

# Gratitude

*By Leonard Cavallaro*



Gratitude. How I hated that word. We had spent the past two hours listening to members of the class blabber on relentlessly about gratitude and ‘what it means to them’. Ugh! Sam’s voice cuts through my thoughts as he concludes his presentation with something about how he now visits his grandmother every Saturday or some other nonsense. There is muted applause from the tired class while Mrs Willa ushers him back to his seat thanking him for ‘a truly sincere and

humbling presentation’. I was next. She was not going to like what I had to say about this beloved gratitude.

It is so unfair. I share my opinion about gratitude and where does it get me. Detention, two whole months of it. I sulk silently wondering how I will possibly survive two whole months of this torture. After a few minutes I walk over to the window. I look outside and take a deep breath to calm myself. It really is a beautiful day. The school lawn glimmers, tiny crystal-like droplets sparkling on each blade of grass. The trees sway softly in the wind and I can hear birds excitedly calling out to one another. The sky is a clear blue, clouds slowly drifting to one side. Leaving the sky behind. Just like my father left me. I bite back tears and slowly slump to the floor. I lie there sobbing softly wondering why he left me all alone without anyone to turn to.

Sometime later there is a knocking at the door. "Hello, it's me Sam," the person says. I turn my head to look at the entrance. I do not want anyone to see me like this. "Go away!" I say my voice shaking as I try to hold back my sobs. The knocking stops and I resume my self-pity stewing over what I had done wrong that had made my father leave. Then the door creaks open and I hear soft footsteps. My eyes remain closed as I lie there quietly hoping that they will get bored and leave me alone.

After what feels like hours but must have only been minutes, I cannot take it anymore. "What!" I shout, louder than I expected. Sam looks startled and just stares at me in confusion. I continue quieter than before, "Why are you hanging around me?"

"I'm just being a much-needed friend," he replies simply. I look at him in annoyance. As if! This is probably some 'good deed' quota or other ridiculous 'helpers act' thing. "Yeah well thanks but no thanks. I'm doing just fine," I say.

"You count spending your lunches crying and avoiding anyone who tries to spend time with you as fine?" Sam asks. I look at him in anger. Now he went too far. "You know what." I tell him, "maybe I'm not as sunshine and rainbows as the rest of you but that doesn't mean I need some little do-gooder hanging around trying to fix me!" He stares at me in shock and sadness. I feel unhappy as I watch him walk away but I push that feeling down and tell myself it's for the best. He wouldn't really want me as a friend. Not once he got to know me.

The next day I fake being sick. My aunt Bekki is angry as she has to take time off work to be at home with me, but I just can't bear to see Sam. To look into his accusing eyes. I manage to keep up the ruse for another day before she sends me to school. I groan and moan to buy myself just one more day, but it is in vain. She has made up her mind. No amount of trickery was going to help me now.

I manage to avoid Sam at first break and all throughout lessons but at lunch I am trapped. Sitting in the office serving out my detention time. I hear a soft knocking. This time I ignore it desperate to prolong the inevitable. The door creaks open as Sam walks inside. I turn away. "Please just leave me alone," I beg him quietly. There is silence for a while before I hear him walk away.

Slowly I begin to realize what I have done. I had turned away the one person who took the time to try and know me, who tried to understand me. I had insulted him; told him I didn't need his help. But the truth was I did. I needed a friend. Sprinting out of the room I knew what I had to do. I had to find Sam.

I run down the maze-like corridors looking left and right in search of Sam. Nothing. When I reach the exit to the eating area I stop. "Sam!" I shout as I spot him heading down the stairs. He stops and turns back to stare at me. "I'm," I start to tell him before sighing. "Look. I'm lonely and I shouldn't have pushed you away. It's just... Well what I'm trying to say is... I'm sorry Sam," I smile at him weakly. He doesn't move or reply. I'm not surprised. How could I have thought after everything I had done that Sam would still want to be friends with me. I was a fool to get my hopes up. Then I see Sam smile at me. Maybe there is hope for our friendship yet.

Two months later and I am the happiest I've been in a long time. I have gotten better at thinking about my dad since then. I have even begun to tell Sam about what happened. We are best friends now. It is great to finally have someone to talk with. We hang out at lunches and nearly every afternoon. I have learnt more about Bekki and now we help each other with our grief over Dad. I am lucky to have such a good friend and a home with a caring aunt. I have so much to be grateful for. I finally understand what gratitude truly means.

The End