

DEAL ●

Patrick Kelly Joyner

He said he couldn't deal,
so he left the apartment and the marriage.
He took almost nothing.

My wife and I went to help her pack their belongings.
We know her—rather Misty knows her. We didn't know him
much.
Seemed a decent guy. A bit squinty when you talked to him.
I chalked that up
to shyness.

Didn't seem the sort to up and leave.
Then again, could I identify the sort?

The wife—actually let's call her the friend now—was a hot
mess.
Hired a couple guys she knew to move her, but
they sat in their truck waiting for the boxes to be packed.

So Misty and I did that.
The friend sat on the floor in her bedroom,
pulling wet tissues apart.
I always leave Misty to the emotional stuff.
I'm a systems guy. I can pack a suitcase. That's my deal.

So they had a Precious Moments cabinet. Whatever.
That took me thirty. Stonewear the same.
Drinking glasses, pottery, and knicky knack crap, et cetera.
By noon
the shatterables were done.

Misty and I did the living room and the den together
while the friend hid in the bathroom.
The husband had a porno collection. I hid that before Misty
saw it.

No need to add that to the shit list.
Could've thrown it out to spare the friend.
Didn't. Don't know why.

Well, yes, I do know why.
I hid the stuff in a box I labeled family photos. The friend
would open it eventually. She'd see what a man her old hubby
had been.
Maybe it'd lessen her regrets. Or maybe
she'd hate him like new.
Or maybe she'd throw the box out unopened.
Whatever. That was my original thinking.
Of course, maybe she was a porno, too.

She came out of the bathroom and burred a thank you to me.
Misty hugged her. I had that one box in my hands, about to
take it
To the living room where the rest were stacked.

But I stood watching them, Misty and the friend.
My wife started crying, too. Only time that day. Not sure why.
She glanced at me and shrugged. I shrugged back.

As I walked by her, she—my wife Misty, I mean—touched my
shoulder. Helping
this friend had been her idea, of course.
She had thanked me already. But she was a thanking person.
That's where we were different.
You do what you should. Thanks are not requisite. But alright.

Why did she go emotional at that moment?
We'd been together seven years.
Two kids, house, minivan, the nine yards. Stable.

Mind you, I once had a thought that maybe I'd split.
Not seriously, but before the kids, before the mortgage. When
the splitting

wouldn't so much break Misty as rock her a bit.
But I could deal. So I dealt. And if Misty
ever had a moment like that, she probably decided
she could do it, too.
Inertia is strong.

We followed the two guys in the van straight back to our
house.
First thing I did was find that one box and hide it up above the
garage.

The friend flopped in our back room for a month.
Finally moved out last week.
Misty was, to be honest, done. But still she and the friend
hugged a long time.
Then the friend left. Moved out to her parents' place at the
beach.

That box is still up above the garage.
I'm no porno. I just don't think it's right
to throw out what a man carefully collected.
He might come back someday.

Anyway, Misty wouldn't approve if she knew.
Part of my job is to protect her.
No harm no foul.