

99 WRITING

Giving Shelter

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TYPE
NARRATIVE

On a dark and gloomy night, with droplets of water crashing against our little blue car, my mother and I were exiting the 10 Freeway on our way to church. The sound of the water was like a dramatic opera song; with each moment the droplets sounded heavier and heavier. We were waiting for the light to turn green when I noticed a tiny old man sitting by the side of the road on a bench stool, waiting in the frigid rain. The man's physical demeanor made it seem like he was fifty, but as I noticed the creases in his face I began to think otherwise. His face had blotches of dirt and the sun had aged his skin like a dry old prune. His dark clothes were torn and faded, and his shoes were ragged.

As I continued to observe the man, it became clear to me that the streets were his home. I immediately looked away when he noticed that I was staring at him, for I could not look the feeble old man in the eye. It was not because I was ashamed of him or myself, it was because I looked back on my life and realized that I had a lot to be grateful for, like my family, home, and shelter. I just assumed that

everyone had all those basic things in life.

Sitting there in our little blue car, my mother noticed my curiosity in the man. She also realized that he was homeless and that he was in need of shelter. Before the light got the chance to turn green, my mother ordered me to get our emergency umbrella out of the glove compartment and hand it to her. She quickly rolled down her window and called to the man, waving the umbrella at him. When the man noticed that she was talking to him, he quickly ran to her to receive the umbrella. It was like watching a frozen statue come to life; the man moved with so much speed and agility that it seemed like he was flying towards our car. The sound of his feet colliding with the wet cement, his steps getting louder and louder as he approached our car, was nerve-wracking because we didn't want the light to turn green and for him to miss us. As we were turning, the man was waving and yelling a thank you with what seemed to be the last of his energy. As we were driving away, I caught a glimpse of gratitude on his face. I mentioned to my mother that that was our only umbrella as I realized that we would have to walk in the rain when we got out of our car. In that moment my mother told me, "He who gives to the poor shall not lack: but he that hides his eyes shall have many a curse,"—something that would become even more than a life lesson; it would become a virtue that I live by.

When we arrived to our house and I took that first step out of the car, the sharp hard wind hit me and the droplets crashed against the top of my head, and suddenly I stepped into his shoes. I started to realize that this wasn't the only tough situation he would have to face. He would have to face not having enough to eat some nights or not having a

decent place to sleep—all the things that I never paid attention to in my daily life.

As I walked to my house, I kept remembering the man's expression and how I felt fulfilled by doing something good for someone without expecting any benefits. I found myself skipping and jumping in the rain, enjoying the feeling that I had and embracing the fact that people who do good feel good. Then I entered my home and the rain stopped; the wind had vanished and so had the moment.

As time passed, I still thought back on that moment and tried to find the meaning in the words that my mother said. It wasn't until I started growing up, and I was put into life situations where I was given the chance to do something for someone else out of the kindness of my heart, that I found my virtue. To this day, I find myself making small sacrifices, like giving my sandwich to a dog or a few dollars that I can spare to a sweet old woman. The act of giving has really become a part of my life; even when it is something small, I know that a little act of kindness can go a long way.