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AN ODE TO BEST FRIENDS

LAMONT ARRINGTON

I went to space, it was out of this world. I tied myself to the rocket deployed by SpaceX with a rope and some duct tape with the help of my friend Jorrand. Jorrand doesn't like space, so he didn't want to come with me, but he was willing to help me accomplish my dreams of becoming an astronaut. The school wasn't, that's why they dropped me from the engineering program. I couldn't make it in engineering, so I tried biology, hoping they might let me on for research. That didn't work either, I was rejected time after time until I took it upon myself to bypass the professional altogether. I decided to go alone.

Jorrand and I snuck into the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. It's hot in Florida, but it would be nothing compared to the rocket launch. Rockets get up to 5,800 degrees Fahrenheit, 3,500 degrees Kelvin, or 3,200 degrees Celsius, I'm not sure which one is right. Here in America we use Fahrenheit, but most people don't like that line of thought. Jorrand says it's a bad idea to listen to most people, he says they're all big numbers, but they're all the same. I know he's a little slow because they aren't the same; 5,800 degrees Fahrenheit is obviously bigger. But that's not the point, the point is, spaceships do get hot and that's why I was glad the launch facility was in Florida where I could get used to the heat in a tent outside the compound before I flew into outer space. I left that next morning after we cut the chains on the fence and found our way to launch complex 39A.

I went up on Falcon 9, lifted off LC-39A at NASA's Kennedy Space Center on Wednesday, July 5, at 7:38 p.m. EDT. I would be the only man on the trip; it was evident by the cargo attached to the rocket. SpaceX sent me up with a commercial communications satellite to a Geostationary Transfer Orbit, or GTO, and all that means is they put

it into space. The rest isn't all that important, because once you're out in space, you float with the rest of the stars. It doesn't matter, all those numbers and calculations, I only calculated how full I wanted to be for the 32-minute trip. Jorrand packed me a ham sandwich that I enjoyed with some French's mustard packets; Jorrand never forgets to pack me French's mustard packets. I appreciate how much he looks out for me.

Like he did, too, when we remembered I needed a space suit. When we broke into the space center, I may as well have been as naked as a baboon's butt because I brought nothing to protect me from the meteor showers I was sure to run into in space. That didn't matter either though; after strapping me to the rocket Jorrand even helped me make my own space suit out of a couple Hefty bags and some duct tape. He fashioned me up a couple of space boots around my shoes and fitted me with a helmet that I couldn't see the night sky out of. At first I was scared because it was dark, but then Jorrand reminded me going to space wasn't all about being able to see.

Due to the Florida heat I barely felt the flames during launch. The rocket pulled me so fast into the sky, I hardly knew I was off the ground. It was hard to smell anything, real smoky when you start climbing from Earth, but honestly, I was moving so fast, I could feel the breath being pulled out of my lungs. Felt a bit like a roller coaster pulling on your stomach, making it hard to breathe; butterflies or something like young love. Jorrand made the space suit pretty good, didn't come undone or anything. I knew I would have to thank him. I read in school that atmospheric pressure could melt a man. I tell you, those textbooks lie; you can go to space with a few Hefty bags and some duct tape. Oh, and don't forget your ham sandwich.

When I came back down from space, Jorrand was waiting for me with a nice bottle of Fiji artesian water, my favorite flavor, and a towel for all the sweating I did on the descent. I told him all about space, how I could feel the stars pushing up against me so warm, like when momma used to hug me after a big BBQ on Lake Michigan in the summer. I told him I could feel the sun, and he smiled at me because he was proud that I finally accomplished my dream. I tell you, I went to space and it only took 40 minutes but I came back down as quick as I could because it was real empty without Jorrand helping me out like he usually does.