

JAKOB

REACQUAINTING YOURSELF

In the center of Jakob's kitchen lies a pile of flattened boxes that Freya scored from the dumpster behind the liquor store. Jakob takes a Captain Morgan box from the top of the pile, returns it to its original shape, and tapes up the seam along the bottom.

He's really got to start focusing on his packing. The move is only fifteen days away. He carries the box into the living room and fills it with two stacks of books, resists the urge to leaf through any of them. He puts the carton on the couch, tapes it shut, writes BOOKS across the top with his Sharpie. Then he sits down, rests his elbow on it, and retrieves his beer from the coffee table. He takes a drink. He holds the cool bottle against his forehead. It's fucking hot in his apartment. The little windowbox air conditioner in the bedroom seems to have no influence at all unless you're laying right in front of it.

He surveys the half-empty bookshelf and feels a sense of satisfaction, even though he knows that there's lots more than books that needs to be packed. Clothes, dishes, all the weird doodads in his tool bin. He'd hoped that moving might provide him with an impetus to organize some of this crap. It seemed like a good idea: if you're packing, say, your files, handling each and every one of them, it's a good opportunity to go through them and assess their relevance. Reacquaint yourself with the documents which are still relevant to your life, and to cull the ones that aren't. But when he gets home from work he's stiff and sore and his mind feels scattered—the last thing he wants to do is sift through more data. Mostly what he wants to do is sit on the couch, enjoy a beer, maybe watch something on public television. If he's over at Freya's, he wants to sit on the floor and listen to her talk about the politics of the record store while she rubs his neck and shoulders.

He wonders what it will be like, living with her.

Sometimes he's apprehensive. He knows her anger, the ways that she will pout and fume if he says something wrong, the ways that she'll try to back him up against the wall with some demand. There have definitely been times when he's been grateful to have his own place to escape to.

They had an argument just the other day, about Fletcher, about whether Fletcher would be welcome in their new place. She pounded her pack of cigarettes vehemently against her palm, and spoke: —Fletcher’s a really old friend of mine; he and I go back *way further* than you and I; I want to be able to feel like I can invite him over here any time and not have to worry about you *sulking*.

—So what do you want me to do?

—I want you to forgive him. I want you to call him up and tell him you’re sorry.

—You want *me* to tell *him* that *I’m* sorry? I didn’t *kiss* his *girlfriend*.

—I keep telling you: it was *me* who kissed *him*. He just kissed me *back*. And you forgave *me*, didn’t you?

—Yeah, Jakob said. —I did.

—So what’s the problem with forgiving *him*?

—I don’t know, Jakob says. —I just—maybe I feel like he should have *stopped* you.

A skeptical look on Freya’s face. —It’s not like we *fucked* or anything.

—I know, I know, said Jakob. —It’s just—I don’t know—I sort of feel like you can’t just *decide* to forgive someone. It’s something that just kind of has to *happen*.

—That’s bullshit.

At the time he’d kept up his protestations, but now he thinks that maybe she’s right, maybe that *is* bullshit. And he *does* miss hanging out with Fletcher. In his shoebox full of loose photos there’s a picture of the three of them together, taken last fall, on a night when they were out at a sushi restaurant, with Clark. Fletcher is trying to stick a chopstick up into Freya’s nose and she’s laughing and pushing him away. He misses that, that *zaniness*.

He tries to imagine making the call that Freya wants him to make. *Tell him you’re sorry*. He tries out phrasings in his head. It might not have to be that difficult. *Sorry I’ve been such a dick. You want to hang out?* It could be that easy.

He drinks his beer and squints at the wall, thinking it through.