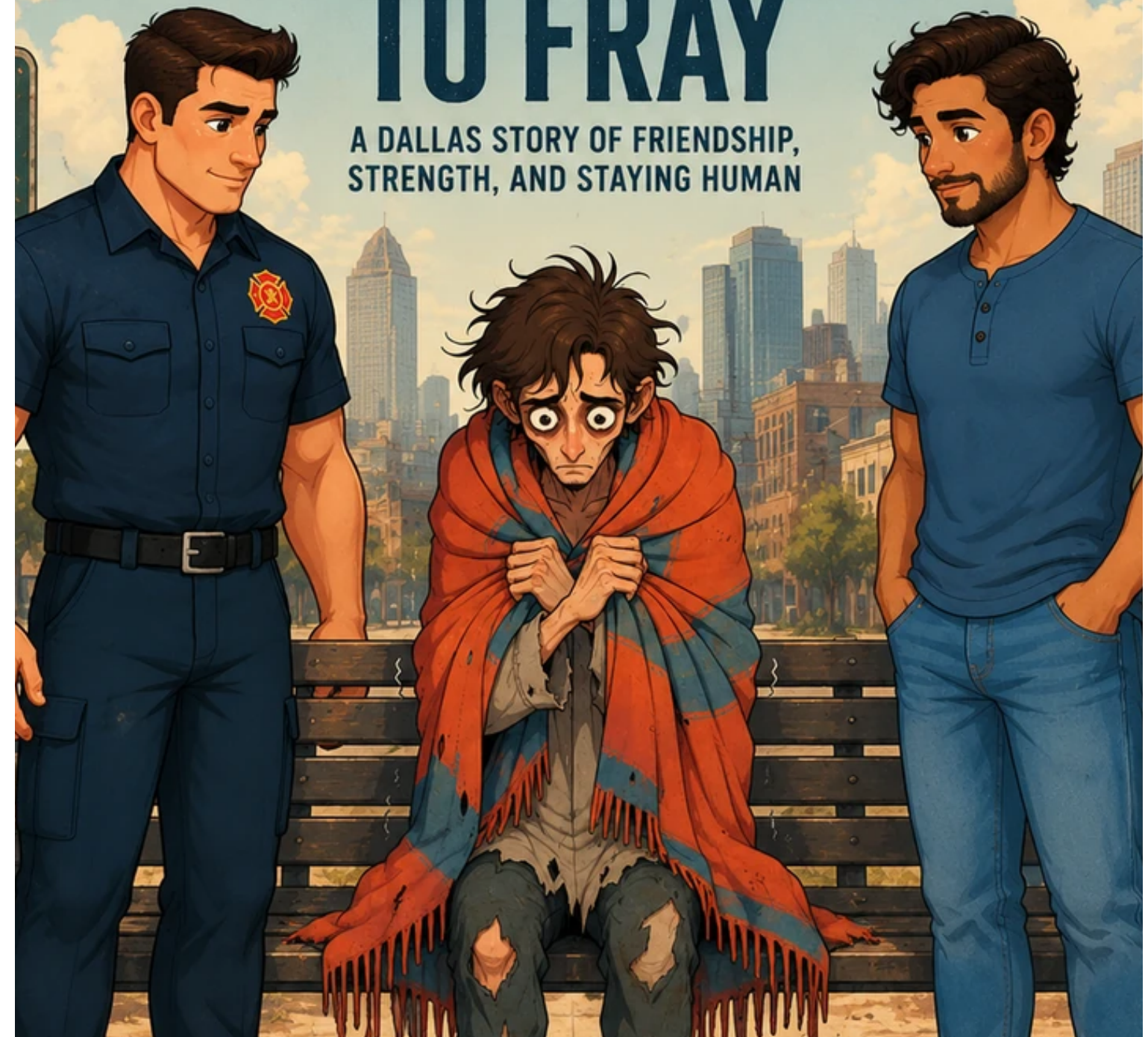


WHEN REALITY BEGINS TO FRAY

A DALLAS STORY OF FRIENDSHIP,
STRENGTH, AND STAYING HUMAN



The Soft Blue in Dallas

kateykate

ACHILLES

PATROCLUS

AJAX



High noon heat saturates the cramped, worn-down Dallas apartment. Achilles sits rigid on the edge of the threadbare couch, eyes wide and unblinking, whispering frantically about the warm, the red, the soft, and the blue.



Pat steps into the doorway in his firefighter shirt, instantly recognizing the dark, chaotic rhythm of a severe episode. Without hesitation, he pulls out his phone and calls out of his shift, choosing to stay by Achilles' side.



Crouching at Achilles' feet, Pat gently takes his trembling hands to anchor him in the real world. He listens quietly as Achilles rants about the burning red shadows, validating his fear while speaking with calm, firm authority.



Pat walks over to the cluttered kitchen counter and fills a glass of cool tap water, carefully dispensing Achilles' daily medication. Harsh sunlight filters through dusty blinds, illuminating the quiet sanctuary they have built against the chaotic city outside.



Guided by Pat's steady reassurance, Achilles swallows the pills and leans his heavy head against Pat's shoulder. The familiar scent of woodsmoke and laundry soap wraps around Achilles like armor, slowly dulling the edges of his paranoia.



Pat leads Achilles out onto the small, sun-baked balcony overlooking the humming city streets of Dallas. The hot southern breeze and distant drone of traffic give Achilles something real to focus on, pulling his thoughts further away from the noise in his head.



Pat's cousin Ajax knocks softly at the door, stepping inside to leave a bag of warm diner food on the kitchen table. Ajax shares a quiet look of solidarity with Pat before slipping away, offering unconditional support without intruding on their space.



As afternoon transitions to evening, the heavy fog of the delusion begins to dissipate. Draped in a soft woven blanket, Achilles rests on the couch while Pat sits grounded on the floor right beside him.



Pat points toward the window, inviting Achilles to look out at the deep twilight sky settling over Texas. The soft blue of dusk fills the room, no longer overwhelming or frightening, but cool and peaceful.



Night falls over the city, wrapping the small apartment in a warm, steady quiet. With Pat resting near his side, Achilles closes his eyes and breathes deeply, knowing he is safe in the home they hold together.