

Getting Help - A Dream Paints It Black!

By Sara Emmons

At the end of my work day, I returned home, tired. I tried unlocking the door of my furnished apartment, but the key failed, for the first time in all the years I had lived there. Looking up, I saw the note on my door from my landlord. It penciled, "I rekeyed your apartment. Your belongings are in the yard. Remove them before tomorrow or I will haul them to the dump."

Shocked, I cell-phoned my landlord saying, "Why are you doing this? Never was I late on rent. I kept the place clean and well maintained – no damage! Neighbors never had any issues. My lease is still good for six months! I just paid you a month's rent three days ago, and now I have no place to go."

"Just deal with it!" he said and hung up.

Of course I had a case for illegal eviction! But it was getting dark. I sat in my truck shocked, trying to clear my mind. Still shaking with anger and fear, I began moving my stuff out of the apartment and into my truck. I got it done by midnight.

Within moments, after I had gotten back into my truck, I heard a door slam and voices from inside in my apartment, loud and laughing. One was my landlord. Another was his girlfriend. They had stolen my home! I called the police about intruders breaking into my home. But when police arrived the landlord convinced them that I had violated the lease, failed to pay rent.

Believing his lie, the police left. Suddenly, a gun appeared before my eyes with my landlord's finger on the trigger. "The cops will back me up! You're on my property. Get out!"

Shaken and not thinking clearly, I drove to another street and parked, realizing I was now homeless! The next morning, I called my boss, told him everything, and he gave me a few days off to find a place to live. Even so, I would not have enough money to rent a cheap room somewhere. Living out of my truck in the days that followed meant finding a public bathroom to use and wash. It meant parking as secluded as possible, where onlookers and security police would not make me move. I had nothing to do but think and figure it out.

Then I woke up! Yes, I woke up. I just was dreaming! I was not homeless, not out of work. The walls of my apartment were surrounding me. I was safe. But I'll never forget that dream.

It deeply impressed me with what it must be like to be homeless and helpless. Today, I am way more grateful for life – even the simple things – like running water, like coffee in the morning, like my own bathroom to use any time I want. My own bed with all its lumps is way better than the sidewalk, and way safer.

Being homeless and helpless on the dangerous street begs the question: What does help mean? Maybe we don't know until we've lost it.