his look.

He was just back from his business trip, his eyes were puffy with sleep, tiredness and anxiety.

In a low voice, he said:

“How are you?”

“I am fine, dad.”

He did not add anything else, he looked at me intently and gave me a new dressing gown.

He smiled at Sebastian and Patrick asking them how were they, and then he went back home. –

- Even Mr. Manley came to visit me. He joked with all of us and, before going back, he shook my hand and smiled:

“Come on, Steven, I want to see you at the office soon.” -

- Dave, these last two months were full of feelings, so now the only thing I wish is peace. -

- It is normal, Steven, you lived strong experiences.

These experiences taught you many lessons, and you feel not to have understood everything.

You saw how death suddenly takes away a loved person and how life gives you joy again for the birth of a child.

This should help you to always express love to people.

*The car accident was another strong experience.
Consider it as a help for you to stop and reflect, as you wish.
Thank your mum again.
I feel that you changed again and that you understood many
other things: I am happy, Steven. -*

- Patrick must be in plaster for sixty days.
When Aunt Virginia saw me again, she hugged me:
“Thank God, the most important thing is that you are all here.”
The Traffic Control Authority sent me a notice stating that, due
to the accident, I have to repeat the driving license test.
Fortunately, they did not revoke it!
There is another good news.
Upon Mr. Manley’s advice, I had insured my car with the
‘kasco’ insurance, which covers any damages even if I am the
responsible for the accident.
With the insurance money, Dad bought another Fiat 500 for
me.
I am very lucky: I have another car after two weeks only.
Even Sebastian’s parents hugged me when we met:
“Thanks God you are still here!” -

- The new driving license test was successful.
I resumed my work and now I am more careful when I drive.
Patrick, despite the plaster in his leg, goes to school without many problems,
Now, the accident is only a bad memory, Sebastian, Patrick and I still go out together.
I feel better, both physically and morally.
Dad wanted to go to the accident site and we went there along with Sebastian.
During the way, he did not reproach me, but recommended me how to behave when driving.
He was really good and sympathetic with me! -

- I am meeting new people at work and I am learning to behave better and better.
However, I feel that not completing my studies is affecting me a lot.
When they ask me to propose policies to educated people, I feel the shivers, I fear not to be up to that, and often it is like that.
When I go in the province to propose policies, the situation is better.
Here, people want to know the insurer, and when I win their confidence, everything becomes simple.
In many people, I see the features of my uncles and grandma and recall the countryside life that I still like very much. -

- Summer is coming.

Sebastian and I decided to go on vacation alone, in a small mountain village.

Patrick cannot come because he must take the school leaving examination for getting the diploma.

Dad did not agree, but when he said to me:

“No, Steven, you cannot go so far”,

I had the courage to reply in front of Aunt Adele and Flavius:

“No, dad, I wish to go and I will go: I have the money I earned doing my job.”

I said that with the tears in my eyes and I was very upset.

Dad did not reply.

So, I went out home. -

- A few days before the beginning of my holidays, I expressed dad my wish to go to the mountain.

This time, he did not object:

“Ok, Steven, tell me the address of the guest house and I will come to visit you.”

Of course, he added the same advice for driving and I listen to him silently and patiently.

Sebastian and I left with excitement: it was our first holiday!

My friend Martin, at the college, told me about this country eagerly because he used to go there every summer with his family.

We liked the place soon.

It was just as Martin described it: there was a large square with a fountain, overlooking the guesthouse and many small houses, close one another.

All houses had many colored flowers in their windows and balconies.

Looking at the sky, you could see the mountains that enclosed the village like in a big circle.

The guesthouse was a real hotel and had even a disco.

There, one evening, I met Juliana, a girl on vacation with her family.

I liked her very much and tried to stay with her as much as possible.

Sebastian liked to tease me, saying that I became ‘fool’ due to her, because I did not eat and look at other girls.

It was true!

I tried to pretend nothing happened... and smiled at Sebastian.

The following Sunday, at 11, dad came to the guesthouse.

There was even Aunt Adele with him...!

I did not expect it...!

I felt joy and, at the same time, anger.

I felt joy because dad was showing me his love, and I felt anger because Aunt Adele was there.

I would like not to see her anymore!

We barely said hello.

Dad wanted to see the place and the people...

After seeing the guesthouse, he said:

“Steven, Aunt Adele and I will have lunch with Sebastian and you.”

“I am happy dad, now we go for a stroll; we meet here at 12.30 pm.”

I immediately showed Sebastian my anger for the presence of Aunt Adele, and he assured me:

“Do not think about that, Steven, we’ll be with them at lunch only, then we go back to have fun.”

Sebastian was a support for me. -

- Dave, I thought a lot about this episode in these days and my unease in seeing Aunt Adele, so I could understand other things.

Dad is no longer spontaneous when she is with him.

Moreover, I do not want she to know my life: she does not love me, she has never loved me.

I do not know why dad took her here, knowing that we do not talk each other.

If she were not here, everything would be very different with dad.

Her presence is an interference in my life. -

*- Steven, I understand your anger and difficulty.
It is true that she never showed love to you, but try to empty
your heart from the feelings you have towards her.
Years go by and situations change, Steven.
Now, you all are adults and many situations can be solved.
Maybe, your dad wanted to try to bring some happiness, to
break the atmosphere of pain and suffering that is there when
you are together.
Steven, try not to have bad feelings towards her, be open to
love and be trustful: everything can change, always. -*

- Holidays came to an end, but there is no sadness into our hearts.
Now, I feel even more a friend of Sebastian because, living together for fifteen days, we could talk a lot and reveal many things we did not know before.
Patrick took the diploma and waited for us, curious about what we did.
Meeting again was beautiful and we had many things to tell one another. -

- I did not forget Juliana, so I go and visit her in the city on Sunday.
The trip is long, about one hour and a half.

That is why, I had to tell that to dad who grumbled:

“Had you to find a girlfriend so far? Go, but be careful on the road.”

It was clear that he did not agree, but he did not add any words, so I went out home soon.

I arrived at Juliana’s house early in the morning and she came with me to visit her beautiful city.

At lunchtime she has to go back home, but for an hour only, then we go on walking in the city.

We talk a lot about each other.

I told her about my family situation and she did the same.

Besides her parents, she has a sister, and her maternal grandparents live with them.

She feels good at home.

She is a good and quiet girl; you can understand that she lives in an environment where she is loved. -

- Winter has come, but even though the weather is not good, I go to visit Juliana the same.

Her parents told her their wish to know me, so I went and had lunch at their house one Sunday.

Since then, I am going there often and I feel good, especially with her mum Giudita.

She already knew a bit my family situation because Juliana mentioned it.

When I told her about my childhood in a thorough way, she sighed:

“I understand you well, Steven. Also Adolf, my husband, lost his mum when he was very young and lived with a stepmother, suffering a lot.”

Here, everybody loves me, and since I can go to their house from Saturday afternoon until Sunday, they found a room for me at a next-door neighbour. -

- Flavius left for the military service for a few months. Thanks to his uncle’s contacts, he could enter the Air Force and stay in a city that is very close to ours, so he can come back home every weekend.

I was happy for him and thought: Flavius is very lucky, has a mum living for him only, a dad who respects and gives him whatever he wants, uncles and aunts who cuddle him since he was a child.

A few evenings ago, I saw him crying in front of her mum, and he told me:

“I came back home because my girlfriend left me...”

Seeing him crying, I felt sadness and tried to assure him:

“Flavius, these things may happen.”

I left home and began thinking:

“You see Steven, life is not easy for nobody. At any time, something bad could happen and it is necessary to be strong and ready to everything.”

I am sorry for Flavius, maybe he also does not feel bad living in this house... maybe he wanted to get married when he finished the military service. -

- Weeks go by happily between work, friends and the weekends together with Juliana.

Now, Lucian works on his own and opened an agency in a large country.

The insurance is the same, so we can still collaborate.

Grandma Celestine feels better and accepted the death of Uncle Valerius with dignity.

I go and visit Susan a little less.

I know that dad visits her regularly every week and Susan is also regular in telling me her complaints about him.

That is why sometimes I avoid going there, because I cannot be calm when Susan begins complaining about dad.

Now, he never let me lack for anything, at least materially.

There is something else making me feel bad but I am not able to tell that to Susan.

Every Saturday, dad gives her a large bag full of food and I guess that it is equal to my salary, in a month-period.

Not only does not she appreciate this, but she says she would need something else...!

Moreover, I think that dad gives her some money as he gives Flavius and me.

I do not know how things really are in this regard, and dad does not tell me even a word about that...! -

- Steven, be careful of not judging Susan.

This attitude can arise because, when you feel some grudges in your heart as those Susan feels towards your dad, when you care about them, you are not able to appreciate the beautiful sides of people and the things they do.

You see that you are finding more and more positive aspects in your dad that you did not see before.

I am happy that you manage to appreciate and recognize them, despite your heart is hurt and you need more love from him.

Even your strong need for him to open his heart to you and to tell you about your mum and your life, could lead you to blame and criticize him.

Good boy Steven, be always impartial in all relationships of yours. -

- Since the compulsory insurance for cars came into force, the work has increased a lot and Mr. Manley made important deals. That is why he opened a new office on the main avenue in the city and hired a new employee.

A few days ago, dad, Susan and George came at the agency: I immediately scared.

But seeing Susan smiling, I calmed down.

Dad asked me:

“Steven, please, could you come into the street for five minutes, we have something to show you.”

“Of course, dad! Hi Susan, hi George; what a beautiful surprise!”

They smiled at me happily and we went out.

In front of the Volkswagen car dealer, located under my office, a new blue ‘Golf’ was parked.

Susan was excited:

“Steven, do you like the car dad gave to me as a present?”

“Yes, it is an amazing station wagon, so you can stay even more comfortable when you bring around your baby.”

While going back to the office, I thought:

“I have never seen Susan so pleased, happy and smiling, and dad as well. How beautiful looking them smiling and joking together!”

And I said to myself:

“You will see Steven, now that Susan and you are adults, you will be able to talk peacefully with dad and express your love. Maybe, you will talk also about your mum and your life...”

I looked at the sky:

“Mum, I want this so much... help us so it can happen quickly.” -

- A few weeks went by and I went to visit Susan and George. Susan was very happy for the car and seemed happier towards dad.

While we were talking about Aunt Virginia, she said to me suddenly:

“You know, Steven, I knew that Guy’s Fiat 12 was bought by dad...”

I felt a pain in my stomach.

I realized that Susan did not tell me that fortuitously...

She resumed complaining about dad!

I felt so bad that I had not the power to ask her who told her that.

I kept on thinking:

“How bad knowing things in such a way!”

Now, I have a doubt:

“Aunt Virginia is so good with me because she really loves me or because dad helps her children?

Of course, dad loved his brother.

I know that he died after a long and painful disease.

Maybe, before dying, dad promised him that he would help his children...

Why do not you tell me anything, dad? What harm was there to tell me that you help even Guy and Patrick?”

I think this is a beautiful thing and I am happy.

I felt tired and went out from Susan’s house quickly.

I felt upset.

I am angry with dad, Aunt Virginia and Susan.

“Dad, why do not you trust me? Why do you keep me in the dark about anything?”

“Aunt Virginia, do you really love me or is it a play?”

“Susan, when do you stop telling me only negative things about dad making me feel so bad?” –

- I feel good with Juliana and go to visit her as most as possible.

In her family, everybody is very kind to me.

Mum Giuditta cuddles me a lot, and every time she asks me:

“Steven, tell me what do you want to eat, so I prepare a good lunch.”

Mr. Adolf is always smiling and kind and never asks me questions.

Also Juliana’s grandparents are sweet and calm people.

When we sit at the table, I feel joyful

I feel like having a family loving me.

Since I have been seeing Juliana and her parents, I feel much better.

I feel this comfort when I leave my city, and the more I go away, the more I feel that.

My mind becomes clearer and I feel excited.

When I go back, I feel the opposite ..

My mind is confused again and I feel a bit sad.

I feel like going in and out a prison...

Living at Juliana's house is very good, with a family loving me, a beautiful city and I feel free: I would like not to go back home! -

- I received the call-up: in two weeks, I have to go to the barracks in a large seaside town, in the South, for the Recruit Training Centre. -

- I am not happy to serve in the army.

I feel a bit of fear, but I am hiding that to everybody.

Mr. Manley, his wife who work in the office with him and the employees greeted me warmly saying that they will wait for me when the call-up is over.

I joke a lot with Patrick and Sebastian about my departure, but it is a way to avoid the sadness of our separation.

They say to me:

“Go, Steven, so you inform us on everything necessary when it is up to us.”

I hugged Susan and George warmly and they recommended me to be strong and behave properly.

Having Juliana and her family loving me gives me strength and confidence.

During our last meeting, we exchanged some photos, being sure they will help us when we feel alone.

The day of departure, dad took me to the station and waited for the train with me.

At the beginning, he did not show any feeling and had the usual attitude.

But in the waiting room, while talking to me, I felt his love and feelings:

“Steven, do not worry about anything, I come and visit you often. You know that nothing can stop me, even the distance between us; write to me.”

When I heard these words, I burst into tears, then I tried to hold my tears.

When I boarded the train, even dad had bright eyes: we hugged and kissed each other and I got in. -

- I have been in the barracks for several days.

There is only a positive thing: the light of these places, which fascinated me since the early days.

At the first gathering of all recruits, the Corporals and the Sergeants in charge of our training, made us realize how the environment in the barracks is.

Our Sergeant yelled.

“From now, you must obey the orders, we want discipline, order and cleanliness, and be careful: we go ahead regardless of anyone.”

This sentence was addressed to those who thought to receive a preferential treatment because ‘with good connections’...

He concluded by saying:

“Now, all in a row, I take you to the barbers.”

Thus, in a few minutes, I found myself without my long hair up to the shoulders that I liked very much...

I felt like having many pins in my head... among the laugh and faces of the barbers and the 'seniors' in the barracks.

All recruits got the same treatment.

There are many boys coming from every region, but the majority comes from the South.

Seemingly, they seem happy to serve in the army and do not have a long face as we from the North have.

Perhaps, this is because they are closer to their family or have different cultures and characters allowing them to face this situation more happily.

On the contrary, I do not feel good at all and I hope that I recover in the next few days. -

- Come on, Steven, try not to pay much attention to your discomfort.

Think that this experience can enrich you. Thus, try to accept it and live it as much peacefully as possible.

Ask your mum and Angel to help and protect you, and they will do that.

When you do not feel good, think about their love.

Steven, you need to get stronger in everything, so the army can be an opportunity to strengthen your character.

Observe without judging and reflect on what you will live.

You will meet so many people drawing many lessons from each of them if you behave with humbleness and simplicity and open your heart.

Through them, you can also understand more things about you. In addition to becoming stronger, you will be more self-confident, even in your relationships.

Come on, let sadness and complaints go away and open yourself to love. -

- Getting used to the new rhythms imposed in the barracks is not easy at all.

I wake up at six o'clock, do gym, breakfast and a long march.

Then, there are other training lessons till lunchtime.

After a rest, we go on marching.

I have been in the barracks for a week and I have not gone out even once.

We, the recruits, are waiting for the vaccination that will make us immune to certain diseases that can be contracted due to the community life.

Yesterday, the Sergeants gathered us in the usual square and said:

“Tomorrow, you will get the injection.”

I danced around with joy thinking: then, I can go out every night.

The Sergeant went on saying:

“From today, the free pass is suspended due to a cholera epidemic that is spreading in a seaside town.”

I was breathless and my legs began to tremble.

Now, I feel a deep anguish.

Despite there is a lot of space inside the barracks for a walk, I cannot resign myself to having to stay within these walls for who knows how long. -

- Dave, I cannot understand why I react so badly to this ban.
The malaise is so strong that I begin to be upset, move around
and be short of breath. -

*- Be calm, Steven. What you experienced when you was a child,
staying locked in your house for years, is imprinted in you and
created a trauma.*

Today, you recall this trouble when similar situations occur. . -

- I got the vaccination: a shot in my chest.
Once I left the infirmary, I went to the meadow in front of it: I
collapsed like an empty sack!
Better there than in the infirmary... only a few people saw me
in the meadow so I avoided to be teased.
I expected it and feared of this moment, because I have been
afraid of injections since I was a child and I used to faint at the
sight of blood. -

- I feel very bad!
In the morning, I get up, go to the toilet and cry for a lot of
time.
I try not be seen and nobody asked me anything till now.

I no longer go to the canteen to eat, because I manage only to drink milk and eat small brioches that I buy at a shop. -

- I have to wait for a long time in order to call Juliana: there are a few telephones in the barracks and there are many fellow soldiers waiting to call their girlfriends too.

She always shows me her love and this gives me strength and happiness.

Dad wrote me that he would come soon to visit me, so I can go out with him. -

- In addition to the marches and the training, we must do other works, such as the dormitory cleaning or washing dishes in the kitchen.

There are also external services, unthinkable...!

For example, yesterday, there was a writing on the noticeboard: 'external service: memorial', along with the names of three other fellows soldiers and mine.

I knew that the memorial was a large monument built for the fallen during the two world wars, but I did not understand what kind of service I had to do there.

Thus, I asked the Corporal who answered:

"Tomorrow, you will know it...!"

The following day, he let us get on the truck without saying anything else.

Finally, we went out the barracks!

So, I could see the countryside full of olive trees and a part of the town.

After half an hour, we reached the memorial.

The Corporal who took us there did not allow us to see the many statues located on the large marble staircase.

He ordered us to enter immediately by a door, which was located at the base of the monument.

We entered the basement!

He gave us a pair of gloves and a small ladder and said:

“You must check the condition of the boxes, then take them in that room”,

pointing to it with his finger.

Here is the answer to the question I asked yesterday!

Those boxes contained the fallen bones...

I thought: here is the ideal place for me! I am already sad, and see what service I have to do...!

Closed in the basement of the shrine with all these human remains!

I did not know whether to laugh or cry.

I tried to distract myself by reading the identification data written on the boxes.

Many fallen people were of my age and even less.

Some of them were born in my city or province and their surnames sounded familiar to me.

I recalled the long speeches I had with Patrick and Sebastian on the meaning of life.

I wondered the same thing:

“Which is the sense of this life? Here, there are thousands of young people who lived for a few years and died violently after many sufferings.”

I did not find an answer again.

We took one week to end that service.

I had to open some boxes and moved some bones to other boxes.

I did it quickly, without thinking, because I was very shocked.

I said goodbye to the shrine and its icy basement.

It was a very tough experience.

I feel alone and sad.

I look forward to the visit of dad. -

- On Sunday morning, at nine, I heard my name called from the speaker of the barracks:

“The recruit Steven is waited at the entrance of the barracks.”

Dad had arrived!

I started running and, when I saw him, I jumped almost in his arms.

We both moved, hugged tightly and kissed him on his cheek.

The Lieutenant let me the free pass until evening.

A taxi was waiting for us a few metres from the barracks and dad said:

“Please, take us downtown.”

We stopped at the avenue in the promenade.

The sun was shining and the sea was rich blue.

Dad was very solicitous: I did not think that he loved me so much!

Smiling, he made me notice:

“You see, Steven, I came early!

I went back home from the business trip and after two hours only I was on the train to reach you. This travel is long and arduous, I took almost a day, but what is important is that now we are together.”

After his arrival, I felt good quickly.

How much confidence dad gives to me!

I would like to be a ‘giant’ as he is, walk up straight, head-on, self-confident, determined and polite with people.

When he is loving with me, I become a child again and nothing scares me.

Dad took me to a sumptuous restaurant overlooking the sea, to eat fish.

At the table, he went on assuring me:

“Steven, do not worry, when you serve the army, the first period is very difficult, but later you will get used. I keep on visiting you and give you the money you need.”

Dad never talked about the family. He only confined himself to say that Susan, George and their baby are good and he did not mention Aunt Adele and Flavius.

The day went by quickly and when the taxi took us in front of the barracks, we both were smiling and happy.

I hugged him before entering the barracks: now, his loving and sweet face was imprinted in my heart and my mind.

Before falling asleep, I recalled the moment when I saw dad in the morning.

It was the same as when he used to come to grandma's house, in the countryside, to visit me.

Grandma Celestine shouted from the window:

“Steven, come, your dad has come”,

and I left everything, ran breakneck, climbed the stairs and jumped in his arms. -

- As you see, Steven, this new experience has already brought a great gift to you.

Now, you are sure that your dad loves you.

A short time has passed since you both parted but he came to you when he realized that you were not feeling good, and he assured you through his love.

Be happy and pleased with this, Steven. Think that you are lucky because many other fellow soldiers will not receive a visit from their parents because they are far.

They have to wait for the first leave to see them, and it takes a lot of time.

Maybe, some of them have no longer their dad...

When you give in to despair, feel alone, think that your dad loves you and smile.

In this way, you can live everything more easily and get the best from this experience.

Smiling and loving, you will feel your mum and Angel close to you. -

- Discipline is strict in the barracks, and I suffer a lot for that. I feel anger for the attitude of the Corporals, Sergeants and superior officers towards us.

They demand perfection in everything: personal care, cleanliness in the dormitories and other services.

Nobody of them speaks with a normal voice: they always shout, even when they make a simple speech.

They look like madmen.

However, I am always silent and never rebel against them.

I always follow dad's words:

“Behave properly Steven, and be patient.”

Not everybody is like me.

There is a group of boys scaring everybody.

Their 'leader' belongs to a 'respectable family, as they say.

He often reacts and, consequently, was put in confinement.

When they take him to the cell, he laughs and shouts some words I cannot understand.

Before the military service, he has been in other prisons, thus he does not fear of them.

He looks like an Indian warrior, has a scar on his face and others in his body.

He loves wearing gold jewels... necklaces, watches, bracelets, and he shows them off.

He laughs, shouts and orders with his companions.

The other recruits and I stay away from him.

We fear of meeting his eyes staring at us defiantly.

Many of us were provoked by his men to see how we react.

He controls from a distance, and if a friend of him found some difficulties when someone reacts, he soon intervenes and lays hands on them.

For example, they stole me everything you need to clean the shoes, including grease for army-issue rubber boots and shoestrings, but I did not have the courage to go and claim them back.

I went to tell everything to the officer on duty that day and he, 'opening his arms told me to 'wake up'...

I have bad feelings for those bully and insolent fellow soldiers...

Two days ago, something happened shocking me.

It was time for afternoon rest, and, suddenly, we heard the noise of glass broken into fragments.

I soon turned to the large windows located at my left side and, with horror, I saw a boy belonging to the group of troublemakers stuck in the window, with the glass stuck in his body and the blood gushing.

I was shocked and I run to the toilet because I was about to faint.

They took the boy to the military hospital and we do not know anything else about him.

In the barracks, it is rumoured that he suffers from nervous breakdown, and that the discipline and the forced stay in the barracks caused this dramatic gesture. -

- Then, Dave, I did not understand anything!

I thought that this boy was only a bully, insolent and indifferent, but it was only exhausted. He found it hard to accept orders and stay locked in barracks, just as I do.

We both are suffering... but he proves to be insolent, a violent person who does not fear of anything, while I am the opposite: I escape from the situations that scare me and I do not react ever.

I prove to be calm and detached, but I feel upset inside me, and when I cannot bear anymore, I burst into tears.

Now, I no longer have bad feelings towards him, and I feel sad.-

- Good, Steven, for removing the negative feelings towards that boy.

Now that you understood what was behind his attitude, you can think the same for his companions, and you will look at them in a different way.

This does not mean that you should justify them and be dominated by them, but the pity for them will remove your bad feelings and you do not judge them.

This event shocked you, but made you realize many things.

That boy addressed his despair towards himself.

Steven, bear this experience in mind and do not allow your fears to lead you to self-pity or to escape, because you will stay sad and depressed. This is detrimental.

Address your look and thoughts towards who love you and open your heart to them.

Talk to your mum and ask her what you need. -

- The cholera alarm ceased and the Commander of the barracks let us the free pass.

The Lieutenant gathered us at the same square and checked if everybody in us was perfect: haircut, body care, clean and ironed clothes and polished shoes.

After examining us one by one, he gave us these orders:

“You must not go to the old town, do not harass girls.

The inhabitants of this town welcome soldiers, but there are some unwritten rules to be respected.

Do not eat mussels or seafood at the small restaurants, since the epidemic has just passed; you’d better to be cautious and, if you value your health, do not meet the fast women waiting for you outside the barracks.”

I went to the exit together with two fellow soldiers and after a few minutes we took a tram to reach the city centre; we realized soon a funny situation: hanging on outside the tram, many boys had fun in being taken around without paying the ticket and this happened in all means of transports.

We observed how these guys are more lively and proactive than the those in the North...

The traffic is different too: they do not care about the traffic lights and cross the street even with the red light; drivers sound the horn more easily and correct each other with ‘colourful language’.

We wanted a bit indiscipline, confusion and the joyful shouting of young people on the pavement, so we welcomed all this with enthusiasm; we also threw our hats to celebrate this free pass.

After a short time, we saw the patrol that was checking the soldiers’ behaviour and we calmed down soon:

“Phew, we cannot vent even here!” -

- The swearing-in ceremony is in a few days and dad assured me that he would come.

I am not good: everything here in the barracks makes me feel anxious, sad, upset and I am not hungry at all.

Unlike me, my roommates live the situation with a different mood.

They are carefree and get used to the military life in a short time. -

- Today, the swearing-in ceremony was held.

When I met and hugged my dad, I had the same feelings as its first visit: as if by magic, my malaise disappeared.

During the ceremony, the barracks was open to civilians, but dad and I had lunch in a different place, unlike many others.

We went back to the restaurant in the city centre and I tested a delicious fish.

During lunch, dad was loving and reassuring:

“Steven, do not worry about anything. Keep on behaving properly, obey and be patient. I will always come and visit you and I will give you whatever you want.”

After lunch, we went for a walk along the seafront and in the town centre.

We did not have many other things to say, because dad does not talk about himself so much, but he simply said:

“I am healthy and I cannot complain about my job. Susan, George and the baby are good.”

He did not mention Aunt Adele and Flavius, and I did not ask anything...

Late in the afternoon, he took me to the barracks.

We separated happily and smiling: we spent another beautiful day together and, even though we did not talk about important things, I was happy.

At the dormitory, I thought about the visit of dad and I thanked him in my heart for being close to me in such a difficult moment.

Now, I feel better and more self-confident. -

- There is ferment in the barracks: it is rumoured that in the orderly office, there are the lists containing the posts to the regiment.

There are a few weeks before the end of the Recruit Training Centre and we are more and more curious to know where we are moved to; now, the main topic is that in the barracks!

We know that about twenty of us have to stay here two months more, to do the ‘advanced’ Recruit Training Centre.

I seek help to mum: I hope it is not my case!

In my dormitory, there is a Corporal working at the orderly office: he is one of the recruits who came before us and he stayed here to attend the advanced Recruit Training Centre.

He is a good boy, so my roommates and I implore him to tell us the place of our future transfer.

His answer is always the same:

“I have the order not to say anything, otherwise you know what happens to me...”,

and pointed to the barracks cell...

But we rely on his goodness and we ask the same question every day.

Finally, today, we managed to convince him and he told us the next post.

While waiting for my turn, my heart was pounding and my legs shivering.

When I approached him, he explained to me:

“Steven, you have two posts: the first one in Cabotoin your region for a four-months stay to attend a course for outboard; then, you will be moved to Lago until the end of the call-up.”

I cried with joy, but he replied soon:

“Steven, are you crazy? If you do that, some officers could understand what I told you.”

I apologized, but I was too happy!

I asked him to repeat what he told me before, and after confirmation that I understood well, I thanked him a lot.

I run and went under the trees, near the boundary wall of the barracks, I looked at the sky and talked to mum:

“Thank you mum, you performed another miracle!

You know the pain in my heart, my suffering and the need to meet the people I love.

Thank you for allowing me to stay near home.” -

- Yes, Dave, I can hardly believe: I will go to Caboto for four months and then to Lago!

This means that when I am in Caboto, I can reach dad in two hours by train, and when I will be posted to Lago, it will take less time to reach Juliana.

Only a day pass is enough to meet them. Hurrah! -

- I am very happy for you, Steven.

As you see, you should never despair nor fall into sadness and discouragement.

These feelings worsen the situation even more.

Your mum is still watching over you and she helped you through this gift.

Now, bear this experience in mind and do your best so that the joy you are feeling will be kept into your heart.

You will live many beautiful moments. -

- I wrote to dad informing him on the good news, and I called Juliana soon: she was joyful too!

The day of departure, the National Railways provided a train for soldiers only.

Before leaving, I looked at the sky to see that rich blue that I will no longer see in the North.

The sun was shining and its rays brought warmth and light: smiling, I said hello to it.

Oddly, now that I was leaving it, I was a bit sad for leaving this beautiful town overlooking the sea:

“Thank you, town, for giving me so many beautiful feelings. Here, I experienced many situations that are helping me to grow up.” -

- The train for the transfer to a barracks is called ‘troop train’. We knew that we would have spent many more hours than usual to reach the north.

Indeed, we were right: there were many stop to allow everyone to reach their regiment.

We arrived in Caboto late evening and got off the train in fifteen.

An officer was waiting for us: he took us to the lorry that would take us to the barracks.

We took a few minutes only and went to bed soon.

I spent the night half-asleep, a bit for the tiredness of the long trip, a bit for the tension that I feel every time I have to deal with new environments and new people.

In the morning, I visited the whole barracks: it is a former monastery and is much smaller than the previous one.

There were still some small rooms having thick bars on the windows and, most probably, they were the monks’ cells.

There is a huge square inside the building where we gather and march; there are also beautiful cloisters with other small squares.

Who knows how many monks walked and prayed there! -

- During the first muster, the staff Sergeant gave us some information about our future status as practicing outboard and the way we would spend days:

“You are here to learn about outboard: you will learn to drive motor boats, which you will use to transport your pontoneers companions and the material to build bridges.

Every morning, after the march, we go out the barracks and leave for the port on the river by foot.

We will start with theory lessons and, after that, we get on the small boats for practicing.

At noon, you return to the barracks for having lunch and rest, and later we go back to the port.” -

- I phoned dad to tell him that I was in Caboto:

“Hi dad, I arrived, I feel good, the trip was long but there were no problems. I am happy because we are close now.”

“Steven, can you go on leave yet?”

“Yes, dad.”

“Well Steven, tomorrow evening, at nine, go to the cafe in front of the train station: I will come there.”

“How beautiful dad! See you tomorrow, I love you.”

What a surprise! I could not believe:

“How can dad come and visit me, given his work commitments?” -

- The new barracks is located in the city centre, and you take only 10 minutes by foot to reach the railway station.

The evening following dad's visit I had a free leave: I headed to the train station happily, where I immediately found the café.

Being still very early, I went back to the centre to have a walk.

Alle ventuno esatte mi trovavo dentro al bar, ero emozionato!

Shortly after, while looking at the street, I saw three lorries coming: I recognized soon my dad and his colleagues!

I immediately went out, ran towards him and hugged him.

His colleagues stopped at the cafe entrance to greet me and looked at us smiling.

Only after a short time, I realized that one of them was my uncle, Richard's dad.

We entered the cafe and, after ordering a coffee, dad looked at me carefully and exclaimed:

“Steven, how much did you lose weight?”

“Ten kilos, dad.”

“Ten kilos are too many in less than two months! Come on Steven, from now on everything will be different and we meet more often.”

My uncle and another colleague of them were a bit away from us, looked at us smiling and nodding.

Dad kept on saying:

“Steven, I have good news: now, I cross this street every day for my job, so we can meet here every evening. We are lucky, Steven.”

I could not say anything, I was too happy!

I felt the tears in my eyes and the lump in my throat: but this time it was for the joy...!

While hugging dad for this good news, I thought of my mum:

“Mum, I do not know how to thank you! You are wonderful, you took dad next to me; I will see him every day. I love you very much, mum!”

I returned to the barracks soon and it seemed I was flying... -

- Dave, I felt ashamed to tell even myself, but I feel bad even here.

I cannot get used to the military life!

Now, I am sure that seeing dad every evening will make me feel better. -

- Well Steven, be sure that from now on everything will change and you will not feel this despair anymore.

Your mum did what was unconceivable for you. It is beautiful to see how you show your gratitude and love to her.

Remember to observe carefully what you experience every day: the relationship with your fellow soldiers and superior officers, the feelings you have in living a so strict discipline and this kind of places that upset you.

Thus, you can understand more and more what causes insecurity and pain to you.

Get help from your mum and you will overcome everything. I also help you in understanding everything. -

- Thank you Dave, I promise that I will be careful to everything and everyone to find out more and more how life is and how to live it.

I am sure that I will succeed thanks to my mum's help and yours.

I love you, Dave. -

- The 'port' is about twenty minutes from the barracks.

It is a huge square stretching along the shore of the great river.

There are several sheds containing small boats, outboard motors, rubber dinghy and the necessary material for building bridges.

In one of these sheds, there is a room where theory lessons take place.

We reach the port walking briskly, two abreast.

It is a nice time of relaxation for me.

When we reached there the first time, I had a strong feeling: the great river that crosses my city is also there, opposite me, and now, sailing it, I would know it more.

I looked around: on the opposite bank, there were tracts of poplars swaying in the wind and, on my right, a few hundred metres, there were big bridges, one for the passage of motor vehicles and the other for trains.

They were backed by huge concrete columns.

Water was beating violently against them creating large 'whirlpools'.

Observing them, you could realize how the great river was rushing and, sometimes, dangerous.

I felt a 'shiver':

"How beautiful living here, outside the barracks, on the river I like so much! Now, I will learn also to sail it: I will be very cautious, as our Sergeant recommended us." -

- Since I have been seeing dad every night, I feel much better and I resumed eating at the barracks.

Some mornings, I wake up with the nightmare of being still at the Recruit Training Centre... Fortunately, it lasts only a few minutes!

Some nights ago, while going to the appointment with dad, I had a doubt:

"Did really dad crossed this road to reach the destination of his business trip even before I was moved to Caboto, or did he lengthen the route to see me? This evening, I will ask him!"

After drinking a coffee, I asked him.

Dad smiled:

"Steven, this is the reason why the first evening we met I told you that we are lucky. When you informed me about your transfer, I could hardly believe too: this is my usual route, and this is the café where we stop for a break.

Your uncle and my colleague can confirm that.

Sonny, life is beautiful even for that: when you least expect it, wonderful things can happen.

Steven, get well physically and try to get some kilos.”

We all started laughing.

Uncle approached me and, caressing me, added:

“Steven, I am happy too for that.”

I had a strong feeling: my eyes were bright... but I could hold the tears.

Going back to the barracks, I looked at the sky and let tears coming down: I could not imagine that I was moved to a barracks located near the route dad crosses for his work...!

“Mum, I love you so much. This is another miracle of yours!” -

- I got the first leave: seven days.

I am very happy to see Juliana, Susan, George, my friends, my city.

I was curious to see what I would feel in going back home and see Aunt Adele and Flavius again.

There, nothing had changed!

Aunt Adele and I ignored each other, as if I had never left.

Flavius and I greeted in a simple way and nothing more.

As always, everybody does his/her own business! -

- On Sunday, Juliana, came to me by train.

At the station, she ran towards me and we hugged showing our mutual love and the pain of being separated for so much time.

While I hugged her, I whispered to her:

“Juliana, thank you for being near to me showing your love, thank you for the letter you wrote to me almost every day. Feeling that you love me made me overcome the difficult situations I experienced at the Recruit Training Centre.”

Later, we celebrated, shouting and jumping, my next transfer, which let me to be closer to her.

When I told her that I do not feel to invite her at my home, she answered:

“Do not worry Steven, I can meet you dad even later.”

We went to visit Susan, George and their child Valerius.

They welcomed us with love and we had lunch at them.

It was a very important moment of joy for me, because, I felt ashamed with Juliana for not doing that at home...

I had and still have this feeling of shame for not being able to invite anybody at home since I attended elementary school.

That is why, before saying goodbye to Susan and George, I thanked them very much for their welcome. -

- The following day, I reported dad on the day I spent together with Juliana, and he commented:

“Steven, you did well to introduce your sister to Juliana, try to love each other always.”

I smiled, but, in my heart, I was suffering by thinking:

“Resign yourself Steven, you are different from the others, you do not have a family... As you see, your dad was careful to say:

- Steven, I would like to know her. Next time, invite her here. - Even though he did not say it clearly, dad confirmed that you cannot invite anybody through that sentence... it is not your home...!”

I cannot take to accept that and it is difficult to hold my tears in front of this sad reality. -

- Steven, do not be distracted once again by these sad thoughts, because, in addition to spoil the joyful moments you are experiencing, they lead you to feel bad things, to judge and complain.

Observe how your mind makes you notice the things you do not have, leading you to be sorry for that... creating troubles and sufferings that you can avoid if you listen to your heart.

Your heart allows you to enjoy the love and attentions you receive, showing gratitude for that and rejoice at what you have.

Be watchful, Steven, and pay attention to your mind; train yourself to give room only to love and positive thoughts.

Only then, you life can be full of love and nice things. -

- Sebastian and Patrick were very happy to see me, as well as I was.

They welcomed me with joy and jokes, and then they asked me several questions about the military life.

I replied cheerfully but I did not tell them how much I felt bad.

However, I understood, through their eyes, that they realized you cannot have so much fun at the barracks...!

Patrick, who will leave for the military service in a month, added chuckling:

“Steven, for sure at the barracks you do not eat so well, you are thin like a breadstick!”

We all laughed, and since that moment, we stopped talking about the military life and arranged to have fun. -

- The four months of outboard practice are almost over. In this period, other things that shocked and scared me happened at the barracks.

One of our comrades died due to the meningitis, and we were obliged to take drugs under the officers’ supervision.

Then, an officer committed suicide: they found him hanging in his room.

Some days ago, at the port, something harrowing and shocking happened: a non-commissioned officer fell from the ‘small boat’, the ‘outboard’ cut his leg and they had to amputate it.

Fortunately, I could talk with dad about these troubles, during our appointments at the café.

I realized, once again, how much I am lucky to have him close to me.

As always, it was enough to tell him what happened to feel better soon.

Every time, dad reassured me by saying:

“Steven, do not worry, pay attention to what you do, you will see that nothing happens to you. And you know that we meet every night.”

Indeed, that gave me a lot of serenity and, when certain events took place at the barracks, I thought:

“This evening I meet dad”

And my heart was reassured.

“Thank you, dad, for your love and for being close to me.” -

- When they told me the date of transfer to Lago, I had contrasting feelings.

From one hand, the thought of not meeting dad every night saddened me a lot, because his presence and assurances gave me a lot of power and happiness.

From the other hand, I was very happy because I was closer to Juliana, so I could meet her more often. -

- Fortunately, now I do not feel scared and weak as when I was at the Recruit Training Centre!

Thanks to that, I lived the separation from dad more happily.

His reassuring words:

“Steven, now go and be quiet, do not worry about anything, I am always close to you”

Entered my heart and I felt a warmth in my chest: at that moment, I felt like an invincible warrior!

I gave him a big hug and a kiss on the cheek, expressing my love:

“I love you dad, thanks for being close to me in this period.

Thank you for your reassuring words.

They are very important for me, your presence is crucial.”

“I love you Steven too”,
he replied excitedly. -

- Lago is located at the extreme North, almost at the boundaries of the State.

Winter is coming and when I reached there, I felt that the temperature is much lower than in Caboto.

I was sent to the largest barracks in the city, which hosts about a thousand soldiers.

At the first gathering, I could admire the high mountains covered with snow from the square.

I breathed deeply the fresh and bracing air. -

- I thought that I was emotionally stronger, but this change of barracks made me realize that I am still weak.

The feeling of loneliness usually brings out the sad state of mind and the wish of crying.

The few comrades with whom I had made friends were moved to other cities.

From Caboto barracks, only two boys living in an island came with me, but I was not able to make friends.

They are good and observant, but they make everybody realize that they do not want to make friends with anybody.

They only talk each other in a dialect that is unintelligible to others. -

- In these weeks, I did many services, especially the sentinel: the most difficult and stressful.

That is why, I went to complain with the quartermaster who has the task of assigning the services, together with other boys who did the sentinel service.

He opened his arms and, laughing, he said:

“Come on, boys, this is normal when you come to the regiment. You already met the ‘senior recruits’, they wait for you happily to be served by you...!”

At the barracks, who is about to leave is called ‘senior recruit’. Indeed, at a tour arrival, the senior recruits asked us to serve them in several ways, including making their camp bed.

They give orders of all kinds and make us do unbelievable things.

We are often subject to insults and humiliation, including the imposition of stupid performances.

For example, they oblige us to climb on to a cabinet, to kneel, and to imitate the cockcrow for hours.

Other recruits reached this place at the same time as our, and they are also subject to these mortifications...

The quartermaster was so clear and direct that we did not know what to say, and he concluded:

“Guys, it is not my fault. Come on, other recruits will come here in the next few months and then you will do less services. Later, when you become senior recruits as we are, you will spend a good life too.”

We realized that he was a senior recruit too, so he could not help us!

At least, he was kind to listen to us and explain how things work at the barracks...

He was a good and quiet boy that, if he did not tell us, we would never imagine that he was a senior recruit.

We never heard him giving orders to anybody, nor obliging others to make his camp bed or teasing anybody.

While taking us outside the orderly office, he looked at me smiling and said:

“Hey Steven, I saw, from your personal details, that we come from the same region, I live just near the sea.”

I replied only:

“Oh yes?”

I did not want to talk or smile, given the moment I was experiencing! -

- Some evenings ago, I went to the city centre to phone Juliana and I had an unexpected and beautiful encounter.

I was waiting for my turn in front of a phone booth, when I heard a familiar voice:

“Steven, it is you?... what are you doing here?”:

It was Mark Manley, Alan’s brother, my employer. I was so surprised to see him that I stood silent for a short time.

I remembered that Mark had left for the military service six months before I did, but I had no more news about him.

Mark is twenty-nine years old: he always postponed the military service because he attended university.

After taking the degree in engineering, he was fulfilling the obligation of military service.

“Hi Mark, I could never imagine to meet you in Lago.”

“Yes, Steven, I came here in Lago soon after the Recruit Training Centre and now it takes three months to my discharge. When did you arrive here?”

“A few weeks ago, Mark. After the Recruit Training Centre, I was transferred to Caboto for an outboard course, and now I am in Lago definitely.”

Mark was opposite me and spoke to me holding his arms on my shoulders.

Then, he added:

“Steven, you are soaking wet! You walked under this beating rain! How are you, Steven?”

I was not able to answer this question and I burst into tears.

Sobbing, I whispered:

“Military life is hard for me... moreover, I am doing services every day, in particular the sentinel that, as you know, are very

stressful; senior recruit never leave us in peace, and we must obey their orders...!”

Since the first time I met him, Mark has always been nice for me.

Often, I used to go to his house to take his brother to the office. While I waited for my employer to be ready and go out, Mark talked to me.

I was fascinated by the sensitivity and kindness he showed when he talked about any topic.

Mark let me give vent to my feelings and hugged me.

I saw that he was crying too...! We both stood silent.

Then, drying his tears, he said to me:

“Come on, Steven, let’s go and sit down, I would like to propose something to you. I managed to avoid the barracks and now I work at the military hospital.

Which barracks you are in, Steven?”

“At ‘Lancieri’ barracks, Mark.”

“On Wednesday, a friend of mine will be on duty at the barracks where you serve. In the morning, ‘report sick and go to him.

You do not need to say anything, only your name, because I will inform him on everything.

He will prescribe your admission to the military hospital for a few days.

Once there, we’ll see if we can assign you some work at the military hospital.”

We hugged again and, still exited and crying, I stammered:

“I do not know how to thank you, Mark.”

“Steven, come on, I am living a painful moment too and I feel bad.

Do you remember Rosalie, my girlfriend? Well, she left me... and now she is engaged to another boy...!

It happened one month ago; when she told me that, I had an unexpected reaction.

At the beginning, I was shocked, stiff and I could not think.

After a few minutes, I felt a strong anger I had never felt before and I started beating her with slaps and punches.

She fell down but, despite that, I could not stop.

Then, my brain resumed working and, realizing what I did, I feared the worst: that I had killed her.

I was in despair and did my best to revive her.

Fortunately, after ten minutes she got up.

She sat at a chair and cried.

I was at a corner in the room: I was confused and dazed. .

When Rosalie recovered her power, she stood up and left the house without telling a word.

So, my love story ended, Steven!

We have been engaging for ten years and we were waiting for my graduation to get married... And look what she did: she was unfaithful to me, while I am here to serve!

All this just a few months before my discharge and our marriage.”

Mark was in despair!

I did not know what to tell him...

I was still upset for my troubles... My mind raced to Juliana:

“Let’s hope she will remain close to me and never leaves me...”

Mark added:

“You know, Steven, I am scared and worried about the reaction I had in that moment and for losing my control. I feel still bad... I miss Rosalie very much...”

He interrupted the sentence: his eyes were full of tears.

I realized how much Mark was suffering... maybe more than I do!

I felt that no words could console him... I only hope that I helped him in giving vent to his feelings by listening to him carefully and quietly, as he did with me before.

Then, Mark cheered up and had a sweet face again.

He recommended me with love:

“Steven, remember to ‘report sick’ on Wednesday, see you at the military hospital, bye Steven.”

“Bye Mark.” -

- Today, I thought of my meeting with Mark.

How beautiful being transferred to the military hospital and end my call-up there would be!

I am ready to do any kind of job if I am relocated to the military hospital.

I am not like many comrades of mine who, when they are ordered to go the armoury to clean the gun on Saturday afternoon, are so happy as if they were going to dance.

They feel powerful and important, clean the gun carefully dismantling and reassembling it many times.

They talk enthusiastically about small boats, outboard motors, bridges, unsinkable tanks crossing the river...

They eagerly wait for the arrival of spring, when training camps on the river begin.

Their wish is to be 'operational': the love to be called like that.
These talks make me shudder!

I oppose any form of fight, war, violence and I hate everything belonging to the military life, starting from the uniform...

For sure, I cannot be defined as an 'operational'...: I can barely reassemble my gun and end its cleaning ... I am always among the last ones! -

- This evening I will be on guard at the shooting place: a military area located on the outskirts of the city.

It is a wood stretching for four or five square kilometres.

My comrades say that there are dangerous weapons buried there: 'top secret!'.

It is the most dangerous and stressful guard service.

The guardhouse is composed of twenty soldiers.

The departure to the shooting place is at five pm, we reach there in about twenty minutes by a military truck, and at six pm we start our duty. .

A few minutes before starting the duty, the head of the place accompanies the guardhouse to the proper space reserved to the guns charge, where he gives orders and instructions:

"Maximum attention, no joke here! If you hear noise or see moving figures, give the order immediately: Stop, who is there!'

If the figure is approaching and it is not recognizable, first shoot in the air, then on it.

Be very watchful: there could be acts of terrorism, and inspections take place often here: if you do not stop the officer and he caught you unprepared, he sends you in prison immediately, and the all guardhouse will have trouble.”

After that, the first guard duty leave by a jeep and head to the watchtower assigned to them, scattered in the wood.

The guard duty lasts two hours, then you go back to the big room that hosts the guardhouse and you go on duty again after two hours of rest.

This goes on until six am. -

- I have already gone on duty several times at thr shooting place: I am always scared!

When I am inside the watchtower, among the trees, completely in the dark, I am very tense.

I am wide-eyed, I feel shivers after hearing some noise, and I am on the alert as a frightened cat.

When the noise is louder than usual, I always shout:

“Stop! Who is there?”,

Fortunately, until now, nothing bad happened.

Probably, this noise comes from some animals wandering into the woods.

I suffer too much from the cold: I am not used to such low temperatures!

Certainly, since I am always very tense, it will be difficult that they catch me asleep! -

- When I start my duty, I always pray to mum so she can stay close to me and protect me.

During those long hours, I think more of Juliana, when I can hug her again, I think of dad to feel his hug and I wear the woolen suit he gave me as a present the day before leaving for Caboto:

“Take it, Steven, these are two sets of underwear, t-shirt and trousers, they are of a good wool: they will protect you from the cold in Lago.”

How much dad loves me!

He gives me everything.

Since I am here, he has been looking at me sweetly.

Every time I think of him, I hear a voice reassuring me:

“dad loves you, Steven, he will always help you.”

And I smile. -

- As Mark told me before, when I introduced myself to his doctor friend, there was no need to explain anything.

“Good morning, my name is Steven.”

The doctor said hello to me and invited me to sit down:

“Steven, what is your rank?”

“I am a simple soldier having a specialization in outboard.”

Then, he took a paper and wrote for some minutes:

“Here is Steven, go and prepare the bag, I admit you to the military hospital, ophthalmological department. I inform the officer on duty and call the ambulance.”

I knew that there was no need to thank, but I think that my smile and bright eyes showed him my gratitude.

The military hospital seemed to me the most beautiful place in the world.

At the ophthalmological department, everything was calm and silent!

Rooms had four beds.

They assigned to me a bed in a room where only a soldier was in-patient:

“Hi, my name is Steven and I come from ‘Lancieri’ barracks.”

“Hi, my name is Nick, I am a member of the Alpine troops. I come from a barracks located in the border, the ‘Graian Alps’.”

We talked for a short time of many usual things.

Later, Nick told me that he wanted to rest.

I slipped into bed too.

I was happy: I hardly believed that I could stay in bed... -

- In the afternoon, Mark came to visit me.

I got up and we went to talk in the corridor.

Mark was as happy as me:

“Now, Steven, stay here quietly. I will talk with the doctor colonel to give you a job: he will come and visit you.

You answer the questions he will ask and do not add anything else.”

Our talk was brief and moderate: Mark works in the department, and caution is never enough.

“Now, go back to your room, Steven, bye”,

he relied on my shoulder, winking at me and smiling.

I walked to my room and I was very happy and joyful: even Mark loves me very much!

I could never imagine he would worry about me in such a way, as he was my brother or my father.

I was very lucky to meet this good boy.

Silently, I thanked my mum:

“Mommy, you are always close to me and do your best to help me: you only could make me meet Mark in Lago!”

I used to think that there were only a few people loving me, but it is not like that...

Now, there is Mark too!

I turned on one side and closed my eyes: I was no more scared and before falling asleep, I sent a kiss to mum. -

- Two days have passed since I was admitted to the military hospital, and I have not received the visit of the colonel yet.

I have not seen Mark anymore...

I made friends with Nick, my roommate.

Today afternoon, while talking about nonsense, he asked me a question suddenly:

“Steven, are you here to find another job and be transferred, isn’t it?”

I was silent for a while.

I felt no trick from his voice, that is why, I answered:

“Yes, Nick.”

Then, he looked at me intently and began to sob:

“I, Steven, will not go back there ever again! Whatever the colonel says to me, I do not go back there...”

His sob turned into tears!

I was amazed!

I felt a strong emotion: I was about to cry...

Nick went on saying:

“You do not know what kind of things the senior recruits oblige you to do there!

Not only we have to do the cots for them, clean their boots, imitate the cockcrow... But also indescribable and shocking things.

I tell you one thing only: I had even to drink the mule pee...!

I feel I cannot take there anymore: I will not go back...!”

He wept desperately and he stretched his arm to me: I held his hand...

Now, I was crying too!

I could not speak...maybe there was nothing to say!

I felt many things inside me: fear, helplessness, anger, pain, sadness ... and I said to myself:

“Steven, you are luckier than Nick!”

Then, we slipped into bed, without saying anything.

We were tired out, but thanks to this sharing and our cry, we felt lighter... -

- The following morning, the Colonel came to our room.
He approached my bed:

“You, Steven, practice outboard and come from ‘Lancieri’, right?”

The Colonel had my file in his hands...

“yes, Mr. Colonel.”

He looked at me for some time and, after he glanced at my file, he went near the bed of Nick.

Nick did not allow him to talk and, in the grip of nervous excitement, he shouted:

“I feel bad, Mr. Colonel, I feel bad!”

The Colonel, together with another medical officer next to him, reassured him:

“Now, be quiet”,

and began seeing him. Nick went on complaining and being restless, so the medical officer told him to take a medicine. Before going out, the Colonel told him:

“Nick, you will be moved to the mental department, be quiet now.”

And so, it was!

The following day, he was sent to that department.

We greeted and wished the best to each other:

“Nick, I hope you will feel better and we can meet here again to be on duty.”

“I hope so too, Steven..., good luck!” -

- But luck did not come!

I realized it soon when Mark came in the room a few minutes after Nick went out.

“I am sorry, Steven, there was nothing to do. Everything seemed solved, you had to take the place of a boy who is leaving in the next few days.

When the doctor Colonel made the request, the Colonel in your regiment answered:”

“No, that is not possible!

This soldier is specialized in outboard, their number is already lower than what we need and we are about to start the training camps and exercises.

Please, choose another boy...!” -

- The day was cold, foggy and dark, as usual.

I missed the sun and the light of the city where I attended the Recruit Training Centre.

The ambulance that took me to the barracks crossed the city and I could see all shops decorated with coloured lights, so I thought:

“Yes, Christmas holidays are coming...”

I was sad, now I had no more hopes to leave that kind of life: locked in the sheds every day to arrange small boats, rubber dinghies and outboard motors for the exercises fields.

Then, guard, duties and the senior recruits...!

However, something changed in me. The meeting with Nick led me to think of many things: there were barracks were boys

were treated worse than I am, but they bit the bullet and went on...

Even Mark was suffering very much, but instead of despairing and think only of himself, he did his best to help me and showed his love.

I felt a bit stronger...

Getting off the ambulance, I looked at the sky and I saw the mountains covered with snow:

I asked mum to help me and stay close to me.

I went to the orderly office to ask for a leave.

When he saw me, the quartermaster exclaimed:

“Hello, Steven, are you already back from the military hospital? How are you now?”

“Yes, thank you. I would like to fill in the form for a leave.”

“Steven, it is useless to fill it in, because the number of leaves and authorizations has been reached ... The Captain told me that he will resume granting leaves in January. Is it a long time you do not go back home?”

“Until now, I went only once when I was in Caboto. Well! Never mind, I will go back in January.”

I had already left the office, when I heard someone calling me. It was the quartermaster:

“Steven, Steven.”

“What happened?”

“Steven, are you interested in doing a fixed service?”

“What is it about?”

“To stand guard at the inner gate linking our barracks to ‘Sparta’ barracks, next to ours.

Who takes this duty has to carry it out until the end of the national service.

That is why it is called fixed service.

Believe me, there is nothing difficult and challenging.

You would only have the responsibility for checking the transit card of the soldiers who must show it to you to move from one barracks to another.

You would be exempted from all services at the barracks and your guard would be only every month or two.

The turn is from 8 am to 12 pm.

One hour break and end of the service at 5 pm.

Then, you are free until the following morning.

Working days are from Monday to Saturday.

You will be always free on Sunday.”

While listening to him carefully, I was more and more excited.

Mentally, I was thinking of the things I liked...almost everything: exempted from all services, only a guard every month or two months, end of service at 5 pm and every Sunday free!

All that only to open a gate and check a card, then I could go back quietly to my room next to the gate...

“Did you say that every Sunday I am free?”

“Yes, Steven, those carrying out this service, if they wish, can get a leave from 8 am to 12 am every Sunday.”

I Was mad with joy and shouted:

“yes, I do it,”

I was really excited: I submerged him with a volley of questions:

“However, can I ask leave?”

“Of course, Steven, that is a right of yours and nobody can take it away.”

“When should I do training camps and exercises?”

“Those days you will be replaced, as when you are on leave.”

“Yes, yes I confirm: I agree with standing guard at the gate linking to ‘Sparta’ barracks!”

The quartermaster was staring me: he was surprised by my excitement and enthusiasm.

I explained to him:

“It is wonderful, because I can go and visit Juliana, my girlfriend, every Sunday.”

“Well, I am happy for you, Steven, and for me too, because I can no longer receive complaints about that service: nobody wanted to carry it out.

All right, Steven, you will start on Monday, bye.”

I was looking forward to go out the barracks and phone Juliana: my heart was pounding and I was very excited.

“Juliana, Juliana, something beautiful happened, we can meet every Sunday from next week”,

Juliana cried with joy.

“Steven, I am happy, hurrah, how is it possible? It is amazing!”

“They assigned a service that allows me to do that. On Sunday, I will explain better. I love you, Juliana!”

I called Juliana from the same phone box where I met Mark... Left the box, I sat on an armchair at a corner of the living room.

My stress was going away and I felt the need to rest.

I leaned my head against the wall and closed my eyes; I did not want them to see me crying.

I thought:

“I felt bad because I was not transferred to the military hospital, and today I received this proposal that suits all my needs.”

Then, I was about to laugh when I thought of what happened at the office and the face of the quartermaster...

I laughed thinking of my mum:

“Mum, you have heard once again my request for help, and you worked another miracle.

First, you let me stay close to dad, now to Juliana: thank you for your constant protection, for your immense love.”

I heard a voice in my heart:

“I will always be with you...”

Laughing, I opened my eyes...! -

- Hurrah, Steven, celebrate these miracles just like that: rejoicing, laughing, thanking.

The ‘no’ for your transfer said by the Colonel of your regiment, the ‘no’ to your leave request, have been closed door in such a difficult moment for you.

But when these doors closed, another one opened: the new service.

Often, it happens:

a door closes to allow another one to open...

This can be achieved if you do not despair when some doors close, if you accept that remaining trustful, patient, praying and opening your heart to love. -

- it is not a dream... it is real!

Monday morning, after hoisting the flag, I went to the orderly office.

The keys of the gate were on the table, the quartermaster gave them to me and said:

“Steven, the outboard Sergeant knows that you are no more at his disposal from today.

We agreed that you will be operational again only for training camps and in case of need.”

Standing guard is a very simple service.

My comrades do not want to do that because they get tired standing there for hours without doing anything.

I do not! On the contrary...

The guard post is nothing but a hole in a concrete wall: two metres high, one metre and a half wide, two metres and a half deep.

Inside it, there is a small bench, but I was ordered not be found sitting there by the orderly officer who comes to check.

It is like a shelter for me and, when I feel tired, I think about the advantages to be there, and the tiredness disappears.

Sometimes, some soldiers crossing the street ask me:

“How can you stay always there?”

I do not explain: I smile, opening my arms.

Now, I realize how much everybody lives the military life differently one another! -

- Saturday night, I could not sleep, I tossed and turned in bed:

“Did the lieutenant sign the day leave? Can I see Juliana in a short time? Her family? Can I go to her beautiful city again?” -

- Hurrah!

The permit stated: soldier Steven can go out of the area from 8 am to 12 am. It is beautiful!

Juliana was waiting for me at the station:

“Steven, Steven, now we can meet every Sunday! It is like you are not a soldier anymore... This night, I could not sleep for the excitement...”

Her family welcomed me even more warmly: seven months had passed since our last meeting.

Mum Judith was even more solicitous:

“Steven, give me the bag with your dirty clothes, take it here every Sunday, and now, Steven, I prepare a good lunch for you with all the food you like... I did not forget them!

You have to put on weight... you are so thin, my boy...!”

While having lunch, I told them the many things I had experienced in those long months, but I avoided to tell what made me feel ashamed and the bad and shocking things...!

They listened to me carefully, and while talking about my meeting with dad, Juliana's grandma and Judith had bright eyes.

I was also moved sometimes.

Juliana was near to me and sometimes kissed me.

When I stopped talking, telling about my new service as a guard and that I would be free every Sunday, I got a big round of applause and we all shouted 'hurrah'. -

- I informed dad about my meeting with Mark and the opportunity to be transfer to the military hospital.

Later, I informed him on my return to the barracks.

Today, I received a letter from him expressing his love and recommendations, and he concluded:

“Dear Steven, see you on Sunday, I love you.”

Dad does not know that I am on duty as a guard... I will make him a nice surprise! –

- When I told him that at the restaurant, he exclaimed:

“Goodness, Steven, this is a very beautiful thing! Do they really give you a leave every Sunday? So, you can meet Juliana every week!”

“Yes, dad. I went last Sunday.”

“Well, Steven, send my regards to her family and tell them that we will meet soon. I am very happy that you feel good there!”

Dad was beaming and recalled the promise he made to me in Caboto:

“Steven, when you come back home, I will buy a sports car to you”.

I talked about many things with dad, but never about our family; only a few words on Susan and George.

Before leaving, he gave me some money and joked:

“Now, you need more money to take the train and go to Juliana... Remember to give my regards to her family.”

Finally, now dad smiles at me!

He is very different from before: he looks like another person.

I hope he will be like that even when I go back home...! –

- Someone killed a girl at the shooting place!

It happened at night.

The guard told:

“I was in the watchtower, near the wire mesh that forms the border with the highway.

I saw a figure leaning to the mesh: I immediately ordered to stop. I did not receive any answer, so I shot in the air and then on that figure.”

The truth came after a few days.

Crying, another member of the guard declared:

“She was my girlfriend: we arranged to meet near that watchtower... I wanted to talk to her...

I was sure they would assign me that place at that time.

When the Corporal changed the order of the places, I did not have the courage to tell him about my appointment: I was afraid of going to prison!

I could never imagine that she would stay there despite they ordered to stop.

We all are shocked and nervous!

I recall quartermaster’s words: I have to be on guard sometimes...!

They took some measures.

The boy who confessed was transferred: in these cases, they make you change the scenery.

The thing that amazed us was that the ministry sent a praise and a leave to the person who shot... -

- Dave, I am very shocked!

I think of the remorse felt by that boy who, seized with fear, did not informed the Corporal on his appointment without thinking about the possible consequences for his girlfriend.

I think of the boy who killed her:

“Who knows what he is feeling! How much he feels bad!

Look what fear causes!” -

- Since I have been standing guard, months are going by quickly.

Winter is coming to an end and next week I have to leave for my first training camp, on a plain, fifty kilometres far from the barracks.

I leave happily for this new experience; the love and attentions I receive every week from Juliana and her family strengthened me. -

- The training camp lasted fifteen days and was not so stressful; only the cold weather caused some trouble.

When I went back to the barracks, I found a letter from dad informing me that Flavius is getting married at the end of the month:

“Steven, ask if they could give you a leave and take Juliana with you.”

Once I read the letter, I felt that unpleasant feeling and the anxiety I used to have at home, when dad talked to me like that.

“Dad, first of all, why did not you ask me if I wish to be present at Flavius marriage?”

You know how many difficulties I have when I am with Aunt Adele and him. No coincidence that we never talk about them.

You are asking me to play the role of the good brother in front of Aunt Adele and her relatives.

How can I do that with people who never showed me love or liking? For people who never cared about me...

I do not know even his girlfriend ...!

I feel trapped: how can I say you that I do not come to play this part?

I already feel my stomach turn.

I am very afraid of being reproached or blamed by you, dad, and of spoiling the good relationship we have now.

Now, it is more than important: it is vital!

I understand that my 'no' can cause trouble, and I do not want to sound unthankful after everything you did for me in these months.

I do not know what to do, dad..." -

- Juliana came with me to Flavius marriage.

Knowing my discomfort to be there, she was happy to accompany me:

"You will see Steven, time goes by soon with me and after lunch we go back to my home."

However, when I saw dad with Aunt Adele in the square of the church, my legs began trembling.

I held Juliana's hand, plucked up my courage and once near them, I said only:

"Hello":

without adding their names.

It comes to me naturally when I have to say hello, at least formally, to Aunt Adele.

They both answered:

"Hello."

“Here is Juliana, my girlfriend.”

Aunt Adele replied:

“Nice to meet you, I am Adele.”

On the contrary, dad was outgoing and answered smiling:

“Oh finally, Miss Juliana, I can meet you personally, I am pleased that you are here.”

Some time ago, dad talked with Juliana by phone.

He asked me her number to thank her and her family for their hospitality and everything they did for me.

Juliana reciprocated the expressions of courtesy and affection, as she usually does.

Seeing dad nice to Juliana and performing my “duty” to see and say hello to Aunt Adele allowed me to relax.

The meeting with Flavius was even simpler: we said hello, we introduced our girlfriend and exchanged a few words of courtesy.

Juliana was right: next to her, I was able to stand a bit on my side, as if I did not belong to the family of the bridegroom...

Everything was simpler. -

- Dave, it all seems so absurd!

I experienced very harsh situations when I was serving and, despite that, my legs are still trembling when I meet Aunt Adele playing to be a family...

This causes insecurity to me... and undermines the power I was reaching in these months...

Will I ever be a self-confident man? -

- Yes, Steven, you will.

I cannot say when because it depends on you and other things, as always.

The wounds of the heart need a thing only: love.

The void caused by the lack of love can be filled by love only.

The uncertainties resulting from these wounds and voids are overcome only by experiencing love. Everything coming out from experiencing difficult and painful situations turns into situations of love, understanding and peace.

That is why Juliana's presence is crucial now.

Her presence, love, the cares from her family, can create the necessary conditions allowing your heart to heal and be filled, making you forget the wounds and pains.

However, everything depends on how you welcome this love, how you allow it to enter your heart and how you accept the kindness and attentions others give to you.

And, above all, it depends on how much you love and how you will give the expressions of love.

Remember that, until you are fully healed, you may be tempted to escape love.

Even the way you interact with your dad can affect you in finding confidence in yourself.

Do your best to allow this relationship to blossom fully.

Pay attention to that especially when you go back home, after ending the military life.

Steven, you are already realizing that a man can be strong in life, but he will remain an insecure child if he does not win the summit of love. -

- Now, I am used to the military life.

I keep on my duty as a guard and, even if days are all the same, time goes by quickly.

They always granted me the leave on Sunday so I could meet Juliana and her family, and I am much quieter. -

- There is a lot of excitement at the barracks: all soldiers are getting ready for the summer camp.

Of course, I have to go too.

It will be a considerable exercise that comes to an end through the building of a large bridge.

This work will be carried out in the presence of a high rank general. -

- The camp started.

The selected place is only a few kilometres from the sea and we camped in tents under high poplar trees, as we did last time, close to a river even larger than the former. Dad made me a surprise and came to visit me at the camp.

The captain informed him that the visit was allowed but I could not go away from the camp.

We sat at a bench near the entrance and we were very happy to meet.

Dad smiled:

“Steven, the Captain told me that you are behaving properly and I am happy for that. I wanted to see you very much and now here I am.”

“Dad, it is a fantastic surprise! Thank you for coming.”

“Steven, now, there are only a few months before your discharge, so I decided to buy the sports car I promised you., Steven, which one do you like between the Alfa and the Lancia?”

I danced with joy and shouted:

“Thank you dad, do you really buy a car for me?”

“Yes Steven, I always keep the promise.”

“Well, dad, I would like the Alfa.”

I was too excited.

“That’s fantastic, dad: when I come back home, I will have my personal car ...!”

After a short time, dad went back smiling and happy to see me so excited. -

- Exercises lasted almost a month and ended with the speech of the General on the armed forces and a special lunch. -

- Performing our task was not difficult because the officers and non-commissioned officers were very skillful and guided us checking all our actions.

When we ended the building of the bridge and I saw lorries and trucks crossing it and airplanes flying in the sky, I moved: I was proud of me and of being part of this work!
I went back to the barracks happily! -

- It takes a short time for my discharge.

Now, I am a senior recruit too, but nothing changed for me, because I feel a simple soldier who has to fulfill his obligations and respect his comrades.

Thus, of course, I will not do the new recruits what the senior recruits did to me.

When I see the new recruits coming and seized by fear, I recall the anxiety I used to feel when I entered the Recruit Training Centre and they make me feel a lot of sadness and tenderness.

I feel that if I keep on being good, I will receive much help from mum as it was in this period.

I phoned dad to tell him that I ended the exercises and everything was good.

“Good boy Steven, on Sunday I will come to Juliana’s home. I decided to come to meet her family.”

“I am happy, dad.”

When I arrived the train station, Juliana ran to me and exclaimed:

“Steven, come, your dad is outside.”

Besides dad and Juliana’s parents, there was also a new, amazing Dutch blue Alfa Romeo GT Junior.

I did not know what to do for my excitement: I wanted to say hello everybody but also to get in the car and admire it: my dream came true.

Dad was wonderful: he gave me a car as a present and surprised me.

Of course, I could not imagine finding the car in that place and that time.

I was sure that he would buy it on my return.

He let me make a good impression with Juliana and her parents!

Without knowing, he satisfied my desire to show them how much dad loves me and how much I am proud of him.

We spent a very beautiful day together.

Thank you, dad, for your love. -

- Steven, even your dad wanted to show those people that you love, how much he loves you and is proud of you.

If you think of how he gave you this gift, you will realize how huge his love is.

He thought to surprise you as a dad does with his children.

You will be always his child for him...

Remember this episode and the many surprises he has made to you since you are doing the military life: they are a confirmation of his immense love even though he does not tell it to you explicitly...

This certainty will help you to always understand him.

So, the doubts and sorrows you had up to now will disappear.

Always try to grasp the essence of love, going beyond the external expressions. -

- I ended my military service!

I celebrated the last night of military life with my best friends in a pizzeria.

I am more than happy!

There is only something bothering me; the thought to go back home and meet Aunt Adele... -

- I went back home.

Before ringing the bell, I thought:

“I hope dad is back from work.”

My refusal of staying with her even for some minutes is so strong that I feel shaken and afraid.

It may seem absurd at my age, but it is like that.

“Who’s there? ”

“ Steven, hello.”

“Hello.”

Dad was still away...

Once I entered, Aunt Adele, with his usual attitude and without looking at me, said:

“Now, your room is that”,

pointing at the room that was Susan’s before.

Then, she headed to the kitchen.

I went to my room and waited for dad.

When he arrived, he just said:

“Hi Steven, how was your trip?”

“All right, dad.”

I was waiting for his hug and to talk with him...

“Where was now the dad who expressed love to me? The dad who reassured me? The dad who finally made me feel a son?

No, no... he cannot be like before again!

Please dad, do not retire into yourself, stay close to me, show me your love.” -

- The atmosphere was not different at home, but I would say that it worsened.

We had lunch silently; you could only hear the noise of cutlery.

I felt freezing, I was no more used to that...!

I ended lunch quickly and I went out to visit Sebastian.

No, I cannot believe... tomorrow everything will be different...

My dad talks to me again, reassures me, shows his love to me...-

- I resumed work after a few days.

Mr. Manley welcomed me warmly:

“Dear Steven, I am happy that you are back.

Mark told me about your meeting in Lago. You both experienced difficult situations, doesn't it? Now, even than period is over.

Steven, now you will have fun, we have many things to do together.”

When I met Mark Manley again, we hugged more warmly than usual

“Steven, finally the military service is over for you too.

You know, I have a new girlfriend and soon I will get married.”

“I am pleased, Mark.”

During our meeting, I took the opportunity to ask him advice to improve my relationships with people.

He answered sweetly, as usual.

He is always able to grasp what I mean to tell him, even though sometimes I ask some unclear questions.

He reassures me by words and caresses, so I hold my tears with difficulty, feeling his goodness.

I consider him as a brother, a dad.

Also on this occasion, I could not hold my tears, but I do not feel ashamed because I know that Mark loves me. -

- I hugged Susan, George and little Valerius again.

Grandma Celestine and my uncles were so pleased to see me, after a long time.

I hugged them with love and emotion. -

- Grandpa Gustavus died: he went to Heaven.

He died suddenly, without showing particular problems.

Now, when I am at Sebastian’s house and see his armchair empty, I feel a blow in my heart.

I miss his smile, sweet voice, the time when he used to tell me his life experience. -

- Only two months have passed since I left the military service, but now, it is only a distant memory.

During the day, I am at work; in the evening, I go out with Sebastian and in the weekend, I visit Juliana.

I am at home only for a few minutes to have lunch and sometimes for dinner. -

Conclusions

My Angel, the Angels and my mum made me know the steps that lead to forgive oneself and others, while helping me to understand my relationships.

In forgiving, I realized that everything I experienced made me grow up, understand more others and myself, allow me to accept others for what they are, without judging anybody.

At the end, I felt grateful to those I had forgiven and I loved them even more considering them as 'means' for my personal development.

Only the experienced awareness and learned lessons are left from my past: my heart is free.

I smile at the freedom I thought to have when I was twenty, because I realized and experienced that the true freedom is the freedom from oneself.

I thank my Angel, the Angels and my mum for teaching me to live in a joyful solitude, without feeling alone anymore.

I am sure that I will not feel alone anymore if I stay next to Them and I let them to take me in Their arms as a Child.

Sriyam

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