

Best Friend

by Valentin

Jonathan flicks the cigarette butt into the street before he has to go back inside and continue moving his things out of his room. Bobby is still inside carefully wrapping breakable objects in newspaper and putting them in their corresponding boxes: "CDs", "Pictures", etc. 'Time to get finished what I started' he thinks, and ambles back into the house, carelessly jamming his fingers through his hair.

"We're almost done?" He says. He walks about the scattered but carefully organized contents of his room. His heavy shoes clunk across the floor as he examines every last box and mentally organizes the rest of his room into even more boxes.

Bobby eventually looks up from the alphabetized set of CDs in the box in front of him, notices Jonathan. "Uh, not even close. Probably be another few hours. We might be done in time for the 7:45 at the Cineplex."

"I do not feel like going to some dumb movie tonight," he replies. "I'm tired of getting all this shit into boxes. I can't believe how much shit I have!"

"Dude, calm down." Bobby tapes up the box and lays down on the cluttered floor. The red sun blazes through the window, traps the heat, makes a greenhouse out of the room. The old hamburger wrappers under Jonathan's bed start to irritate Bobby. He tosses them into the wastebasket by the door. He notices the holes in the door and remembers the night they mysteriously appeared. The shouts of that night were particularly loud to the ears of a twelve-year-old. They bounce around in the back of his brain. He shakes the voices out of his head and focuses on Jonathan. "You're sure about this? You don't wanna talk to your mom again?"

"Never been more sure in my entire life." He contemplates for a moment and fingers the hairs on his chin, trying to look intelligent or sophisticated, something along those lines. "I've been dying to get out of here for good since he decided to swiss cheese my door. 'Member that?" Bobby nods, trying to force a look of indifference.

Jonathan starts lining up boxes against the wall. Besides the boxes and bits of garbage that Bobby will clean up later while

Jonathan isn't looking, the room is empty. Bobby cringes as Jonathan carelessly shoves the boxes against each other and against the wall adjacent to the door. While he roughhouses with the boxes Jonathan looks up. He forces a smile. "I really appreciate your help, you know? Seriously. Thanks."

"No problem," says Bobby. He looks at Jonathan, a little surprised. "Anything to help out. Anything just to hang with you." Bobby quickly turns away, trying to hide his flushed face. "Uh, anything for my best friend." He tries to get up but his knees feel like they're filled with water. His heart pounds against his chest like someone trying to escape a locked room.

Jonathan continues to shove his things into the boxes. Bobby follows like a tired mother cleaning up after her two-year-old. They finish most of the packing, the light things, and leave the bed and the heavy furniture for the next day. They both end up sitting against the back wall next to the bed. They stare at the empty walls and ceiling and remember the posters and pictures that used to dominate most of the space. "I almost forgot the walls were white," says Jonathan.

"You gonna miss this place?" asks Bobby.

"Maybe," Jonathan says. "It's always been my space, you know? Mine, away from them. I won't forget it, I can tell you that."

"Not even if you try."

Jonathan gets up to examine the boxes. As he gets up, his arm brushes against Bobby's. Bobby closes his eyes and swallows nervously. He follows him. As Jonathan rifles through one of the boxes, Bobby's hand brushes across his back.

"You had a hair," he says with a faint smile. "Just brushing it off." His hand drops to his side. His eyes drop to the floor. Jonathan looks over his shoulder at Bobby and then turns away.

"Happens, I guess," Jonathan says. "But you're always there to brush 'em off, right?" Bobby inhales, holds it. Jonathan turns to Bobby and leaves the room. Bobby closes the box that Jonathan was rummaging through and sits on the floor next to the box marked "BOOKS" and alphabetizes them for Jonathan.