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Background Summary

Millions of people were out of work. Banks ran out of money and closed down. Companies shut down. Farmers went broke. They lost their land and their homes. Grown men lost their jobs and sold apples on the street. People stood in lines just to get bread to eat. Hard times hit everyone.

What was the name of this time in the world's history? It was called the Great Depression. Everyone was affected in one way or another. The Great Depression began in 1929 when the stock market crashed. Suddenly, companies that had been successful were worth nothing at all. Many of them had borrowed too much money. This caused a ripple effect. The Great Depression lasted for a long time—more than 10 years. It wasn't until World War II started in 1941 that the economy started to improve.

1

Forced to Go

Mike stared at his father. He couldn't believe what he had just heard.

Father sighed. He stamped his muddy boots on the doormat.

'*What?* We have to move? *Why?*' Mike almost shouted at his father.

Father walked slowly into their tiny kitchen. His shoulders slumped. What's wrong with him? Mike wondered. What's happening?

NOTHING IS FOR FREE

Father looked at Mother. Then he looked at the floor. Mother stood at the stove, stirring. Her mouth was firm.

‘Why?’ Mike asked again. ‘We’ve always lived here! This is where my friends are’.

Father sighed. ‘Mike’, he began. ‘You know times are bad. Especially around here’.

Father sat down heavily. He looked at Mother again and shrugged his shoulders.

Mike frowned. He was tired of hearing about how bad times were. It was the 1930s—the Great Depression. Everybody in Australia was going broke. He knew his family didn’t have any money. His parents made that very clear every time he asked for something.

Mother looked sad. ‘It’s this way for many people’, she said. She sighed and looked at Father.

‘But why do we have to move out of Great Rock?’ Mike asked. ‘What has changed?’

‘I lost my job today’, Father said. ‘They told me they won’t need me to clean the high school any more. There is no money to pay me. The teachers will have to clean their own rooms’.

Father looked uncomfortable. He stared at his hands.

‘Father! No!’ Mike exclaimed. ‘They can’t sack you! You do a great job. Everyone likes you there’.

Father didn’t look up. Mike stared at his father’s hands. They were rough. Years of hard work had hardened them.

It wasn’t fair. His father worked so hard. Now he had