My little nest: Branka Kringas

In my little flat I felt safe, comfortable, tranquil and contented. I felt joy coming back to it from a trip, a weekend away or even a busy day out.

It was a bit cluttered but tidy.

Everything was dear to me as it had a story to tell. I have reached the age when one has a great collection of memorabilia.

Suddenly my nest was lost - partly burnt by a fire and partly destroyed by smoke. Now, even the smell of burnt toast will make me jump and think of that terrible morning.

It was 4am on December 8. I was awoken by a fire alarm but I didn’t move till l smelt smoke. l jumped out of bed and ran. In the bathroom/laundry the washing machine was on fire. I tried the phone but it didn’t work. l ran to the garden and took a hose and sprayed the machine. l thought l’d succeeded in putting the fire out but the flames burst out again.

I woke a neighbour who called for help. l just stood in the middle of the front courtyard in my nightie stunned, not believing what was happening. A few neighbours woke up and one gave me a coat and another a pair of socks.

The fire brigade, ambulance and police arrived. The fire was put out and I was examined and questioned by the police. Then, it was over. One of my neighbours took me to her home.

Next morning l went to see what was left of my dear nest. The bathroom/laundry was completely burnt. I lost many things some precious. The rest of the flat was badly damaged by the smoke. My chest tightened. I was very sad to see the destruction of something l loved.

My son came. ‘Thank goodness you’re alright,’ he said. He took me to his home. Four months later l came back to my little flat which had been renovated. I’m putting things that I saved back together, but I have fewer possessions so, it’s goodbye clutter.

I am very lucky l wasn’t hurt and have a kind and caring family.

But whenever l smell smoke l will remember and feel the Fire of December 8, 2020.