

LettersAboutLiterature

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Level Three - Grades 9-12 - First Place Winner - 2012 - Indiana
National Honorable Mention Winner for Level Three for the Library of Congress

Dear Ms. Kadahota,

I have, admittedly, always been a bit of a pessimist on life. All I cared about was fulfilling my parents' wishes and trying to get through life as quickly and effortlessly as possible. Life was just for living, for doing what needed to be done, and in the end was death. That was it. But while reading your book, *Kira-Kira*, I discovered that life was not just for the living, it was for the *living*. It was for enjoying every little aspect and detail of the life that was given to me, and appreciating it to the fullest. From something as grand as the skies on a clear, glistening day to something as subtle as the little snuffling sounds my little brother makes as he sleeps during the night.

I'd always heard the quote, "Live every day like it's the end of the world," but really, I hadn't given it much thought. As much as I wanted to, I didn't have time to "live everyday like it's the end of the world." There was too much on my agenda, too much to do. Too many problems to deal with and too many hardships to face; too much of everything! But I was taught through Lynn's loving words to her little sister Katie that it wasn't just about living every spare minute like it was my last, but to also live every spare minute like it was my first. To appreciate all those little things that couldn't be explained to me when I was a child—like the trickling breeze dancing on my skin, or the funny little flowers that popped up across my yard and tasted better than my parents would let on.

I also came to understand and appreciate the sacrifices that my parents made for my brother and me when they decided to immigrate to America through Lynn and Katie's own parents. From working long hours through the night to being forced to adjust to a whole new culture and way of life; they battled and overcame many hurdles that Asian-American children who grow up in America can't comprehend as well. I'd always thought my parents were just pushy old people who made me memorize words from the dictionary or repeat multiplication tables twenty times a day so that they could say they had raised an amazingly exceptional child. But no, it wasn't for them to have the pride of saying something like that, but for *me* to be able to say I was able to live better than my parents. Although those words are not very filial, they are the truth. My parents did not want me to have to always keep a tab on my bank account just to make sure the food would last the rest of the week. They didn't want me living the half-life that they lived.

But, see, I didn't say their goal was for me to be able to say I was not like my parents. Ms. Kadahota, you showed me that underneath these tired, weary, strict people was an amazing strength that allowed them to

persevere in such a foreign and backwards country. You showed me that their love for me was so great that they were more than willing to pause their busy lives back home just so we could have the best life possible. There is a pride in immigrants like my parents and Lynn and Katie's parents that allow them to bow their heads for the sake of their children, and yet at the same time rise gracefully when they know it's called for. If anything, I would be honored to have the balanced traits that my parents and the girls' parents have.

So, thank you, Ms. Kadahota for teaching me that life is not as complicated as people to take it to be. It's actually very simple. Thank you for teaching me not to forget about those little things and acts of love that everybody forgets about or just can't see. Thank you for teaching me to always search for the *kira-kira*, or glistening, in life. Thank you for teaching me that life was meant to be enjoyed, no matter the hardships and trials and suffering. Life was meant to be loved.

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