June 7th, 2019

**Short Story- Benji’s Apartment Crisis**

Fire. Burning. Heat.

The flames burned and coiled around the opening of the melted glass. A blazing inferno raged on as if it were a gigantic torch extending out of its cage, wrestling for release.

I should have expected something to make the day worst after an unusually tiring day at RBC. Emails left unanswered and work untouched because of an all-day workshop left me wanting to relax and forget about the stacks of paper on my desk. Instead, I was dealing with this mess.

“Benji!” the clerk at the front entrance exclaimed, “Sorry about your apartment.”

“How did this happen?” I muttered to myself as I bolted up the stairs all the way to the 12th floor. I almost burst in to my 1-bedroom studio had it not been for the three firefighters in front of the door trying to battle the flames.

It felt like eternity waiting for the firemen to do their job. A couple hours later the fire department told me that it started because my toaster was half unplugged. A stupid toaster caused me to lose everything, including my bank account because nobody told me of renter’s insurance. With no money, and nowhere to go, I was at a loss of what to do.

The entire night I walked around the dingy slums of New York City, inviting myself to shelter after shelter, but all of them were full, or so they were saying. As a last ditched effort to appear homeless, I ripped up my dress pants and shirt for my last attempt at seeking shelter.

I sauntered up to the final shelter and knocked as hard as I could. I got very irritated that nobody would let me in.

After a few moments, the door flew open, “What do you want?” a burly man asked, agitated. “There’s a doorbell you know, we’re not that poor.”

“Just want a place to sleep for a couple of nights until I get my next paycheck, not too much to ask, isn't it?” I hissed, frustrated.

“Not here mate, we’re full!” shouted the man, whothen proceeded to slam the door in my face.

I woke up to the sound of car horns along a busy street in Manhattan. I dragged myself out of the alley I was sleeping in and onto the main street, dodging and weaving around people getting to their job. I was just like that yesterday, a normal person going to work, but I can't go into work with ripped clothing. They would fire me on the spot. Yet I had no other option, I had to get paid.

I became the laughing stock of the office for the entire day. Nobody helped me with my clothes. My boss reluctantly gave me my paycheck early to get me sorted for tomorrow, so I didn’t embarrass our clients. I used my work phone to get in touch with a distant cousin that could take me in for a couple of days for free.

I arrived at his homey house on the outskirts of town just before sunset. I knocked on his door. I knocked again. And again. There was nobody home. What a great cousin he is, not even letting me know that he wasn’t going to be home. I decided to sit on his front porch to wait for him. He has to come home sometime? Right?

After another long day at work trying to forget my cousin’s betrayal, I arrived at a rental that I quickly found while researching during lunch. It didn’t look like much from the outside, but it’s better than nothing at all. I also supposedly had to share the space with a roommate, which bothered me, but not to the point of rejecting the opportunity. I knocked on the door of the small bungalow.

The door swung open, revealing a cheery middle-aged man, “Hey, Benji right? Heard you were staying with me. Name’s Eric, why don’t I show you around?”

I let Eric do all the talking while touring me around the house. He was quite energetic and excited after all.

During the dinner we shared together that night, I told him my adventure of my apartment burning down.

“Let’s hope that this is your last place!” Eric laughed.

“I think it is my last.” I shared a slight smile with him. I finally found a home after the bright, rushing flames encased my 1-bedroom studio.