

A Place to Belong

Home. I've always taken that word for granted...until it was taken away from me.

Sasha closed her laptop and sighed. This was going to be a LOT harder than she thought it would be. Why, why, why did her first assignment at her new school have to be an essay about what their home meant to them? Sasha sniffed, trying not to cry as she looked out the window, memories flooding back to her.

Dad walked through their door, covered in smoke.

"What happened?" Mom asked, distressed.

"There was a fire at the shop," he explained, "Thankfully, everyone survived, but we all lost our jobs." Sasha gulped, realizing that their entire life was about to change.

Sasha, coming back to her senses, opened her laptop trying to focus on her assignment rather than daydream. But it was useless. All she could think about was why she was even here. A couple of days ago her family had gotten evicted from their home. It was because of their father. There was a fire at the auto shop her father worked at. Everyone lost their job, and he couldn't find another one before it was time to pay their monthly rent at their apartment. The landlord let them stay, but when they couldn't pay rent for the next three months, he finally told her family that they had to leave. Now, they lived in a small, one-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment with her grandparents. That was why Sasha couldn't think of anything to write about. How could she write about her home, when she didn't even have one?

"Sasha?"

Sasha turned to the sound of her mother's voice. "What are you doing up so late?" She asked, "It's almost ten-thirty, and you have school tomorrow." Sasha turned to look at the clock, and to her surprise, the glowing red numbers did shine the time of ten-twenty-seven.

"Sorry Mom," Sasha said quietly, trying not to disturb anyone who was trying to sleep. But all that did was get her to roll her eyes. Whether she whispered or not, no one would get any sleep. Everyone was crammed into one room. Sasha's mom and dad slept on a big air mattress on the floor, her grandparents slept in their bed, and Sasha slept on the couch in the living room. "I was just trying to finish my English assignment. We're supposed to write about what home means to us, but I don't know what to write about because we don't have a home. I mean, should I write about our old house? That doesn't seem right, though, because we don't live there anymore so..." Sasha looked down at her lap, wringing her hands. She always did that when she was trying to keep her emotions controlled.

Mom sat down in the seat across from Sasha and took her hands, holding them gently. "Sasha, when you think of home, what comes to mind?"

"Well," Sasha started, "I guess I think of my volleyball team and church. I feel like I can go there almost every day and feel welcomed right away. I feel...I feel like I belong there." Sasha stopped talking and looked at her mother with bewilderment in her eyes.

"Well, there you go!" Mom said, giggling quietly. "Now, you know what to write about! Get to bed soon, though. I don't want you sleeping through the school day."

Sasha smiled, kissing her mom goodnight, and turning her attention to the task at hand. She deleted her first sentence and began her essay.

Home. Some may think of it as a roof over their head or a place to sleep at night. But for me, it's a place where I feel like I belong. I know, weird, right? But I feel like, even if everything else was going wrong, or my world was shattering in front of me, and I still had a place where I would feel welcome or a place where I knew I would feel loved, I would be happy. Home, to me, isn't somewhere where I sleep at night. It's the place where I feel like I can be the weird, crazy person I am, and still feel like I belong.

Sasha looked at her essay with pride. Even though she had lost her home, she knew there were still places where she could be herself and still feel like she was welcomed.

Quietly, Sasha slipped under her covers, turned out the light, and dreamed of tomorrow.