

# The view



Life is short.

Be swift to love!

Make haste to be kind!

—Henri Frederic Amiel

(19th-century Swiss

writer and philosopher)

## By Nyx Martinez

I stared out of the bus, past the rusty window frame. The day was off to a gloomy start and so was I. Lost in thought, recalling things that would have been better left forgotten, I sank into a dark mood. Strange, isn't it, how when we're feeling down we tend to busy our mind with thoughts that only waste our time and sap our spirits?

The bus rolled to a halt. Again. Manila traffic. I glanced at my watch. Six A.M. Too early for traffic to be moving this slowly. I had a deadline to meet and hadn't gotten much sleep the night before. Angrily, I turned back to the window.

A young street vendor was selling black boots that he had shined to a bright finish. I could almost read his mind, feel his hopes that today would be good. Perhaps he'd earn a few more pesos than yesterday and have a better meal tonight. Just maybe.

A prospective buyer stopped. He wore faded jeans and a worn shirt. Slung over his shoulder was an imitation Jansport backpack. He held up a pair of boots and admired them. *Someday, maybe someday*, I felt he was thinking, I'll have enough money to buy some boots like these.

I wondered what his daily earnings came to. Two hundred, maybe three

hundred pesos? The boots cost twice that much. His money was needed elsewhere—lots of elsewheres. He probably had a family back home in the province who needed to eat, and debts to get out from under. His money was spent before he earned it. The boots would have to wait.

The man looked wearily at the vendor. His eyes said it all. *Not today. And probably not tomorrow.* The two made small talk as if they were old friends. They laughed and shared another story before my bus inched down the block and stopped again.

This time, I found myself staring at a wrinkled old lady selling candy. She sat on a low bench as the thronging crowd moved around her. Her eyes—the part of them her sagging skin didn't shield—told of sadness. About what, I didn't know. Maybe the simple fact that today would be just like yesterday and the day before, like all the days that had turned into years, a day just like she knew tomorrow would be. She would sit on that stool from sunrise to sundown. A few people would buy bits of candy, but nobody would notice her.

After dropping coins into her callused hand they would hurry off, strangers still. The day would move on

with them. The old lady would grow older and not any happier for it.

As I watched, the corners of her mouth fell even more. She stared off into the distance as a glistening drop formed in her eye and ran down her cheek. I had to look away.

A traffic controller was busy at the corner hurrying pedestrians across the intersection. Was he, too, carrying some unseen sorrow? Was he also haunted by thoughts that would have been better left forgotten? If something was bothering him, he couldn't afford to let it show. He had work to do today, traffic to move, order to keep.

A twenty-something woman crossed the street at his signal, and I tried to imagine the world through her eyes. What was her story? Where was she going? What was her name? ... Why did I even care?

My mind snapped back to my own situation and I realized that something had struck a chord inside, against my own will it seemed. It was odd that I should be feeling someone else's emotion. Or was it? Was it okay to be calloused to the feelings of others, to go through my days as if all the nameless people in the crowds around

me were mere props in my world? No. Each stranger was someone's mother, someone's child, someone's husband, someone's brother, someone's someone. And they all mattered.

As I thought back on my own problems, whatever had been bothering me before seemed trivial. I don't have a sad hard life, living and working on the street, with pollution stinging my eyes and hardening my lungs. I don't have to worry every waking moment about how to make ends meet. Sure, I have problems of my own, but by comparison, life has been good to me. And from all indications it will continue that way.

The bus eventually picked up speed and I got on with my day. But in those few glimpses out the bus window, God had given me something that I hope I never lose—empathy, a heart for what others are going through, and a desire to help make their world a little brighter.

Out of life's window, my view may change everyday, but there will always be someone in need passing there. What can I do for them? Real compassion does not just observe and then turn away ... and neither should I.

You can always  
drop a little love into  
the hearts of those  
you pass by, even if  
only with a word, a  
smile, or a look of  
sympathy, and they  
will know that God  
has loved them that  
day. His Spirit will  
tell them so. A little  
bit of love goes such  
a long way!

—David Brandt Berg



Do you notice those around you? Do you stop to see if they need something—a listening ear, a smile, some help along the way? We all need it at some time or another, and when we see those who need help more than we do, it should make us thankful for what God's given us.

Go out of your way to give something to someone today—something that can't be repaid, something that can't be returned, something that will be a pure gift of love. You'll feel better too, because it will get your eyes off your own problems and onto someone else's. Keep doing that day after day, and you'll get more out of life! That's God's love in you, reaching out, loving unselfishly. He loved us first, when most of us were unlovable and had no way to pay Him back. He kept loving us until He brought out our lovable side, that part of us that wants to reach out and give that same love to others.

So follow your heart. Give love when it's needed. You'll see how it will change your life. Love can change your life! Try giving it away as much as you can, and see the change it brings in you.

—David Brandt Berg