



**"A Town Without Violence"**

*Karen, age 10, Colombia – December 14, 2008*

I will start with a joke: A boy said “Mommy, may I go to the cemetery?” His mother said “No, because a witch might get you.” Then he asked again, “Mommy, can I please go to the cemetery?” And the mother said “No, because a vampire might get you.” He begged, “Mommy, can I PLEASE go to the cemetery?” Finally she said “Go.” Suddenly, in the cemetery, a witch appeared and shrieked “Look at my nails, look at them!” And then a vampire screamed “Look at my teeth, look at them!”

Then the boy shouted, “Smell my armpit, smell it!” and they both ran away.

For fun I like to play PlayStation and to play around the house. The PlayStation belongs to my step daddy. I also play “*Jeimi*” which is a game where you form a tower with six stones, and then you take a ball and throw it to knock the stones over. We also play a game where one kid bends down and the others jump over and say the rhyme “*contra pulsero, uno mambruno, dos patacos, tres ligros, cuatro montesalto.*” My favorite place is the pool, because I always go swimming into the deep end and I love it.

In a typical day I wake up, eat breakfast, take a shower, and brush my teeth. Then it takes two minutes to get to school and start studying. In the second period I got seven bad grades, but in the third period I improved them and didn’t get any bad grades. I like math and arts the most. After school I take off my uniform and help my mother clean the house. At night I watch “*Pasión de Gavilanes.*” Then I eat and watch “*Vecinos*” and “*Desafío,*” and then I go to bed.

When I grow up I want to be a doctor so when people in my family get sick I can heal them. My family members are the most important people to me because someday they could die and I would miss them so much. Where I live people get killed sometimes without doing anything. Sometimes people kill just because they think someone doesn’t like them. My saddest memory is my father’s death, because I loved him so much.

I remember the last day I saw him four years ago. I found 500 pesos on the floor and I went with him and my sister to buy some stuff. When we returned home we played “*mamasita.*” My sister played the father, I played the mother, and my dad played the son. While we were playing a car arrived and took him away. He said good bye and gave me a kiss, wishing me the best things and saying that I must be good and obey my mother. Once I knew he was murdered, I didn’t want to see him but I did go to the funeral.

My happiest memory is about my dad too. I always went to Medellín with him to ride in the crazy cars and things like that. He used to ride with me. And we played lots of games. He always tickled me and sat me on his shoulders like he was a horse and I was the rider. Then he went running and it was all fun. When it was raining he always gave me his jacket and we played hide and seek. And when I was very small he got me a dog, pigeons, bunnies and small turtles. I always checked on them to see if they were warm and well covered in their box.

If my father was here now, I would tell him that I love him so much and I miss him. I want him to be with me in the same way that other kids are with their fathers.

To me peace is a town without any violence. I think that people should not cause anger and bad feelings in others, because if they do they can get killed. There are very bad people that kill others because they are thieves or murderers. But they should talk and say things to avoid killing. If I am very angry but nobody did anything to me, why should I kill someone? First you have to talk. People should treat each other well without shouting at each other. If people treat me well, then I will treat others well. Violence is very sad, so people better think first before doing something violent.

I'm grateful for having a dad who was very good, and I'll keep him in my heart always.

*Karen is receiving help and support through the organization Art for Refugees in Transition (A.R.T.). To learn more about A.R.T., please visit [www.artforrefugees.org](http://www.artforrefugees.org).*

**Discussion questions:**

1. Do you think that most violent people are *inherently* violent, or do you think that certain life experiences *caused* them to be violent?
2. If a person commits a violent act, do you think he or she suffers mentally for it, even if he or she isn't caught?
3. To Karen peace is "a town without violence." What is peace to you?