

Shelter

by Aileen McPherson

What is shelter?
Is it a house, apartment, motorhome,
a camper, car, or maybe a tent.

Yes, all of these are shelters.

Others will say, but a rescue mission is a
shelter, and I say, *no* it is not!

When a shelter source forces those it helps
to prostrate themselves for a meal, a shower, a
bed, or worse – a mat on the floor, this is not
shelter it's sacrilege.

My first experience in a shelter was around
11, when my family was split apart – mom, me
and my two younger brothers, were taken to a
large room full of bunk beds and cots,

I wondered – did Dad's room look the same,
while mom cried herself to sleep.

The second time was in a rescue mission, I
was 13. We stayed in a family room. It had a
small closet set between two sets of bunkbeds,
and a closeable door.

We arrived in summer, but later in winter
after the daily services, which you had to
attend before every meal or you could not eat,
a couple was signing up for beds.

Later that evening, while I was passing the
women's bunk room, it held 10 sets of bunk
beds, one of the ladies was trying to comfort
the woman previously seen downstairs. She
was crying buckets, saying he didn't get a bed,
that there are no rooms for couples, only
families. We should be thankful. Here she
began to cry harder.

Now this puzzled and confused, since a
family room sat open same as ours, ready to
use and able to hold two couples, let alone one.
Were they not a family? A couple, sure, a
husband and wife, a family of two, definitely
true.

After this and many more scenes, I viewed
the world with eyes new and keen, this shelter
of religion is cold, unfeeling, where hypocritical
lies unfold.

I swear upon my life bold, to never set foot
upon these darkened thresholds. Nevermore
my soul to sell, nor tears to shed for bread,
bath, or bed. On streets I'd rather be; I may
not be sheltered, but at least I'm *free*.

Despite how hard I worked to stay away from
homelessness, it struck anyway, and one day I
found myself saying, "In *no* shelter will I stay,
for I know all too well they will RIP my love
away, and this will make me go insane."

And so the street was preferred, for a while
in a tent we endured, then into a village that
was disturbed, until a home which is mobile
was procured, bringing shelter, warmth, and
safety felt.

Though still on the street we sleep and eat,
my family will roam, while seeking a
permanent home. Let all take note shelter can
bring hope or cause a stroke.

Hanging in there

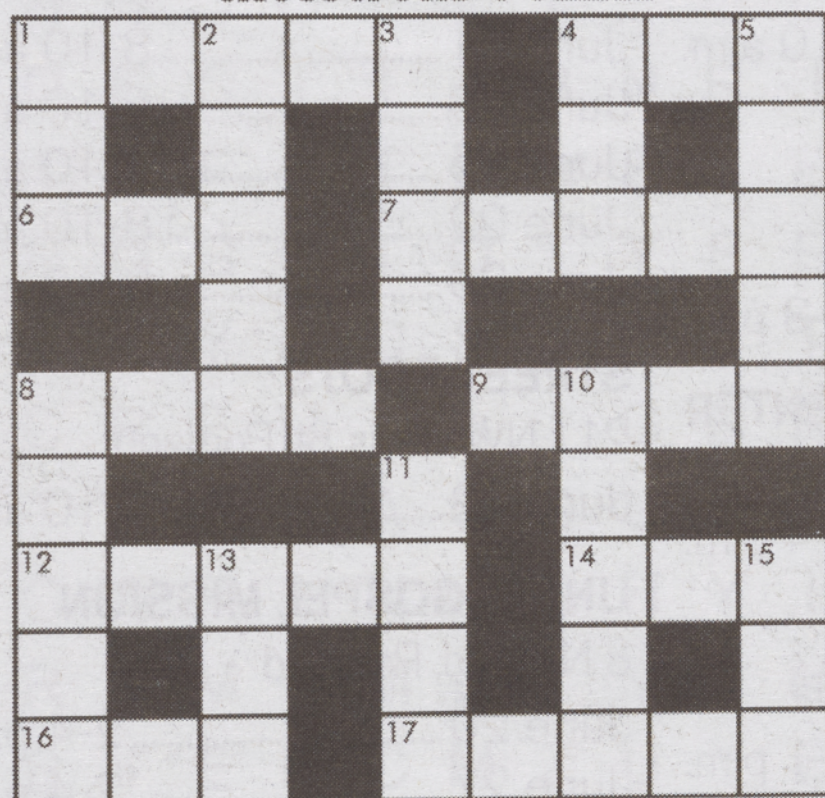
by Eileen Vizenor

My heart breaks each day when:
I watch the news.
I read the newspaper.
I witness the homeless trying to survive.
I hear of senior abuse.
I hear of child abuse.
I hear of animal abuse.
I hear of hate crimes.
I hear of police brutality.
I hear of public assistance on the demise.
I hear of America's continued division.

These days are scary which hinders my
Faith in people, and our country.

However, I hang on to hope thanks to
My customers and my small circle of
Friends for their kindness. They help
Me to stay positive.

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ACROSS

1. Fermentation agent
4. Have a bite
6. Tree fluid
7. Cake ingredient
8. Three-ply cookie
9. Hook's henchman
12. Ground grain
14. The gift of ____
16. Tease or ridicule
17. Francis or Kevin?

DOWN

1. Affirmative!
2. Type of fritter
3. Analyze or try
4. Cake ingredient
5. Tres
8. Deal
10. Potter's practice
11. Nosh!
13. Late rapper; abbr.
15. ____ appetit



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