



A FRIEND'S GIFT

Troy left the shelter. He found a job and took classes at night. Troy worked at a meat packing company. He found a cheap place to rent. He bought a used car.

Troy tried to save money, but it was hard. He did all he could to stay off the streets.

Justin left the shelter a year after Troy.

Justin tried to keep a job. But he did not like to work. He lived with his girlfriend. She broke up with him. She wanted him to move out. Justin was going to be back on the streets.

Troy and Justin still talked on the phone. Sometimes they met for dinner. They liked to eat burgers at a diner. The diner's name was the Slop Shop. Troy always paid for their meals.

"I got a call from Cash," Troy said, eating his burger.

"Cash?" Justin asked. "What's up with him?"

Cash was a friend from the shelter. Cash moved to a town called New City. He got a job at an auto parts plant.

"Cash is having a New Year's Eve party," Troy said.

"Cool," Justin said. "I wish I could go."

"Why don't we go?" Troy asked. "I can drive."

"Dude, I wish I could."

"Why not?" Troy asked.

Justin looked at his food. The food that Troy paid for.

“You know I’m broke. I can’t help pay for gas or food,” Justin said. “I have no job. My girlfriend is going to kick me out. She just took back her cell phone.”

“Why not go with me?” Troy asked.
“What keeps you here?”