

Twenty Years

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FOREWORD

Twenty years. “I don't think they are enough to write the story of my life, when there's still so much to be lived.” This thought was the first that came to my mind when I intended to write an autobiography in my twenties; at once came another one some more objective: “What or who can guarantee me that I am going to live much longer?” Here I made a pause during some minutes before one last thought came to my mind, this one more impressive than the previous ones: “If I'm not alive tomorrow, haven't I anything to tell about these first twenty years of my life?” So, I started to write...

All the experiences in the life of humans begin as games because we all start being children, and that's precisely what children do: they play.

My case wasn't different. Since I was five years old I started playing taekwondo. Since that moment on, my whole life has revolved around this sport which, for me, has become a way of life.

My parents, as well as my three siblings, have supported me from the moment I started, and I am very grateful for that.

This game has acquired seriousness with the passage of time. Today I have already fifteen years practicing taekwondo, I have been a member of the national team and my greatest dream in this sport is to represent my country at the Olympic Games and win the gold medal.

However, I hope that it never stops being a game for me, because when we play we have fun and we enjoy. More than a medal or a title, living these emotions to the fullest is what makes life meaningful.

REVOLUTION, FREEDOM AND PERSONAL INDEPENDENCE

Revolution is defined as the rapid and deep change in anything; also as the rotation or spin that some part makes around its axis. Freedom is the inherent faculty that man has to act in this or that way, or to avoid acting, so he is responsible for his own acts. Independence is, when talking about a person, the freedom he has to maintain his rights and opinions without admitting a third-party intervention, i.e., he does not depend on someone else.

Based on these definitions, and with the autobiography that I am presenting below, I expect to bring about a fast and deep personal revolution or change. I look at my life from outside, revolving around my axis, as a simple spectator, to perform an objective analysis of what I am and to convert into words all the remarks that I could have expressed about myself, as well as to hold my opinions without a third-party intervention, and to free myself of society's opinion, because this text is nothing else but my experiences shared with you, not with the intention that they are judged but with the intention of explaining to myself what my life has been and getting a glimpse at where I'm going.

I thank you for the simple fact of taking a break to read the following pages and, at the same time, I invite you to get free and independent of yourselves through an objective analysis of your lives, and to declare, as if it were someone else, what you have seen in a movie, with the difference that in this one we are both the spectator and the main character.

Revolution does not mean to rise up in arms, and even less when we're talking about a personal revolution. Instead, it means to make a positive change in our essence, a transformation to improve ourselves. And this will be achieved if we, owners of our thoughts and emotions, decide to analyze what we have been and to determine what could make us better human beings. As in 1917 our society fought for social reforms and the end of dictatorship—what would make us a more free country—today let's fight for a purer personal essence in which love, good and truth prevail.

NUMBER ONE

Number one has been my favorite number for a long time, and that is no accident.

At school, at home, in sports, in all my activities, I've always liked to be number one. That may be good from the perspective of personal growth, but also bad from the perspective of arrogance.

Referring to myself, I can say that arrogance is one of the human being vices than most displeases me, and although this doesn't mean that I don't have it to a certain degree, at least I don't consider it's the driver of my acts.

The key issue to highlight is: When does wanting everything becomes something bad? Or, rather, is it good to want everything?

Someone once told me that we should always aim for the best, for the top. If we did so, our best scenario would be to get everything, but if something went wrong, we would obtain a lot anyway. On the other hand, if our aspirations were poor, the best scenario would be to get them, and the worst to get nothing. Perhaps this statement is a bit extremist; nonetheless, it's true. So, based on this explanation, if we aim for the best we will get positive consequences, as long as we act in good faith.

A wise man said that man can have anything he wants in life as long as he gives up everything else to obtain that. What he meant is that everything has a price.

Unfortunately or fortunately, life is not perfection, and every time we have to take a step in one direction, that means we have to stop walking in another direction. That's why making a decision becomes so complicated, because deciding is synonymous of resigning. Wanting to be number one is not a problem, but not accepting to give up anything is. This is precisely the problem that I face frequently, because it has been hard for me to understand that I cannot do everything, at least not at the same time.

MERIDA, 2001

I'm in the stands, about to go to the warm-up area. I go to say hello to my parents who have come from Puebla to see me compete.

Although my face doesn't show it, I'm a dying of nerves because, what else can an eleven-year-old girl feel at a national Olympiad.

It's not my first experience in this kind of competitions; a year ago I also participated, but this time it's different. A year ago, I made everything possible not to awake my parents on Saturday mornings so that they didn't take me to my training sessions. Many times I succeeded, but when I failed I used to go very afraid because I knew how tiring that would be; during the week, the training sessions were something else because I always enjoyed them. This year, instead, I was the one who woke up in the morning of the weekend to receive my dose of voluntary weariness. I knew that it would be worthwhile because I had always dreamed of being a "national and international champion". Frankly, I don't know where I heard that, but it sounded very well.

So I say hello to my parents who show the emotion on their faces, and I hear their words of encouragement:

—Go on, daughter, go and win!

I smile again and I agree with my head.

Once I've turned my back to them, I think to myself: "I hope so."

The competition has already progressed and I've surmounted three bouts. After each one, my dad has come to encourage me and to remind me that to reach the first place I must win on one bout at a time. Now he has come up to me once again and has reminded me that I've already assured the silver medal, but that we're going for the golden one. I'm competing in the final bout.

I know that the other girl is good; many people around me say so. Nonetheless, Gonzalo, my coach, has made a good job in motivating me and I'm ready.

The three rounds have ended. My face looks toward the sky, my eyes have a few tears and my hands are raised. I've won the first place! I turn around to look at the stands where my dad screams thrilled, while my mom cries of joy. My brothers jump and shout my name with euphoria. They never stopped supporting me one single moment. And I can't hide the smile which tries to express all the happiness that I feel.

Back to my normal activities, after that experience at the National Olympiad of Merida, my life changed.

As all that I wanted was to relive that excitement, my life became more training, more sacrifices, fewer parties and fewer friends. At the beginning I was sure that it was the right thing because you must give up some things if you want to achieve your goals. The problem was that taekwondo had ceased to be a game, and winning had become an obligation.

The following years were good because I participated in all the national Olympiads and I won silvers, bronzes and also golds, although in the “forms” mode. But I couldn’t obtain the first place in combat. Today that is completely understandable. At that age, during my secondary school years, I had turned my back on my friends so that I could train. And that training was not fun: it was a requirement to win or, rather, to avoid losing.

THE VIETNAM WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

When I was fifteen I gave myself the opportunity to have my first steady boyfriend and it surely was a steady one, because I dated him more than three years. I had opened myself to the “world” a little more. He helped me doing that, though he always supported me in my activity.

During that stage of my life, I attended the 2006 National Olympiad where the ticket to the Vietnam World Youth Championship was at stake.

Once again, I focused all my energies on taekwondo and on that event. I was so determined, almost obsessed, on getting that place that I got it. After five years, I regained the first place of the podium in combat, which is my preferred category, and I enjoyed it as never before. The following week I had to take part in an assessment to obtain the final pass to the world championship (that’s the way it happens in Mexico: too many assessments to pick the best contender), and once again I got the triumph.

So far everything seemed perfect. My dream was becoming real because in a few months I would represent my country at the world championship. However, that obsession had prevented me from seeing another reality: winning meant that I had to go to another city and live gathered with the national team with which I only shared my passion for taekwondo.

The very same Sunday of the assessment I traveled with my stuff to San Luis Potosí where I would live for the next two months, and I said goodbye to my parents, my brothers and my boyfriend.

The next Tuesday I was desperate to go back home. I felt a terrible hole inside me and, to be honest, I cried a lot. The training pace was strenuous because we had three daily sessions of two hours each, and it was something I wasn’t used to. I missed my family, my normal activities, my hometown. And it sounds completely absurd to feel that way after being only three days there. However, the fact is that I was not prepared for that. I was not aware of the commitment I had acquired; indeed, I wasn’t even aware that I had committed myself to do something. For me, the objective had already been fulfilled and everything else was extra, but it was exactly the other way around: the matter was just starting.

So were my two months in San Luis Potosí: I cried often, I trained thinking that each session was one less before going back home, and the rest of the time I phoned to feel close to my family and of him.

When the day of the World Championship approached, I started to realize what it meant and I decided to train harder and focus myself on the competition. But things don’t work that way and, of course, my performance in Vietnam was mediocre. Or at least so I think it was.

However, nothing of the above was lost time. I discovered what sacrifice, commitment and dedication are, but, above all, how special it is to fight for your country. Moreover, I understood that, when you leave home, the only thing that changes is the physical space where you are, because the support of your loved ones will always be at your side. Thus, any kind of obstacle that I found on those days was only in my mind, just as the obstacles that I might find in my way. And without those experiences, I wouldn't know all those things today.

HIM

Upon arriving at San Luis, I wished never to return, and when I got home, I started thinking at the time I would return to the national team...

Nonetheless, it wasn't as soon as I expected. Fate took care of giving me time enough to live new experiences. These include him above all. If it can be said that a sixteen years old person is able to love, then I will say that during that stage of my life I experienced what love is.

I never stopped training, competing, dreaming about all my taekwondo objectives, but then I also gave my mind time to get busy with other things. Or at least that's what I wanted.

I thought it was time to go out and have some fun, to call my friends, to live with my family. But when I tried to do that, I found out there was no party where to go, there were no friends to talk to, and my brothers didn't ask me to play with them because, of course, they had grown.

All of them had carried out their activities without me, because I had moved away from all of them given that taekwondo was the only thing I cared about. All were in their world, except him, who always remained at my side.

Those three years were marvelous; nonetheless, the immaturity of my age (or whatever it was) demanded me to live, to learn and to experience new things. Suddenly. I felt the need to do what the people my age was doing, to talk about what they talked about. What a silly idea. So I decided that he didn't had a place in that plan, because I needed to get to know more people.

Not everything was as cold as I'm describing it; in fact, sometimes I am very harsh with myself. What really happened is this:

We started going around in April 2005. I stared at him from outside the gym when I ended my training and he started his. I liked him a lot. A month later, on May 20, we became "sweethearts", and so far I had not experienced such a big thrill and excitement.

The first year was fantastic. For the first time I said "I love you" and I really felt it. I gave my first kiss. We fantasize about the children we would have and their names; when we would get married and where we would live. In fact, what all the sweethearts do sometime, but for me (and I know that also for him) it was something very special.

At one point, neither him nor me we went out with someone else. We shared everything. Our tastes were the same; we were healthy youngsters, without vices; we even didn't like to go to parties. We enjoyed evenings at the movies or with a tasty coffee: *espresso* was our favorite.

He motivated me day and night telling me that I would reach even my greatest goals, and I did the same with him. We laughed a lot together; sometimes we behave as small children. During our family discussions we tried to support each other to solve

any problem.

We had no interest in going out with anybody else; our company was always more than enough. My activities were his activities, and also my ideas. Suddenly, he didn't speak of anything else but to marry me as soon as he finished his career. When we had an argument, he always opted for agreeing with me. Everything seemed perfect, but it wasn't so. No extreme is good, and I think we fell into that. He used to say that I was the love of his life, and that, whatever happened, he would always be with me because he rejected the idea of being a frustrated man ending up with someone other than the love of his life.

During the second year of being together, that idea began to scare me. I feared that our love had become an obsession. Besides, he already had a good record of girlfriends, and I, well, I was just starting mine. He was the second after my high school boyfriend, Chava (only after one month we started holding hands, but I don't like to skip anyone; he was cute). So the idea of "the first and only one in my life" began to scare me more and more. I was aware that I had to know more guys; that I had to live as a seventeen-years-old girl and not as a woman about to get married.

We talked about it and he, loyal as always, agreed to give me some time to reflect on what I really wanted. Our separation lasted ten months but he never stopped looking for me.

As every story, this one also has two versions. While it's true that he was an excellent boyfriend, noble, faithful and really respectful, it is also true that a seventeen-years-old girl who is proposed marriage and hasn't had more than one boyfriend, besides expecting too many things in the life, ends feeling scared. And it's also valid that she wanted to meet somebody else to substantiate what she really wanted.

At the end of those ten months, a misunderstanding made us get back together. They made me believe that he was already going out with someone else and that he had forgotten me. I didn't wait more than one day to call him and tell him that such a news was the saddest I had heard and that we had to talk. That evening we got back together.

We both made a mistake. And I say mistake not because we shouldn't be together, but because it was neither the time nor the way. Besides, those ten months had chilled things and it was clear that we weren't the same persons anymore. Thus, three months later our relationship ended definitively. This time he didn't look for me nor waited for me. He simply forgot me, and things ended in the worst way. More than nine months had to pass before we talked again, and this was because I found out that he had suffered an accident (in fact, I had a hunch, even if it sounds unreal).

Today, one year after ending our relationship, I am going out with another person, and I must say that although Parker wasn't precisely the reason of our breakup, he has lighten up my life once again.

He has also a new love. And we were so similar (at least I so want to believe) that we also started our new relationships in simultaneous periods. How do I know? There's always a way to find out what happens in the life of persons important for us.

The only thing that is left of those three years and seven months of our relationship is this poem that I wrote:

TO BE AND TO BE THERE

She was not whom he loved,
she was not his perfect half.
She didn't possess what he desired;

she was not an ugly woman,
but neither was the prettiest one.
That doesn't matter, cause she was not.

She was not what at one point in time I was,
and it wasn't him who decided that I weren't.
It was me who decided to stop being,
and who I am today is not who I was yesterday,
at least not for him.

He didn't ask her to be,
and maybe she never imagined to be,
but she was there when I left.
She fixed what I had shattered;
and though she wasn't, she was there
when he needed me.

Although she was not, being there gradually made her be.
I stopped being there and that caused me to disappear.
For me she was not, but that doesn't matter,
because for him, now she is.

I decided to stop being there.
I decided to stop being me.
That's why I can't figure out
why I still can't see him
without wishing her not to be,
without wishing her not to be there.

For him, today I am not there.
And for him, today I am not.
Perhaps one day his kind memory
will finally erase me in self-defense
and eventually make him believe
that I am not and never was.

Our thing will not be a memory,
nor it will be a great dream.
Our thing will stop being,
as if it had never been.

My memory still remembers him,
sometimes it even calls him,
but the memory will end up being blurred.
And maybe then I'll be able to think
that once he was and today he's not.
And if I'm lucky, I will think
that our thing never was.

Then I'll let her be, let her be there.

BACK TO THE NATIONAL TEAM

My senior year was an unforgettable year. And so it is because I don't even want to remember how it was! And what you don't want to remember is indeed the first thing that comes to your mind. At least I thought so initially.

However, it's the year that left me more teachings: you can't do everything at the same time... at least not if you want to do everything well. And for me, "to do things well" doesn't work; I must confess that I am a perfection addict.

That year it wanted everything. I wanted to go out with my friends, to train, to have a boyfriend, go to Mexico City and train with the national team and, besides, to be the president of my high school generation. I repeat, you can't do everything at the same time; not if you want to do everything well.

So, I started winning the school elections, training more, going out more, looking for a new relationship (he and I were going through those ten months of temporary break up, and let's recall that I "needed to meet someone else") and, of course, studying a lot because I always had to succeed at school. It is worth mentioning that it wasn't a burden for me because I've always liked to study.

At first, the outlook seemed the best. But it was only starting. I felt constantly tired because I didn't make time to rest. There was always something to do, and also the training sessions had intensified because I wanted to win and be in the national team. Things at school were going on normally. There were people satisfied and also people dissatisfied with the council which I headed, but that was nothing uncommon.

When the decisive competition to rejoin the national team arrived, one point less on the scoreboard of the final fight moved me away from my dream, and thus, with a second place, I lost my place in the Mexican national team. It was a very sad day because I wanted to represent my country, especially when I had worked so hard (doing a bit of everything). But then I realized that on the other hand it could be the perfect time to enjoy my senior year of high school, go out and also perform properly my post.

Luckily for me, two months after that competition, I got a call from the national coach who asked me to be part of the team, regardless of my second place. That announcement made me more than happy; however, there was also a lot to sacrifice because I had to leave.

I didn't think it twice, and in the middle of the school year I left the post in the hands of the student council, I managed to finish the second half and went to Mexico City to join the national team.

As you must already know, my experiences away from home, convened in a place where the only thing you do is training and where you live with people who only share with you your taste for the sport, are not my strong point.

I arrived very motivated and grateful for the opportunity; however, that feeling did not last long because I started to worry more about what I had left than about what I

was getting.

Two months later I was able to return to Puebla to duly finish my studies, to recoup my post (in fact it wasn't such a big deal) and to organize the graduation ceremony and the prom. They allowed me to return on the condition that, at the beginning of the summer holidays, I would be back in Mexico City.

Time went by very fast. All my friends, rather companions, were in their own world, in their "high-school" atmosphere, and I felt myself an outsider everywhere. I wasn't at ease in Mexico City, I got too tired, I didn't want to diet, I felt that I wasn't even a good contender (I repeat that sometimes I am very critical with myself). And, on the other hand, I didn't fit in at school, I wasn't in the same ambiance. I felt very lonely at the prom.

In the end, I returned to Mexico City in the summer. Perhaps once more I wasn't ready to leave, because I didn't feel happy being there, but quite the opposite. I counted the days to go back home, and I reasoned that my stay there wouldn't be forever. But even though I cried a lot, and my state of mind was really down. There were no sense to stay there because I was not enjoying my training; I felt awkward. I had lost the motivation of my efforts for the taekwondo. I felt that no sacrifice was worth because I wasn't getting what I wanted.

How is it that what you most love, enjoy and dream about makes you suffer so much? That was my question.

Initially, and despite the others, I believed in me. And I don't know at what point in time I stopped believing. My parents always supported me in whatever I decided, but they also advised me to do what made me happier.

That was precisely the problem: it was obvious that I didn't feel happy being convened in Mexico City, but giving up the national team would make me feel weak and, in the future, I would keep thinking about "what would have happened if I had endured just some more time".

I must say that it is a very confusing situation and that, when writing about it, I find difficult to convey it because I don't even know from what viewpoint I should explain my feelings.

Besides training, eating and sleeping, while I was convened I had a lot of time to think, and during those moments many questions came to my mind, which I will now share with you:

I know that when you pursue a dream not everything is easy on the way, but, how difficult must it be to know that it still is "a part of the sacrifice" or that you are going the wrong way? It is also true that the road must not be a martyrdom, because if you expect to find the treasure at the end of the rainbow that will not happen. What you have to understand first is that a goal is not some finish line you must cross, but rather the end of a whole journey. The finish line is not worth anything if you haven't gone over all that lays before getting to it.

Thus, this road is not supposed to be despicable, but enjoyable. Of course, and according to this hypothesis, we would all go through the one making us feel good, and doing that sometimes means to disregard what is really right. But, what is right? Here I'm going to stick to what Milan Kundera says in his book *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*: "Man can never know what he must want, because he only lives one life and he has no way to compare it with his previous lives nor to amend it in his next lives". Therefore, we do what at that moment we consider correct, or makes us feel good.

It's said that a person who wants to leave the place where she lives does so because she's not happy, but that wasn't my case... What I wanted is to be in the national

team and represent my country and, of course, to do that I had to leave my house, because until today it's impossible to be in two places at the same time. I didn't want to leave this place but I also had decided to do so, and that caused me a lot of confusion.

The trainings were exhausting; I missed my family and my other activities; the burden was heavy. But Kundera says: "The heavier the load, the closer to earth our life will be, more real and true it will be." And I agree with him.

Indeed, when a training is awfully exhausting and you feel like dying, that's when you are more alive, when all your feelings get exposed. When the load you carry is burdensome, it makes you live more fully, value everything around you. So, although this situation is still a bit unclear, here I find the answer to some of my questions. indeed, over time the rest will also become clearer.

LIFE IN COLLEGE

I was about to skip this stage of my life, but thanks to my parents I did not. And although at first I wasn't sure that it was the best decision, now I am fully convinced that it was.

I faced the difficult position of having to decide between not studying and devote myself fully to train, or entering college and sacrifice taekwondo time. The two options had their advantages and disadvantages, so I had to analyze both carefully:

One of my biggest dreams, as already said, is to compete in Olympic Games and win the gold medal. Those persons who have made it so have invested a lot of time training and have sacrificed many others things, such as family, friends and studies. Following the model of these champions, most coaches say that the more you train, the better results you will get. But, on the other hand, the more time you spend at training and competing, the less time you will have for everything else.

So those who we dream of winning an Olympic Games we accept this idea and we convince ourselves that studying will take us time, or that, while we study, our opponents will take advantage of that time to get better prepared and, of course, they will have greater chances of winning. We also know that the competitive time period of an athlete is very short, and if she doesn't take advantage of it when she is young, that time period will not come back. On the other hand, we are also aware that it's never late to study and that after having achieved our goals in sports we can reinstate our studies and prepare ourselves for our professional life.

I, like many others, was convinced of this idea, so I believed I had to stop studying and devote myself completely to taekwondo. What I did not know is that this idea is nothing more but pure theory and that in real life I had to forget the idea of being good in theory and become a practical expert.

Don't take my following comments as simple opinions, but as result of the experiences I have lived: most athletes who stop studying do not face the dilemma of having to decide between two things because in fact they give up something they never liked: the school.

This same group of sportspersons do not consider sport as a goal in their life, but as a modus vivendi, thus they have to bet everything so their chances of failure are minimal. The sportspersons who reach their highest sport goals and afterwards restart their studies—I dare to say—do not exist. Besides, after excelling in a sport you receive many attractive rewards, mostly economic, so it is not necessary to look for some profession that might “move you forward” because “you're already forward”. Moreover, if you have to work for living, you can always resort to what you have practiced more: you can be coach of your sport.

However, this group of sportspersons forget an important fact: their achievements are not eternal; in the end they become history. There's nothing guaranteeing you that you will achieve your goals (that's why a goal is not a final destination, but rather only

the end of a journey). The brain is also a muscle that has to be exercised to avoid making bad decisions. And, what's most important, there's no path traced in advance; it's a mistake to think that you can do what others have done to obtain their same results. Each person builds his own path.

Following these premises, with the help of my parents I was able to glimpse that I have to follow my own path and, whatever happens, be a champion in life while I enjoy and learn from every experience coming my way.

I came to these conclusions after exercising my brain (studying) and analyzing objectively my options in such a way that I finally decided to go to college and keep on training.

I know it's not easy to keep performing those two activities at the same time and that it requires more effort, but I also know that it is what makes me happy.

I've drawn many positive things of this decision, starting with the fact that entering college has broadened my horizons and help me understand that a person cannot have only one goal in life because life is full of goals we want to achieve and that become motivations to keep us going forward. And those things we expect to achieve are, simply, what makes us strive more, but the unexpected is what changes our lives, what infuses them meaning. Moreover, I have learned that, despite having goals or motivations, life doesn't consist in pursuing them to achieve happiness, but rather in taking a break and observe everything around us, show gratitude for being able to witness it, smile for it and, finally, understand that there are no ordinary moments: there's always something magical happening.

Today I am in college studying law; I've met wonderful people and I've shared enriching and very funny experiences with my teachers and friends; I've made the most of my time with my family and I've met my boyfriend, Parker.

At the same time, I keep chasing my dreams in sports. I exercise every day at college, but not only my mind, also my body. Besides representing my state and my country, now also I represent my University in sport events, which makes me very proud. Sometimes I must exert myself more at the school, and sometimes at the taekwondo, but the key is to keep the balance between the two.

In fact, at this stage of my life I have learned that the balance must be present in everything we do. Any excess is negative. Now I can say that I go out with my friends (the old ones who I've recovered, and new ones that I've won) and that does not prevent me to have a good performance in my activities, but quite the opposite. As I always say: there's time for everything.

Although I keep performing both activities at the same time, I try to separate them as much as possible, and I consider myself equally dedicated to sports and to my studies, as I don't want to be just a good lawyer: I want to be the best one.

I don't think that studying takes up my training time, but rather that it complements me, and in sports I still have the same ambitions but now I pursue them in a different way. Any way that we decide to follow is valid, as long as it's unique and, in addition, it is directed by our feelings in balance with our reason.

Sometimes we have to stop thinking about what people expect of us, address our own expectations and, under no circumstances, let them be mediocre.

To explain myself a little better, I share with you a speech I gave in 2005 (when I was fifteen) and that talks precisely about mediocrity:

Mediocrity

How sad it is to give up without having made a try, but it is still worse resigning before

making a try.

Life is full of illusions and dreams that sometimes just stay in the mind of persons for fear to make them real, for fear to fail or not be able to achieve them; and this same fear leads them to be satisfied with what they have before making any attempt, or to be satisfied with what for ordinary people is normal; or for mediocre people is enough.

But, why no trying? Why not dreaming? Is it impossible?

Dreams, together with illusion and hope, are what gives life meaning, what drives us to act, and even what keeps us on track, whatever the difficulties.

There are those who dare to dream, but they have small dreams; those who are satisfied with immediate, ordinary, easy things. We can take as an example a prepared professional who's planning to enter to work at a company and who thinks that he would settle for the assistant position; why doesn't he aims at the manager position, or why doesn't he dream of creating his own company? Of course, it's going to require more work, more effort, because how easy is what's easy. But don't limit yourself because it is possible to give more and the satisfaction, of course, is greater.

Perhaps you're going to ask me that, if the purpose is to make your dreams come true, what's the difference between having small dreams and fulfilling them, and having big dreams and fulfilling them? Well, here comes what I'm talking you about: mediocrity.

What do you expect of your life? To study, work, get married, have children, send them to college, get old and die, because that's what everyone does? Come on, don't be mediocre.

And, of course, it's quite respectable if that's the real dream of some beings, because there will be always someone whose greatest illusion is to carry a child in her arms, or someone who dreams of making a change in the politics of his country, or someone who intends to win the Olympic gold, and all the dreams are equally important if they entail your full happiness and if they become real; but never act to follow a life pattern; do it so that when your hair gets gray and you turn back, you feel not only satisfied, but happy, with what you did.

Dreams are personal, so you don't depend on anyone else to achieve them; the only thing you need, in one single word that encompasses all what this entails, is: decision.

Fight for your dreams, to be great, because you're strong.

The road is not yet plotted; you mustn't follow the course led by others, because although it seems that some people have similar ideals, they surely don't have the same objectives nor the same priorities as yours, and that's what makes the difference. Therefore, you must choose the road, not the one you're going to follow, but the one you're going to mark.

Don't wait until your dream has been put into practice by someone else to believe that it's possible; the fact that no one has done it before doesn't mean that it can't be done, it means that it's waiting for you to make it real.

Don't wait to follow an example: set it yourself.

The only thing required to travel on this road is: confidence in yourself, along with hope and faith. Trust your abilities; don't accord more importance to your defects; instead, highlight your virtues; never think how much others have prepared themselves, how much they sacrificed or how much they exerted themselves; instead, consider how long you worked, how much you exerted yourself, how much you sacrificed, and that will give you the strength and the confidence you need. Don't wait till others act out so that you can act; and never act for others: whatever you do, do it for you. The rest will come by itself.

Never stand out if that implies going over others; don't consider yourself good just because you're better than someone else. It is a trait of weak people to expect everybody to be inferior so that they can feel superior; it is a trait of great individuals to live in a world of superiors where they are the best. In other words, what matters is not to be the good one among the bad, but rather to be the best among the good.

Remember that to dream one has to believe, if that's not so, your dream will not make

sense; whatever it is, as huge as it may seem, believe that it's possible, because remember that God did not create us weak.

Have confidence that every effort has a reward and that everything happens in due time, so never stop before you see your dreams fulfilled.

Despite the difficulties, keep going ahead. If establishing a difference in the world were easy, everyone would do it, but that's not so; that's why only the strong-spirited individuals enjoy such a privilege.

It is clear that the tests that you'll have to pass to get there are not easy and that sometimes you will fall and rise, you'll fall back and rise again, and then you'll have only one more thing to do, to stand up, because the real champion remains constant until the last minute.

Don't expect big if you dream small, nor expect small if you dream big.

Well then, are you going to let someone else act for you? Come on, don't be mediocre!

PARKER, MY LOVE!

He knows perfectly what I feel towards him and our relationship. He knows it perfectly because he has lived it with me. But for this section to have the impact that I expect, I want you to know also what I feel for him. So, I will share with you a very special letter that I gave him at the beginning of this 2010:

I would like to write a poem...

I would like to write a poem so that what my heart feels might remain captured in letters.

I would like to write a poem for each time that I might not be at your side, a sheet of paper that might help you remember that you're the soul of my body and the beating of the heart that gives me life.

I would like to write a poem that might speak for me when my words were away.

But after trying to write that poem, I realized that when reason takes care of words, the heart becomes mute, and the more silent it remains, the purer it becomes, cause it stops thinking and just deals with feelings.

So my mute and pure heart has ceased to use reason and is fully committed to this feeling for you. And since I will not write a poem, I'll tell you what it would have had if it existed:

In it I would invent three stronger words than "I love you" so you could know that I haven't love someone more than you. And that I will not be capable to love someone else because my love for you will never end.

I would explain to you that the before and the after you, simply, do not exist.

I would describe the chills that run through my body when you get close, and the tears that, for some odd reason, want to come to my eyes when you kiss me.

I would explain to you that loving you is the strongest feeling I've lived, and that the best moments of my life have been with you.

I would confess to you that to imagine me without you is the saddest scene I visualize in my life, which means that I cannot live without you; that having you has become a need.

I would tell you that the most valuable thing I have is my present, and that my present is you. And that I want my future to be with you.

In it I would reveal that you are the owner of my sighs, of my smiles and of my dreams; that my life is yours and that I have given it to you because with no one I feel more safe and protected than with you. You have taught me to love madly and passionately.

I would tell you that in front of you I'm defenseless, because love doesn't allow me to resist anything. My self-control is null while I'm next to you.

Finally, I would try to explain to you all this mixture of feelings that invade me so that you might be able to share them with me, and so that, when you see me smile, you could understand that it's only the reflection of all these emotions yearning to get out.

When I finish writing, I notice that a kind of poem has been captured, and I realize the irony of it, since my heart, mute of love, wasn't able to express his feelings with words;

but reason has told me that this time she has set up a truce with him and they have teamed up to help me express my feelings in writing so that in a piece of paper they remain reflected forever.

I met him the first day of classes at the University, when he went to ask how he could join the taekwondo team of which I was already a member. And it was not love at first sight, since my first impression was: "What he wants?"

All the romance started after the second day, when he showed up at the first workout and I realized that "that guy" was really grabbing my attention. During the week, the coach kept testing him to decide whether he could stay or not in the team, and inwardly I begged that he was accepted because physically he attracted me a lot. I thought he would be another motivation for me to go training.

In fact, I was not interested in anything else since I had just finished my old relationship (which you already know very well) and it wasn't precisely a new one what I needed.

The coach accepted him and, from there on, I was destined to see him Monday through Friday from one to three in the afternoon. He was marvelous. Even seeing him at the workouts ceased to be enough for me: I wanted to know him more. So I started with the typical glances and I asked my friends to investigate if Parker had some interest in me. But none of that worked.

Santiago (him) kept looking for me while we were apart, and I thought that if he still loved me and we had been together for so long, I had no reason to wear myself out due to someone who was not even interested in me. Thereby, we started going out again after ten months of separation, and I had to forget Parker completely.

That wasn't so easy, especially because I continued seeing him every day, but frankly I had got used to the idea that he would be my friend and nothing else.

Things with Santiago didn't work too well when returned because everything was forced and love had already faded away. Although I had promised not to hurt him, all that happened afterwards was very unfair.

I didn't know how to tell him that our relationship was over. I didn't want to deceive him, but at the expense of that I was cheating myself, trying to convince me that I still loved him. It was neither his fault to keep loving me, nor mine to no longer love him. Everything was simply very unfair and I was too weak to leave him. Here I will quote Kundera once more: "But it is precisely the weak who has to be strong and decide to leave when the strong is too weak to be able to hurt the weak. One becomes aware of his weakness and doesn't want to fight against it, but surrender."

In the end I left him. I hurt him, but I was honest with myself. From then on his feelings towards me are resentful, but I hope that time will give things a positive course.

I stopped pretending and I accepted that, although I wasn't looking for him, I still liked Parker. Once I got free, we began to become closer friends. Santiago found out about this and thus he tried to become his friend at all costs. He talked to him about me, and he assured him that he would never be happy with me because he was the only one who understood me. He also quoted him the loyalty that friends must show each other by never going out with a former girlfriend of a friend.

His plan worked perfectly, because while something more than a friendship was coming into being between Parker and me, that faithfulness pact prevented us to be together.

I must confess that I was desperate. I didn't know if that fixed friendship would be stronger than our thing. I thought to give up more than once, but the truth is that I

couldn't. How could I resist him? Instead of being angry at the attitude that he had adopted, I felt proud of him because he has proved to be a faithful and respectful friend.

The moment I thought my efforts were in vain, I told Parker that I was sick of that situation. He knew what I felt, it was obvious. I also told him that he could take all the time he wanted to decide whether he loved me or not, or if that friendship of his was more important, but that I was not going to be waiting for him. And all I wanted was to keep loving him the same when he decided to love me.

I used the technique that would have succeeded with me: pressure. And it surely worked, because shortly after he spoke with Santiago to make him clear that, despite their good friendship, between him and I there was something and he wanted to make sure that there would be no problem between them. Santiago gave the impression to understand it. However, today I cannot say that they are good friends; rather, they seem gentlemen who greet each other only as a courtesy.

After that talk, our thing started flourishing, and a few weeks later he asked me to be his girlfriend.

Since then everything has been marvelous. I could even say perfect. We have been together almost a year and our relationship thrives and gets gradually stronger. We are both convinced that when you love a person, you must love him or her unreservedly, even if you can get hurt. And we both love each other that way.

More than sharing tastes or activities, I am convinced that we both complement each other. We enjoy spending time together, talking and laughing about anything. But the most important thing is that we encourage each other to follow our personal goals. I believe in him as much as he believes in me.

Our story keeps being built, but I can say with certainty that I've found in him the person in whom my feelings of admiration, respect, attraction, love, passion, happiness and security get united. And finding all this in one single person is not a coincidence, it's a blessing.

Although he wasn't the first guy in my life, nor the first who I loved, who I hugged or kissed with such an emotion, he is the one who has made me intensify any love feeling.

REARRANGING THE PYRAMID

Writing in a few pages the life of a person, be it long or short, is absolutely impossible. We would have to stop living and devote our whole time to write. That's why we pick moments that have marked us to create a kind of summary of what has been our life.

While it is true that the life of a person is not limited to be born, grow, procreate and die, why so much talk about these stages? Precisely because they are events that leave us marked. In addition to these events that recur in almost every person (almost, as not all procreate... and some don't grow), each person brings a different hint to his/her life, based on the circumstances he/she had lived. Some stay in the former basic development. But it's not age—however important it is—which determines the number of experiences, but rather the opening of the senses to capture all that happens around us every second. And all these are new experiences given that nothing gets repeated; so, if we let them pass unnoticed we will lose thousands of them in one single day.

All the knowledge acquired, and the one we expect to gain with the passage of time, take up a particular place in our personal scale, which I call our pyramid.

What I want to get at with this is that in this succinct autobiography I've tried to emphasize some of the more important events of my life, but I have set aside for the end those at the summit of my pyramid.

Sometimes we categorize inaccurately our pyramid because we assign a wrong value to things that happen to us, and when we try to rank the facts according to their value, we may have above an event that is perhaps less important than another that we've placed below.

How can we assess them all accurately? Of course, each of us has his/her own set of values and, based on it, we give things a meaning.

Of course, and as a personal suggestion: money must never be placed on top of the pyramid as it would become the driving force of our acts, our master, while occasionally it's good to hold our money in our hands, but only to recall who's master of whom.

Besides being a beautiful fact, love is a blessing, so we have to live it and value it as such. The greater value events turn up at unexpected moments, so you must never stop being on the lookout.

We must not let our pyramid be ruled by one specific objective because, if for some reason it doesn't materialize, our world would collapse, and no event is guaranteed, except death. If the highest rung is occupied by a person and for some reason he/she dies, we must understand that this fact is not a punishment, because death is just one stage of life to which we will all arrive sooner or later, so we have to face it. On the other hand, if that person were to let us down and that destroys us, it will be our fault for having entrusted all our emotional integrity to someone else instead of ourselves.

According to my experience and consideration, the only people who will never let us down are our relatives, and with them we share the majority of the most important events of our life. So, for me, they occupy the top rung.

Relating all that I have lived with them would entail writing another whole book; However, it can be summarized in that they have always been present: in my good times and the not so good ones.

If they hadn't accompany me to each of my contests to encourage me, none of it would have been worth. If they hadn't motivate me to train myself in that sport and to persevere until reaching my goals, surely I would not have achieved anything. Without their support I would not have been able to go to any workout get-together out of home. If they hadn't been with me to share every victory, none would have had any sense. If they hadn't shown up at my defeats, for sure I would have cracked and hardly would I have recovered.

In short, they are the driving force of my acts, they are my strength and my happiness. My family is everything to me. My parents are the persons I most admire. Definitely, when I grow up, I want to be like them. I owe them all I am for always guiding me and my brothers on the right track.

What would I be without Isa, my older sister, who inspires me many of my ideas, although she surely doesn't know it? Besides, who would I disclose my joys and love disappointments at dawn but to her, who, most of all, never judges me. By the way, evoking with her our experiences when we were little girls is hilarious. I think she's the one who has more faith in me; sometimes even more than myself.

Camila (Margot, Camote, Camel, Mrs Vancis) is the light of my days. We never get tired of playing and doing foolish things, although we're no longer little girls... well, I'm not really convinced of this. Besides sharing joys, we share our daily experiences. We talk a lot and we coincide in our way of thinking. It's really impossible to get angry with her, as I don't know anyone more peaceful. Always tender and good, she is an excellent company and I never lack her unconditional support.

Ale, my faithful pupil, is the youngest of the four and, certainly, the most noble. He listens to me whenever I have some advice for him, and he tries to put it into practice. He trusts me as much as I trust him. When we were kids we played all the time; detectives and wrestling were our favorite games, and each of us even had a character: he was detective Jenkins, Cami was McDowell, I was Terroba and Isa, although she never agreed, was Roland. During my combats he's always the most excited, and I love to see him shouting from the stands. He found it hard to discover his favorite activity, but he finally found it and now music is his greatest passion. I'm sure he'll be a great artist.

I couldn't fail to recall our holidays in Chiapas, every year, with my grandparents, nor the adventures with my uncles and cousins, but in the end... all of them know that they are who I most appreciate in the world; they are my top, my family. And my family, as well as every moment of my life, God has given me. I am deeply grateful to Him for how much He loves me.

TWENTY YEARS... LATER

The present is all that we have, given that the past has fallen behind—we only keep memories of it—and the future is uncertain. However, it is important that we get a slight idea of where and how we want to see ourselves in the following years (even months or days) because, as I've already said, that will be our motivation. In the end, the result will always be a surprise, but that's what makes our life exciting.

Before wanting anything, we must be disposed to exert ourselves to get it. Moreover, we must also be aware that every decision will involve a waiver. So, based on this, here is how I see myself in the future:

"I'm back in the national team. I'm more prepared than ever and fully aware of what it means to be here. I train for the greatest competition of my life: the Olympic Games. Each workout and sacrifice is worthwhile, since the date gets closer and I want to be in the best conditions. For these days there's not a second chance.

"I've fought several combats and none has been easy, but I feel very skillful, strong and intelligent. I am about to advance to the final round of the Olympics, and this moment, rather than to fight, is to enjoy... Sweat runs down my face and the incessant blood through my veins. I throw my kicks at the precise moment and points appear in my favor. There's no way to wipe the smile off my lips because the clock keeps ticking and I am just a few seconds away from glory. My parents and siblings are somewhere in the stadium, shouting and jumping, although I can't see them.

"Suddenly, the hand of the referee indicates that the bout is over. Now I can hear all the shouts around me. All my emotions are skin-deep. I turn my face to heaven and I thank God. I'm Olympic champion!

"Finally I'll be able to get into Harvard and study a master's degree. My desire was to take there a bachelor's degree, but at the time I opted for taekwondo and I didn't even submitted an application at that prestigious University. Now the opportunity has popped up and one of my dreams will be fulfilled.

"It's time to put into practice what I've learned all these years of study. I work at a law firm and I've also joined a political party. I'm eager to bring some good to society, fight for it, even if that entails going against the flow... In practice I've learned a lot and I've solved many cases, but my passion is to fight for human rights, so I plan to join the Mexican diplomatic corps and represent my country at the United Nations.

"Undoubtedly, one of the most important events in the life of women is their wedding, and my case is no exception. I'm happily married and I have four wonderful children. There's no greater happiness than hearing them call me mom and to know that next to me they feel protected. He is an excellent father and the perfect husband. We love each other... without stop. The unity with my family strengthens me and makes me feel fulfilled. With them I can't ask for anything else.

“Since I participate in politics, my ambitions have been great. I ran for the Presidency of the Republic and I hope to be soon the first female President of Mexico. The first thing that comes to my mind when I think of that position is responsibility, not power. It’s time to break paradigms and to do it I’ll mostly need lots of courage.

“Holding in my hands a book written by me has been a longing, and today it’s a reality. I’ve analyzed every word captured on paper and all are at the right place. I hope that my ideas can be understood and that they reach many people. If my words benefit one of them, my goal will be accomplished.”

You must start today, there’s no time for tomorrow. As well as I have the aspirations that I’ve just shared with you, I know that each of you has your own, equally important and valuable. But none will be useful if they are not put into practice, and today is the day to start.

Revolution does not mean to rise up in arms, and even less when we’re talking of a personal revolution. I insist that seeing our lives from an objective viewpoint, as simple spectators, learning of past experiences and setting off for the future knowing our real strengths and weaknesses, is to make a change, an internal revolution aimed at improving ourselves.

The consequence of this revolution is our personal freedom, according to which our life is not subject to the judgment of anyone but ours, which from now on is an objective judgement. Freedom will also stem from the acceptance of ourselves with each of our traits, and the confidence that we can dream big and achieve the most ambitious.

Each and every one of these situations and the decisions we freely make will give us personal independence.

May our thoughts and actions be free, and be guided by feelings, counterweighed with reason! Only a free and independent person can join society to provide it something good.

I invite you to change, to become independent and, most of all, to be free in body, mind and spirit.