

2015 High School Essay Contest Winner: Dragons, Boxers and Bathrobes by Sharon Ideguchi

Welcome to this celebration of the winners of the 2015 Garaventa Center High School essay contest. The top three essays will be read by UP student actor, Amy Billroth-McClurg.

Dragons, Boxers and Bathrobes, by Sharon Ideguchi from Bellarmine High School, Tacoma, Washington.

Five of my closest friends and I stood in a rainy intersection next to a smoking car one Saturday night.

Nowhere in our plans for that evening had we decided to be in an accident, but then again I guess that's why they're called accidents. In any case, we stood in the rain, cold and scared. This was the first time I had ever questioned my invincibility and to be honest, it was one of the scariest things I had ever faced. Yet in the midst of my fear, I found moments of joy and laughter and to this day, that is one of the most amazing things I have ever felt.

Being teenagers who had just been in a car accident, we made the situation very dramatic. There was crying and hugging and the occasional screaming. We took everything very seriously and our dark demeanor is parallel to the brooding weather. It felt like this moment was some huge point of no return for us, as if nothing could ever make this better. Of course, we were wrong about that and our viewpoints on the situation were changed with the help of a stranger who had seen the accident.

His questions were the same as everyone else's had been. Are you okay? Are you hurt? How do you feel? However, unlike everyone else he had a very laid back vibe about him and he seemed completely at ease among our anxious movements. We began talking about what we had been doing prior to the accident and he inquired about our attire.

I was confused by the question and I was almost annoyed. I thought, "How could he be talking about clothes at a time like this?" But then I realized why he had asked. Here in the middle of the road, soaking wet, we were wearing silky boxers and bathrobes, embroidered dragons and all.

In the commotion of the night, I have forgotten that we had been headed to a pajama themed dance. All of a sudden we all took note of our friends standing in men's underwear and we all burst out into fits of giggles.

The people around us looked at us like we had gone mad and maybe for a second, we had. But to laugh in the face of our fear was empowering. After the first break in the tension, laughter came easier to us. Despite the gravity of the situation, we were able to find reasons to smile. That night, we decided that dragons are a closet staple "must," and that boxers are way more comfortable than we realized.

And since that night, I can truly say we are happier people, being able to laugh, and one of the darkest times has made everything else in life a whole lot funnier. The other day in my class, my teacher told me one of the corniest jokes I have ever heard. This was like one of those jokes you find on a popsicle stick. It also didn't make sense and it was really ridiculous. Normally, I would have given it a consolation smile, you know, the A for effort smile. However, this time I laughed for 30 seconds longer than anyone else

and I didn't do it because the joke was particularly funny. I did it because my teacher was so proud of himself afterwards, and because someone across the room made a silly face.

After finding humor in pain, I found that I could recognize joy in everything, even in the small things like candy wrapper jokes. Humor healed me that Saturday night and it gave me a new appreciation for the beauty of wit. Never before have I encountered something as powerful as laughter. Its ability to pervade every situation is my most compelling evidence for the existence of God. Without humor, without laughter or joy, humanity would have lost hope long ago. Our ability to make fun of the hardships we have endured, is what allows us to survive, and is one of God's greatest gifts.

If we are meant to accept the outcome of every situation, then humor wouldn't exist. Our humor is our way of changing things, of healing things. God gave us laughter in order to tell us that it's okay. I can't pretend to understand God, but every time I laugh I feel like I know him.