

## **The Smell of Death**

Andrew began to wonder about the smell of death just at the moment when the doctor confirmed, after the results of the tests that he had been subjected, that he suffered from an incurable disease and he had only a month of life. He also told him that they would try to alleviate with drug and therapies the excruciating pain that he would soon begin to feel.

When he returned home, he sat in his favorite chair for a moment and watched the world with new eyes through the window. He looked at paved roads, street lights, aerials,... He looked at mothers who were in a hurry because they had to pick up their children from school, the paper boy that had stopped for a moment to collect the old newspapers from the newsstand, the office workers that were smoking out of their offices, two police officers who had stopped a young man who was holding his helmet in his arm... And everything that represented the simplest routine, seemed so immensely beautiful and full of life that came to hurt.

He thought he should go out and spend his last days doing what made him happy: sunbathing, a trip to Paris... Where would he start? Would he go to talk to his family and friends about that or would he hide this terrible news? Would he call his girlfriend to announce her that they needed to talk? Or maybe, not, she could interpret it in another sense, though he would inevitably slipt up with her anyway ... What a mess it was becoming to die. What it was clear was hat he was not going to kill himself, although the fate offered a fateful end; the idea of leaving this life through the back door would not be fair to people he loved.

That night, as he could not sleep because he felt obsessed with the smell of death, he encouraged himself to go to a wake. When he arrived he began to offer condolences to the few people who were there though he did not know the deceased. He approached the coffin and a scent, different from the flowers of the wreaths or coffee that pervaded the room at that very moment, came from his nose to his brain. He knew it was pure and inimitable essence of death.

A smell that told about sadness and absence, about farewells without a possibility of reunite, about a little boy that could not hold back his tears,

about losing battles, about wrong flights, about confusing echoes, about remote desires, about apologies that had been late, ... in short, a smell that talked about the lived moments and that now, they belonged to the memory of death.

So... he did not know what to do, if he needed to cling to life, to Carpe diem that he had so often repeated to his students because the Tempus fugit is the only truth, or run away to death. He hoped that this, with its unmerciful and pitiless hand, crossed out his name from the book of the living.

Suddenly thousands of anonymous voices which opened the silent path through their last dreams would transit to finally arrive to the most ruthless of the winters. And when he felt a sudden pain in the middle of his back that paralyzed his movements, he sensed that maybe he had no longer days, but hours.

He fell dead to the ground in front of the incredulous and altered looks of the attendee. When they came to help him, they could see in his face the mask of death but instantly they realized that this deceased did not smell like the other dead.

His smelled of sea waves, of untamed forest, of wind without reins, of countries without borders, of a tree with nests in all its branches, of a sky that has never been framed, of an angry but generous rain, of a fertile and hospitable land, of the company of friends, of the embrace of the beloved, of nights of poetry, of celebrations and sunlight of childhood on the skin, ...of a full and eternal life.

He knew, then, what his death smelled of and he could go in peace.

**M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles Rodríguez Marmolejo**

**4º CAL**