

## *Kevin*

Every day I struggle living in this city,  
I'm a homeless man trying to make it.  
People walk by me and just stare,  
Because I have decent clothing on and don't look poor.  
I'm sorry I don't look dirty with ripped up clothes,  
I didn't know that was the requirement to be considered  
"homeless."  
I'm sitting here writing this in cold weather as my hands  
freeze,  
Trying to keep warm and keep my fingers moving with  
my thoughts.  
I have to express myself in some sort of way,  
That's what my therapist used to tell me.  
I haven't seen her in months, I miss her,  
She has helped me get through a lot of things.  
Obviously I don't have the money to see her now,  
As I'm just trying to survive day to day.  
Any change helps me to get some food,  
Most days are snacks just to keep me full.  
I'm lucky if I get a full meal at least 3 days a week,  
I have a store owner who gives me some leftover food  
when he closes.  
I feel bad for bothering him a lot of days,  
He rides around the neighborhood trying to find me  
sometimes.  
I have to go to different places to sleep every night,  
With so many loitering and trespassing signs around I

don't want the cops to arrest me.  
Then again being in a police station and a jail cell would be warmth,  
But I'm working on finding a way out of this.  
It's messed up how people don't show empathy or sympathy in this world,  
Like I miraculously decided to just be homeless.  
I just randomly woke up and went out to the streets,  
And I decided to hustle and try to survive in this cold world.  
Cold world full of mean people and it's cold outside right now,  
Shelters are jam packed and some nights I can get a cot to sleep on.  
There are picky homeless people when it comes to their food,  
Not me, I'll take whatever I can get to be honest.  
A lot of nights I cry and shed tears of sadness and sorrow,  
Losing my wife to cancer and my company shutting down killed me.  
We never had kids, but we had a great life but my life savings is gone,  
Trying to survive paying bills, rent, I eventually went broke.  
Evicted from my home and my family refused to help or take me in,  
I now pull a suitcase around with whatever clothes I have.  
In my 50s, companies don't want no old man working for them,  
They probably think I want all of this money to work.

I'm just trying to survive and get a place to live,  
But rent is ridiculously high and it's too much to think  
about.

So imagine what I'm thinking in my head right now,  
I'm thankful I have that store owner who lets me wash in  
his bathroom.

When he closes his store for the night, I go wash up and  
get a warm meal,

He tells me to come by and work for him some days.

Most people don't even have some of the things I have,  
I'm thankful for whatever I can get at this point.

He's struggling financially with his store and I feel for him,  
This economy is no joke and he told me his rent went up.  
It's been months since I felt the hot water of a shower hit  
my skin,

Oh how I'd kill just to sit in a bathtub and soak my aching  
bones.

Sleeping on hard floors has caused chronic back pain,  
My store owner friend slides me Tylenol after dinner to al-  
leviate the pain.

Depression is kicking in on me with another cold night  
upon me,

Trying to not think of the cold as my jacket keeps me  
warm.

Time to go into my spot in a dark alley where I'm unno-  
ticed,

Cuddle up under a dark space and try to get some shut  
eye.

Hopefully the rats don't walk on top of me tonight,  
I hope my body doesn't fail me like it has in the past on

winter nights.

I don't think people truly know what it's like to be homeless,

I'm quite sure the heat, lights, hot water and warm bed they take for granted.

The little things that we don't take into account,  
Are the things we need the most in our lives.

People are engulfed in their iPod, iPads and cell phones,  
The materialistic things that I no longer care about.

Waking up to blistering snow falling on my head and blowing in my face,

I don't know how much longer I can deal with this.

I wish a miracle would happen and someone saves me,  
Just a simple gesture of staying in someone's home for a little while.

The good news is I woke up to \$5 dollars in my small cup,  
It's decision making time on what I'm going to do with it.  
My soap is running low to wash up and so is my deodorant,

How am I going to eat today? I don't want to bother my store owner friend.

Thank goodness none of my high school classmates have seen me,

This city can get to you and you never know who you'll see.

Drugs and alcohol have never been my thing,  
But I have moments where I think it'll help me escape the sorrow I have within me.

Being strong and being a fighter is just not within me,  
Somehow people think when you're homeless you're men-

tally strong.

I sing songs in my head a lot of days to get by,

My favorite songs my wife and I used to dance to.

Spreading out my time between writing my journal,

Of life being a homeless man in a big city.

Sometimes people give me a little money,

And they ask me my story and what happened.

Today I managed to get a good ten dollars before it got dark,

Which allows me to get a good meal and a small bar of soap.

So people start thinking about the daily struggles being homeless,

You're alone, you have to survive on your own.

Start to think how you have to drag the last of your belongings around,

And having to find some place to sleep every night.

Imagine having to count on others to help you eat every single day,

There are no requirements or specifications on being homeless.

There is no required clothes and look to who can be homeless,

Stop being so judgmental of people and have a heart.

Be thankful for the smallest, simplest things daily,

Don't take having a home, bed, water, food and clothes for granted.

It doesn't matter what race I am or where I am from,

What matters is I'm a human being just like you.

Yes homeless people are ashamed of where they are and

their circumstances,  
A lot of us are thankful for whatever we get from others.  
I've gone from having a wife, career, home and two cars,  
To nothing at all, I've somehow been humbled by life's ex-  
periences.  
We forget to be human beings a lot of times,  
I used to be that man who would walk past homeless peo-  
ple.  
I'd lie to a lot of them about not having spare change or  
money,  
Thinking in my head that they're on drugs and how they  
ended up homeless.  
I was judgmental myself and took all of things I had for  
granted,  
I didn't pray, I didn't thank people for things because I ex-  
pected to have the basics.  
You never think your life can change in the blink of an  
eye,  
One minute you're living good and the next you have  
nothing.  
I used to think homeless people were lazy,  
Until I became homeless and met a few of them and heard  
their stories.  
Now I wish I was more empathetic and took time for peo-  
ple,  
Gave back to my community and did good deeds.  
I thought Corporate America and being married was  
enough,  
But it never is, especially if you know you can give more.  
Spending my weekends being lazy at home and sleeping

all day,  
Knowing I could've been in the world giving back.  
When my company had events to give back,  
I'd pass up on it to go shopping for things for myself.  
Reflecting on it now, being the selfish man I was,  
And now I don't own half of the things I bought.  
I was forced to sell those things to scrap for money,  
It became survival when my house got foreclosed.  
I was against having kids because I wanted my wife to myself,  
I didn't want kids taking time away from the woman I wanted for me.  
Praying each day that I get a second chance at life,  
I will do more to give back to the world and impact others.  
I want to help homeless people and do more to build shelters,  
Help others to get jobs and places to live.  
But it starts with me getting out of my current situation,  
It's all a process, one day at a time and having a strong mental focus.  
As I'm breathing cold air out of my mouth,  
Reflections of my guilt has me in a bad place. Sitting here writing my life story right now,  
And trying to tell people to be thankful for the necessities they have.  
There's so much more to my story and it saddens me,  
I pray that I get another chance at this life I'm given.  
I've lost track of the last time I slept in a warm bed,  
With heat keeping the house warm and being under covers.

Sunlight coming through my windows in the morning,  
Going to a bathroom with running water to brush my  
teeth.

Being able to use the bathroom and not having to rush,  
Instead I go to restaurants where I barely have 2 minutes  
to myself.

Cooking a nice meal after shopping at the supermarket,  
A refrigerator to keep my food in and keep it cold.

Being able to wash my underwear and clothes weekly,  
Now I spend my days washing my underwear with soap at  
my friend's store.

All of life's simplicities that you should always appreciate,  
Don't wait until you're down and out to reflect on these  
things.

This is my story, my name is Kevin,  
And I'm a homeless man fighting to survive.