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The apartment smelled of old paper and dried lavender, a scent that had been grandfathered in by its previous tenant, Mrs. Elara. Elias, the new resident, inhaled deeply as he pushed the final, heavy box—labeled “Miscellany & Sentimental”—into the center of the living room. It was an involuntary act of respect for the residual life of the space.

Morning sunlight stretched across the worn wooden floors, illuminating dust particles that danced in the air. Elias felt an odd comfort in the weight of the silence, as though the apartment had accepted him already. He unfolded a small chair, sat down, and allowed the quiet to settle inside his chest.