



8. A House Is Not a Home

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Handout-1

As the narrator entered high school, in the first year he felt strange. In the junior school, he had been the head of the class and had enjoyed the privileges given to a senior. It was uncomfortable to be a fresher at the high school. The school was twice as big as the old one and to make matters worse, his friends had got into other schools. So, he was lonely too.

He would go back to his old school to meet the teachers because he missed his old school. The teachers would encourage him to meet new people in the new school and to get involved in new activities. They said that after some time he would adjust to the new surroundings and would love the new school more than the previous one. The teachers at the old school made him promise that he would visit them even when he got settled in the new school. The narrator tried to feel comfortable with these words of his teachers.

One Sunday afternoon an accident occurred. He was sitting at the dining table, doing his homework. The day was cold and windy and a fire was up at the fireplace. The narrator's pet cat was lying on top of the sheets of paper. It was making a purring sound and was hitting on his pen just for amusement.

As he had saved the cat, it remained close to him as he protected her.

His mother tended the fire to keep the house warm. There was smoke filling the room from the ceiling. Within a few seconds, it filled the room and they could hardly see. They made their way to the front door and escaped into the garden. The roof had caught fire which spread quickly. He ran to the neighbours to call the fire department while his mother ran inside the house.

His mother came out of the house, holding a small box full of papers. She threw it on the lawn and ran back. She was trying to save important things. As his father had died when he was small, she had to save his pictures and letters which were the only memories of his that they had. He screamed at her not to go inside the burning house.

He tried to run after her but was stopped by a firefighter. The street was full of fire fighter trucks. He tried to free himself and tried to explain that his mother had gone inside the house and he wanted to bring her back.

The firefighter did not let him go because he knew that the very next moment, he would run into the house.

He said that the other firefighters would bring her back.

The firefighter wrapped a blanket around him and made him sit in their car. A fireman came out of the house with his mother behind him. He took her to the fire truck and put

an oxygen mask on her mouth. He ran to her and hugged her. The thought of losing his mother aroused affection in his heart and all thoughts of dislike vanished from his mind.

The fireman calmed him and said that she'd be fine. She had inhaled smoke. Then the fireman ran into the house to bring down the fire while the mother - son duo sat there wondering on what had happened. He still remembers how he saw his house burn and felt helpless about it.

It took them five hours to control the fire. The house was totally burned down. Then he realized that his pet cat was missing. He could not find it. He got sad and depressing thoughts like difficulty adjusting to the new school, the burning of the house and losing his pet cat; made him cry. He thought that he was suffering many losses.

They were not allowed to go into the building as it could be dangerous. He wanted to know about his cat but he had to leave. They got into the car with none of their belongings. All they had were the few blankets given by the firemen. They spent the night at his grandparent's house.