

This is Lieutenant Roger McCort from The Salvation Army in Eureka with today's Community Comment.

If you're not driving, close your eyes. I want to invite you to imagine yourself into someone else's life for a minute. You've been working, but living paycheck to paycheck and the bills keep getting away from you. It was just a bit at first, but you started using the line of credit on your checking account a little more every month, until these last few weeks it's been tapped out. Then you got laid off.

It wasn't your fault; the company has had some tough times of their own. They decided to close your location rather than add more debt to their bottom line.

So you missed paying your rent, but the housing market is tight so your landlord only gave you two weeks to pay and you couldn't do it. Your stuff went to a local storage locker, but you could only put up the deposit and first month. You

aren't sure what will happen after that. Maybe something will come up.

But you have nowhere to go. No immediate family, no friends who can let you stay more than one night. You start pawning things from storage to try to stay in your cheap motel, but things you value are only worth a few dollars to the guy behind the counter. Your life's accumulation of stuff buys you two more nights sharing a room with bedbugs, then you're out on the street with everything you have left in a single suitcase. A suitcase someone steals from the fast food restaurant you had lunch at when you stepped away to visit the restroom.

The ten bucks in your pocket might buy dinner tonight, but it's not going to put a roof over your head. No one has called you about your applications for a new job. At least, you don't think they have. Your cell stopped working

yesterday. It was a week past due and paying wasn't an option.

That's the first night you try to sleep in a shelter. The two things which are hardest for you are the heat and the smell; both overpowering. Exhaustion from worry and wandering the streets all day helps you get a few minutes of sleep here and there, so long as the broken spring in your mattress doesn't squeak too deeply into your ribs. It's hard to shut out the noise of the room full of other people snoring, coughing, talking. One keeps waking you up by screaming something dark and wordless every few minutes to an hour. You wonder how they don't wake themselves and if they will stop. They don't. By the time you start to adjust enough to really sleep, it's five am and the shelter workers are rousing everyone out of bed. By six, after a shallow bowl of oatmeal and a glass of watery orange juice, you're out on the

street. But don't worry: They open again in twelve hours, if you come back.

Welcome to your first real day of being homeless. You have nowhere to go, nothing to do, nowhere you are allowed to sit or lie down, no public restrooms, and nowhere you can get a glass of water as you wander aimlessly, trying to stay out of trouble and out of sight.

Open your eyes. This isn't real for you, but it is for hundreds of people around you. The next time you drive by that dirty, tired looking soul loitering on a street corner, remember: It's not so great a stretch to believe that this could happen to any one of us. A few bad breaks and you're stuck.

Any solution to poverty needs to come from those of us who are – for now – not in it.

Grace and peace to you. This has been Lt. Roger McCort with today's KINS Community Comment.