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## House to Let

by Vera Gajic

“Its perfect,” said Ruth. Every day at her aunt’s was one day too long.

“Good,” said Julie in her efficient estate agent’s voice, “let’s see what the landlords says first.”

“How long will that take, I really need to move now?” said Ruth

“Not sure, it depends when they’re free. I’m sure they’ll love you. We just need to make sure we get the references to check you can pay the rent quickly.”

“What do you mean?” asked Ruth the alarm showing on her face.

“You said you’re working didn’t you. Well we need to get a reference to see how much you are earning.”

“Oh I don’t think I earn enough to cover the rent, I’ll have to apply for Universal credit. I need a rental agreement first though.”

Ruth started to feel her hope fading.

“I see,” said Julie, “well that’s difficult isn’t it, I’m afraid it’s not going to be easy getting somewhere without proof you can pay the rent.”

“But I’m desperate,” said Ruth and burst into tears.

Julie wasn’t sure what to do, you weren’t supposed to touch anyone since the new Corona virus rules, but she couldn’t stop herself and put an arm around Ruth and made comforting noises.

Ruth knew that when she finally decided to leave Tim after 9 years together it was not going to be easy but she had no idea that finding somewhere for her and her son to live would be so hard. She had been building up to leaving for the last year so by the time they had their final argument it felt like a release to finally admit it was over, but now it was all going to come tumbling down. Her aunt said she had to leave as she was going to self-isolate and Ruth had to carry on working at the pharmacy. She was terrified. What would happen to them, where would they go?

A week later Ruth had the keys.

“I have to dash,” said Julie, “the agency is closing down today.” Then she was gone.

Ruth was bewildered, she didn't have a chance to tell Julie she couldn't move in, there were no removal men working anywhere.