

Excerpt From Part I

A Recipe for Happiness

Many who have happiness take it for granted, and when it is gone, will go into the dark places to search for it, ignorant that it never can be found in the grime. While the soul wants for love, happiness can never be found, and if happiness is lacking in the heart, then the soul will find no peace.

Alas, love is so hard to find, yet we all must seek for it. Only we must also not forget that the path of love—real, true love—never runs smooth, and like true friendship, true love would remain unscathed when it passes through the fire. However, do not be dismayed when I mention fire. Indeed, the two most important tests of true love are quarrels and absence. It is also important for you to know that love in the sense of the word is much more than roses, chocolates, and gifts. It surpasses all lusts. It's all about understanding and sharing. It's about forgiving and putting behind you the other's wrongs. Love is a foundation without which a home is doomed.

Love is like a seed:
It takes trust and a lot of care to grow.
Like a growing seed in the farm
Needing water and weeding to attain maturity,
Love must be tenderly nurtured,
Lest it be choked with thorns.
Only when it is carefully tended

Can it grow with firmly grounded roots,
Never to be uprooted by the winds.
Then will it blossom with flowers bright.

To crown all that I speak on love, I would tell you this, and you always must bear it in mind,

that for you to love someone else, you must first love yourself. He who would be happy, therefore, must learn to love himself, yet he must also learn to put others before himself.

It is indeed true that loved ones will often fail you, yet you must learn not to hate, but to give even those who have brought you pain all the love you have within your heart. However, when you give to anyone, whether it is your heart or gifts, give not because you expect or want something in return—be it gratitude or gift—lest your heart be disappointed. Men never do remember to give, and when they do, never give to you what you expect. Some will condemn when you would expect them to praise you, and some will show ingratitude when you expect them to be thankful. For this reason, you must learn to give to others for the sake of giving.

Excerpt From Part II

Essence of the Gift

My little girl, life draws close to its ebb. I know of nothing better to challenge you with than with my own thoughts on life. This day I sit to write these thoughts to challenge your thinking everyday from the day you read them. In challenging your thoughts, it is my hope that you would be challenged to live life at the very best like I know you have the power to do. So now I sit and write for you one last time in this secret journal of ours.

I sit down to think,
I sit down to write,
I sit down because life is a story,
A story that must be told.

Many questions have troubled my mind since the day I learned to think, and now as life draws to its end, many answers came to my mind; many things

unveiled themselves within my very soul tonight, and sleep has eluded me. When the questions rumbled through my mind, their answers immediately came to me as well. So many words flowing through my head that's why I sit down this day to think and write. I know of no one else to entrust these words, these thoughts of mine to, other than you, my little girl. Therefore, I find our journal, and I sit to write them down just for you, knowing you will know what to do with them.

I have dined with the sage, and I have supped with the fools, yet my encounter with them cannot compare with the truth I am faced with this day. I write the answers as they come to me, unable to keep them to myself, that all may know this truth I've found. It all began when I thought over my life, which did beg the thought, "What is life?" Then, I heard the echo in my head say, "Life itself is a gift," and I pondered on this.

If life is a gift, it must have been given for a purpose, for if there was no purpose for his gift, the giver would not need to give. Then I heard another echo in my head: "The giver of life gives the gift for a reason."

If there is a reason for life, then what is its use to the receiver? I wondered, For a gift without value to him who receives it can be put to no use. As I thought

on this, I came to realize life is a gift of worth to him who gave and to him who received.

If humanity does agree that life does have its worth (for I am yet to meet that man who would love to die), why do we spend our life growing and never living, and why do we live and never grow? It seems to me that we often forget that when the novelty of a gift wears off, the gift may not last past that season. Like babies outgrowing their toys, there indeed comes a time when a gift has fulfilled its purpose, and a time when life's purpose has reached its term. This is why the old must die, for their use of life is fulfilled.

Yet I ask, What use is that gift which is not utilized? For I know that a gift well used would often bring other benefits. Like the happiness children derive from playing with their toys, much joy can come from fulfillment in life. Alas, the benefits of this gift called life can only come to him who would put his gift to good use. To the one who does appreciate life, life will give him many benefits. Thus to leave a legacy for the world to remember you by, know the purpose of your gift and use it as it ought to be used. For,

It is possible to breathe and live,
And then fade away like the morning dew,
If you do not know the value of your gift,
And the purpose for which it was given to you.

When I thought of these things, I realized that visions and dreams are benefits of the gift of life, given to that receiver who discovered the purpose of his gift. Then I asked myself, Of what use are these benefits to the receiver of the gift? And it did seem like a tiny voice spoke in my ears, telling me to wait and think. "Yes, think of the clothes you wear," I heard it say, and did I think of this? I thought, and I thought some more, then like the light from the morning sun chases the night away, I saw the light of truth disperse my ignorance. Clothes do absorb sweat and rain, but is that the main purpose for wearing the clothes? No indeed, for we wear clothes to cover the nakedness of the body, but it does other things for us as well. So also,

Life as a gift gives that appreciating receiver
A chance to dream
As well as the chance to fulfill his dream.

Upon this realization, these thoughts came to me:
Life holds so much in its grasp,
So much beyond the imaginations of my mind,
too big a view to behold all at once,
bigger than I could ever comprehend.

New things I see each day.
And I learn new things too.
I once thought there couldn't be more,
But then a surprise came my way.

I do understand this now:
It isn't possible for a man to see it all.
Each man will only see
what life has specifically for him.

Yet if I must, in whatever time I've got,
See all life has meant for me to see,

I must discern the purpose for this gift of mine
While the breath remains in me.

I must learn to live life as I should;
Then I can receive every benefit
That this gift of mine would bring
When my purpose is fulfilled.