
B E S T F R I E N D S

by Tim Kissman

a short-short story

LIMELIGHT CREATIONS

Lansing, Michigan 2000

~ C o p y r i g h t ~ © ~ 2 0 0 0 ~ b y ~ T i m ~ K i s s m a n ~

"John, can you hear me?" Thomas Boog's situation was dire. Trapped inside a 50-gallon drum on the bed of a truck, he was slowly suffocating. At least the truck had stopped moving. He felt like the ball inside of a rattled can of spray paint when the truck drove over what must have been every bump in the road. His throat was scratchy from the lack of air and his head ached, but he continued to hiss. "John, buddy, talk to me, man. Are you all right?"

John didn't answer.

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Hours ago, Thomas and his best friend, John Sanders, were sipping beers at a local bar. John was acting depressed. He spoke about his wife, Cindy, and how he thought she was having an affair. Thomas listened intently, trying not to look guilty by nodding at the right times and patting his buddy's back. After all, he was there for support.

As he reached for a cigarette, Thomas suggested they move to a strip club to get John's mind off Cindy. Even though he really did it to shut John up. John liked the idea and agreed to go.

Dangling his unlit cigarette between his teeth, Thomas followed John out the door.

"You know those things will kill ya," John teased, turning to his friend as they stepped into the sunlit afternoon. Thomas lit his cigarette and blew smoke at the back of John's head.

"Not today, my friend," he answered with his cookie-cutter response.

"You got that right," John coughed.

The pair turned the corner, heading to the alley where their car was parked. Two men leapt from the shadows and threw hoods over their heads. It was the last thing Thomas remembered before losing consciousness from a blow to the head.

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A ticking noise echoed from outside the drum, but Thomas chalked it up to a cooling engine.

"John, buddy," Thomas tried one last time.

"I'm right here," John's voice sent a wave of hope through the drum's prisoner.

"Hey buddy," he croaked. "Are you all right?"

"I'll be better in two minutes," John replied.

"Can you get me out of here?"

"It was you, you bastard. You're trying to take my Cindy."

"What are you talking about, man?" Thomas tried his best to sound sincere.

"You're my best bud, I would never do that. Let me out of here, please."

"No, Thomas. You have to pay." John's voice was ice. Thomas felt the truck move slightly up then down again, signaling someone leaving the vehicle.

"John? John, ARE YOU THERE? JOHN! LET'S TALK ABOUT THIS!"

His screams were never heard. The ticks, distant before, pierced the silence with agonizing accuracy. John sat in the back seat of his wife's car, heading exactly two minutes in the opposite direction, when the truck exploded. His two older brothers, with pillowcases wadded in between them, sat in the front and drove.

"Cigarettes won't kill you today, my man," John mumbled. "But, I will."