A Depressing Story

"It's a recession when your neighbor loses his job; it's a depression when you lose yours."

Harry S. Truman

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A short story based on "It's a recession when your neighbor loses his job; it's a depression when you lose yours." *Harry S. Truman*

"Fired?" I asked incredulously. "That's impossible! I've worked for this company for fifteen years!"

"Sorry, Marcus," replied Keith, my boss, "You know your way out." He buried his face in his work, and I looked at him in shock. After fifteen years with the Hedron Company, I was being fired for an unknown reason. My boss refused to even look at me to explain what went wrong. I left his office in a fit and returned to my desk to collect my belongings. I could not stop thinking about the absurdity of my boss and asked myself why this had to happen. Suddenly, my computer homepage gave me my answer – the recession! Yes, the country was going through a recession of late that has affected countless workers. Some of the best companies have had to send their employees home, and unemployment rates are on the rise. My good friend Joseph, who was an excellent investment banker, was among this number. He lost his job at Price Waterhouse because they could not afford to keep him. Of course, I did not think that I would suffer his fate because I had been with my company for numerous years. Now, without a job, and with prices and inflation the way they are, how was I going to live?

I opened the door to my home sluggishly, avoiding the stack of mail beside the mat. Bills would only serve to depress me even further. I was ashamed to tell anyone about my day. I turned on the television and saw more reports on the recession and its effects on jobs, the stock market, and gas prices, and I forced myself not to think about other people's problems. I muted the television and began to ponder my options. I had to get a new job, and fast. I grabbed the

newspapers by the door and started digging through until I found the Classifieds section. I hunted eagerly for something that I could do, but to no avail. After my futile attempt, I decided to register on Monster.com to try and market myself. Weeks dragged on and nothing happened. I had no idea what I was going to do.

I neglected the mortgage payments on my house and the lease payments on my car. Suddenly, I came home one day only to realize I had been visited by the bank and had no time at all to make a payment before they evicted me. My fancy job was gone, and my beautiful house was going. Next, the world was going to take away my glamorous car and the rest of my belongings. My cousin, who was a stock broker, warned me that the economy may not get better. He said that it was not assured that the government's plan "to boost liquidity, [and] recapitalize financial institutions" (Bush) would help the crisis. I needed to stop thinking about this, so I turned on my television to my favorite channel – The History Channel. There was a documentary on President Eisenhower and about the depression of his time. At the time, "it was the highest post-World War II level" of unemployment (Vance). During this documentary, the narrator quoted President Truman's famous words on finance: "It's a recession when your neighbor loses his job; it's a depression when you lose your own" ("Harry S. Truman"). Suddenly, everything made sense, and I realized that at least things were not as horrible as they were during the depressions of Eisenhower or Roosevelt. After having my epiphany, I began to feel better, and I thought things would begin to look up. The phone call I received next disproved this idea. It was a call from the bank; they were sending someone over to talk to me about my mortgage payments.

I could not take it anymore, and so I got into my car and began driving. I drove to my favorite place – a cliff near my house that gave a great view of the sea. I sat there and thought

about my options. Determining that I needed to face my problems, I got back in my car and headed home. I was so focused on my problems that I failed to pay attention to the sharp turn in the road heading down the cliff. Suddenly, I was brought back to reality by the oncoming car. I tried to avoid it but I could not slow down. I hit an oncoming car and watched as my life spiraled out of control before my eyes. My attempts to steady the car were fruitless and my grip on the steering wheel was knuckle-white as the car hit the metallic barrier and flipped over, plummeting down the side of the mountain. As the car shot through the air, I thought about my life, about my regrets. I thought about all the things that I had left unfinished and things I had yet to accomplish. The sound of the water reverberated around me as the car met its surface. As I started to sink, it occurred to me that if I had a second chance, I would do things much differently than I did before…

I awoke and after checking the time on my phone, I realized that I had been dreaming. It all seemed too real to be a dream, however, so I felt disoriented even when I got to work. I continued with my job as normal, but I was determined to appreciate it more. I vowed to save more money and made plans to pay down the principle on my car and house. Later that day, I printed a copy of Truman's quotation and posted it in my cubicle. That evening as I went to the parking lot to return home, I noticed something I had not seen earlier that day on my commute to work - a large strand of wet seaweed sitting on the floor of my car. I looked up at the sky in awe and then sped home to begin my new life.

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