A Chair for My Mother

By Vera Williams

Modified by Sam Lake
My mother works as a waitress in the Blue Tile restaurant. After school I meet her there. Her boss Josie gives me a job too. I wash the tables and I help cook. One time I peeled all the onions for the onion soup. When I finish, Josephine says, “Good work, honey,” and pays me. And every time, I put half of my money into the jar.

It takes me a long time to fill a jar this big. Every day when my mother comes home from work, I take down the jar. My mama empties all her change from tips out of her purse for me to count. Then we push all of the coins into the jar. Some days she has lots of tips. Some days she has only a little. Then she looks worried. But each evening every single coin goes into the jar.

My grandma lives with us and when she has extra money she puts her savings into the jar.
When the jar is full of coins, we are going to take out all the money and buy a chair. Yes, a chair. A beautiful, fat, soft armchair. We will get one covered in velvet with roses all over it. We are going to get the best chair in the whole world.

That is because our old chairs burned up. There was a big fire in our other house. All our chairs burned. So did our sofa and so did everything else. That was not very long ago.

My mother and I were coming home from shopping. We were walking to our house from the bus. We were looking at flowers in the gardens of the houses. Then we came to our block.

Right outside our house stood two big fire engines. I could see lots of smoke. Tall orange flames came out of the roof.

Mama grabbed my hand and we ran. Mama yelled, “Where’s Mother?” I yelled, “Where’s my grandma?” A woman waved and shouted, “She’s here, she’s here. She’s O.K. Don’t worry.” Grandma was all right. Our cat was safe too. But everything else in our house was burned and we could not live there.
We went to stay with my aunt and uncle. After a while we moved into the apartment downstairs. We painted the walls yellow. The floors were all shiny. But the rooms were very empty.

The first day we moved in, the man next door brought pizza and cake and ice cream. The family across the street brought a table and three kitchen chairs. Someone brought a bed.

My other grandpa brought us his beautiful rug. My other aunt made us red and white curtains. Mama’s boss, Josephine, brought pots and pans, silverware and dishes. My cousin brought me her own stuffed bear.

Everyone clapped when my grandma made a speech. “You are the kindest people I know,” she said, “and we thank you very, very much. You helped us to start over.”