

January 24, 2023

Dear Alan Gratz,

“It isn’t me *against* the world...It’s everyone, working together. And not *against* the world either, but *for* each other. *That* was how they survived.” —Brandon, *Ground Zero*

These words are most likely familiar to you. This was the realization of a shaken kid you brought to life. Brandon. He is a symbol of Misery, which is a speck compared to the world, but the speck that swallows us whole.

Misery is something not to be overlooked. Everyone meets Misery, everyone experiences Misery, everyone knows Misery. Misery is the enemy that follows you around. No one can avoid the presence of Misery.

I used to believe my life was harder than others. I used to wish it was possible to swap lives with someone else. So my life could be easier, and I would not struggle as much. I would envy others.

Then you opened my eyes. While I was comfortably relaxing on my luxury couch, I learned about the traumatic experiences life brings, and no matter how hard we try, those moments will forever stay. That was when I had a realization.

We all have challenges to face. And they are tests. Because only some have the power to rise above it all. I did not go through 9/11. Hopefully, I will never go through something as horrid as that. But we all have our moments. Some lives may appear better than others. Some *are* better than others. Which teaches me to be grateful. Because there is always someone who has it worse than you. And they will never know that. You never know what you are missing, or what you don’t have, until you meet it.

I can appreciate what I have, because I have seen people with less. I have seen people who go through unfair things. Life changing things. Things that break them down to their very core, leaving room to grow back stronger. Misery is a forest fire, it destroys all life, but leaves room for more. Once Misery leaves, you’re just left with Hope. And the Hope clears the air for understanding and acceptance. Once you accept the Misery, you accept the world, and every part of it. The Good and the Bad.

Misery. Some people meet Misery, and then walk right past it. But others linger there, possibly forever. Everyone meets Misery. You can’t reach the top until you touch the bottom. Until you reach Ground Zero.

“In an instant, the world can change forever.”

Sincerely,  
Mary Stowe  
Grade 5