



UNIVERSIDAD  
ANDRÉS BELLO

# 3<sup>rd</sup> Interscholastic Short Story Contest



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# Introduction

The promotion of reading, the stimulation of creativity, and the encouragement of our nation's young people constitute the main objectives of the University Andrés Bello in this our third edition of the Interschool Short Story Competition in English (2009).

This program, which has convened more than 900 students from various educational institutions from Arica to Punta Arenas, is a great achievement for our university. We certainly share and celebrate with each one of the participants.

Alejandra Basualto, a national writer, Sofía Francisco, representing The English Speaking Union, Chile, and Silvina Zapata, Director of Education in English at our university, participated as the judges of this competition. They were the ones entrusted with the selection of the winning stories from each area. This was a difficult task, more thoroughly honed at a colloquium in which prominent national writers—Pablo Simonetti, Héctor Soto, Hernán Rivera Letelier, Camilo Marks and Alberto Fuguet— participated and with whom students and scholars alike had an opportunity to share.

We thank each and every one of them for their dedication and we especially thank all the young people who submitted their work. Today their stories can be found among the many award-winning stories in this book, which we gladly offer to the entire community. We invite them to continue writing and certainly, through the invaluable encouragement of their teachers, urge them to continue competing.

The stories gathered herein show a wide variety of themes, although there are also those themes that are treated time and again: in either case, we have the representation of complex worlds that are often revealed through simple, everyday experiences. That is precisely the strength and greatness of these stories. Love, pain, nobility, friendship, death, reflection, fantasy, anger are all elements that run through these narratives and invite us to measure in these texts all that is human. For Julio Cortázar, memorable stories are those that surpass the merely anecdotal and manage to achieve

“that fabulous opening of small to large, confined to the individual and the essence of the human condition.”

We believe this narrative genre, the short story, is of great value not only as an artistic and intellectual expression, but also because the process of creation, as in every work, is in itself an invitation to awaken and deepen thought. It is necessary at this stage of human development to look beyond what is presented before our eyes, to reveal our habitat in all of its complexity. Through this process, imagination, reflection, as well as a certain amount of boldness and lack of inhibition are necessary in order to achieve natural forms of expression and hone the craft.

We live in a world where globalization has placed technological development within our grasp and we find ourselves constantly buffeted by all new developments that come our way. We wish we could be more capable and more successful; however, it is the role of each one of us to humanize our existence, to make it happier.

We are certain that through this program we are contributing, to some extent, to the revitalization of the magic of this genre - the short story - whereby the need to communicate, verbalize experiences and find enjoyment acquires value through necessary synthesis. We tell stories from what we are, from what happens to us, from what we observe. This need to communicate is always with us and in our story telling where we leave our footprints, a legacy for the future that requires knowing the origin of things in their entirety.

On behalf of our university, it is a great pleasure for me to present these stories, each accompanied by a brief autobiography prepared by the winning authors themselves. You will learn a little more about them and the reasons behind each word put on a page that before was blank. You will also be able to share with them the feeling of joy they experience when seeing their literary efforts published.

This contest, sponsored in its 2009 version by Librería Antártica, El Mercurio and the Sociedad de Escritores de Chile, is an approach to the wonderful world of books, of literature, of our history and of all the memories these young people are able to recreate.

These efforts, articulate a craft that is, in itself, a means by which to govern our lives and serve as the foundation for our ideas. You will discover a certain liberating air in these pages, which we invite you to read.

Rolando Kelly Jara  
President  
Universidad Andrés Bello

# Trieste

**Soledad Cuevas Moreno**

*4º Medio (Senior Year)*

*Colegio La Maisonnette de Vitacura*

I freely admit that when people stopped dying I just didn't care. "Death on Strike," was the headline in the national newspaper. And just like that, nobody died anymore. And nobody even knew why.

You might think that I'm telling you nothing out of the ordinary, those strikes happen all the time. But maybe now you will understand why I decided to write all these words about something as usual as death. The third day after death resigned was the day I was supposed to die. November 11, 7:34 p.m. Death was looking at me right into my eyes; she suddenly walked away, far, far away.

If you claim to live in a "real world", you probably don't understand very well what I mean. If you live in Trieste,... well... feel free to skip this explanation. Here you are not born alone, you do not die alone either. Everybody walks around looking at his own life and his own death. Since the instant we are born, we are firmly gripped by the hand of life, so we don't forget the danger of living.

Death introduces herself using all the right lines, making you feel that nobody else knows you as she does, thinking her restless heart should beat with yours forever. Until maybe, on a random day, the second figure, the one that always walked three steps behind you, reaches the shoulder of your life. Soon Life walks away without saying goodbye. Death once again takes you by the hand, though not as strongly as the first time, sweetly now... asking for your permission, perhaps for your forgiveness. Many people just don't want to lose their dear life, begging her not to go.

They are not afraid of death, they know death. They just feel they need more time to do all they wanted to do, because there will be always too much to do and so little time left to do it. In the end, all of them understand they have no other choice. Even if they tried

with tears in their eyes, the fingers of death would not open. "It is time", it is the only explanation she whispers before she takes you by your hand and walks by your side, keeping you company until you reach whatever the place is after leaving life behind. You may think it useful to talk with your death if you just get tired of life's daily wounds. But don't cheat yourself, I had been told that when suffering women beg their death to take them away, death has remained indifferent, because, if you decide to hear what I have to say, you should know, my friend, that we don't die when we should, we die when we can, when we finally free ourselves from life or when she herself decides to let us go. Isn't that ironic?

But I think that anything else, any other way, would have been confusing.

I was born in Trieste some years ago. Sadly, I had lived the wrong way and finally I had reached the wrong end by the wrong means.

I was dying the wrong day.

I knew the face of my death since the day I was born, so it was actually like losing a dear friend. "We will get out of this mess," she had said, and then, like every other death in town she disappeared.

What should I do now? I can't die and I really never understood very well how to live. I felt I was on the wrong page of the wrong book, I was not completely alive anymore and I had no death. "If you have no legs, run," I suddenly heard. It was my life that was still by my side. "Forget about dying and all these lines so well rehearsed that you call destiny. It is the unexpected that makes us who we really are, anyway," then added, "if you have been given the chance to keep knowing this world, do it!"

Escape from this town for a little while? I asked myself... I smiled. All there was left to do was run... so I ran. Whatever you want to do, take it or leave it. There is only one way, because Trieste, my friend, is a complicated place. You must take the wrong road, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, on the wrong day, of the wrong week. It looks like a lot of work but death makes you change your priorities.

An unseen world was waiting. It was such a long way to go and, I must admit, I didn't know where I was going; I was just following the road. You would never imagine what I was about to discover. It was a long and dark December, at least that's what I remember. I saw worlds in which atoms had the size of bees, worlds with four, five and even eleven dimensions, a country in which there was only one family of commoners in a kingdom of royalty, a society governed by anger and violence, a universe in which every day was Christmas, an island of immortal beings, a little town in which genetic manipulation had caused disaster. But if you ask me, I have to say that there was one and only one place that caught my attention. This place is the reason behind this story, how to explain that in Trieste, birth and death are not experiences full of loneliness. In this particular place, people were so afraid of death that they had forgotten about life. Here they used to be born, walk, live and even die alone. They didn't have a life which took them by the hand to remind them they had to keep going. Instead, they had only themselves in order to avoid falling behind.

They knew nothing about death. She was a complete stranger, so they were terrified just to think in her unknown face. But what I find more surprising was that even when no one knew anything about what dying was (and they didn't have the methods to find out about it either without actually dying), they seemed to show more interest in and respect for death than they did for life. They lived every day wondering "what will happen next?" They were so concerned about how life after death would be that they didn't care about making life before death a good thing. Their lives were a daily learning about Death. More than living they were taught how to die. Death was almost unbelievably overvalued. And most people were more interested in asking themselves if life had any meaning at all, rather than actually living. My friend, if you decide to keep reading me, you must also know that life HAS a meaning.

What kind of evil god would put us in this universe without any reason at all? The meaning is just as simple as looking deep into your heart and doing whatever the hell makes you happy. Find out what makes you smile or find someone to love and hold on strongly to that. I just wanted to yell at them, "Why don't you understand that you must let go, so something new can begin!"



For so long it felt as if the world would change, but I'm back home now and things still look the same. Here I am, writing this down on one piece of paper for you, my friend, whoever you are, because the strike is over and I need at least someone to hear what I've learned. That just like everybody else, I wish I could stay here forever, watching the world go by, but eventually we all fall down, the curtain has to hit the floor sometime. What is really important when you reach the end is not getting there wishing you had given more. Please, my friend, believe me and do whatever you can to avoid saying "I could have done it better."

Maybe some day I'll be good at goodbyes but now I'm not. Letting go of life is the hardest thing I'll ever do. Now I only hope you don't let these thoughts upset you, I also hope it is true that when we die we go up to the sky. Nothing is certain at the beginning so why should we expect something different at the end? Now, my friend, you can be sure that if they tell you that life is in far away Trieste, they are lying. But I'm also sure that Trieste is the best way of living, of dying.

*Soledad Cuevas*

*I was born in 1991. Now I'm without a purpose or direction. I think I have always had ideas for writing, but only sometimes I find the time to put them onto paper. "Trieste" is the name of a street that caught my attention when I was little. This street was not only placed in the wrong place, it was lost. Walking there I could feel like the real world disappeared, so I used to imagine Trieste was the entrance to a very different place. Once I told my sister that one day in the future I was going to write about it, so I guess it was a good idea to do it after all. If you ask me, we do not need to waste our time fearing death. Happiness is simple, it is not hidden in what you don't have...I believe I was born to be happy.*

# Sunday

**Cecilia Gheza Núñez**

*3° Medio (Junior Year)*

*Colegio La Misión de Calera de Tango*

It's Sunday, you're having lunch with your grandparents today. You're sixteen years old, so you sit in the backseat of the car, listening to music with your headphones. Your parents stop the car and get out to buy a dessert (cake or cheesecake). You don't get out because you don't feel like pressing the pause button: you're in love with that song. You start looking through the window and observing people. Some guy runs by, sweaty and panting (he'll end up having heart problems); a woman carrying some bread in a bag (she's too fat already, she should buy water crackers) and an angry looking girl walking and holding the hand of a woman who was, probably, her sitter (she looks like my sitter when she was younger).

The girl must be five or six years old, but she's really tiny. She has a round face, curly hair, black eyes and rosy cheeks. She's pouting and doesn't want to move. The woman has to pull her arm softly and she answers giving very short steps and looking at her angrily (spoiled, insufferable brat). You're small for your age; you have a round face, curly hair, black eyes and rosy cheeks. Finally, they walk next to the car and the girl looks at you. You look a lot like each other and you understand that's natural, you're both the same person, after all. You only have one doubt: are you in your time or in hers? You wake up and open your eyes, knowing it's late, but you don't want to get up. You're sleepy, despite the fact you have slept a lot; but your bed is warm and soft, and it makes you feel safe. Do you need anything else? Yes, you need to eat: breakfast. If you stay in bed you'll have to go out at full speed and won't have time to eat (I'd never skip a meal). Slowly and reluctantly, you get out from under the sheets, delaying the moment when your feet will touch the floor and you'll be obliged to assume that you are awake. You stretch your arms and yawn (I don't want to get up), and, after you've stretched your arms again (why can't I stay here?), you go take a shower (I could stay

under the gush of water forever), then choose your clothes (I want something cheerful, the orange sweater?) and end up wearing jeans and the dark blue sweater (it's better to go unnoticed). For breakfast you fix a cup of coffee and eat some bread, and after brushing your teeth and looking at yourself in the mirror for the umpteenth time, you leave the apartment and get in the car. It's Sunday, you're having lunch with your parents and your grandparents and you said you'd bring the dessert. You stop in front of the bakery and buy a cake (definitely, I'm not an original person, we've been having the same dessert for the last three years), put it on the car's floor to make sure nothing happens to it, turn around and see her standing next to the bakery door: The same angry looking girl from many years ago. She hasn't changed, but this time she's alone, her sitter (my sitter, now that I think of it) is nowhere to be seen. The girl looks like she's about to start crying, you were always scared of being alone. "Can I take you somewhere?" asks the woman with the big car (I like big cars) and smiles, showing the kind of teeth you only see in toothbrush commercials. Mom and dad say you mustn't talk to strangers, but you're sure you've seen her before. The fact that she isn't someone you know doesn't even come into your mind. "Yes, please," you answer. She opens the door and you practically jump into the car, excited, you've always wanted to go in the front seat. You fasten your seatbelt and look at the driver.

You smile because you think she's pretty, you'd like to be like that when you're older.

"Where do you have to go?"

"To my grandparent's house."

The pretty lady looks a bit complicated, like she has a problem.

"Your grandparents or mine?"

"Mine, we're having lunch with them today."

"Sounds obvious, it's Sunday," she murmurs.

The car starts moving and you drive in silence through many streets