

Like a Good Neighbor by Abran Jaquez

I awoke this morning to a crashing tidal wave of sweat. I have always found it easy to overheat while sleeping. I am quite used to the low hum of a fan or two in the room, or in the summer, a window A/C unit. Not tonight. I shuffled my dreary body to the master bath and wiped myself dry with a towel. No sooner than drying my face and opening my eyes, a bright flash of light cut a path straight to the bathroom mirror and lit up the place like Cameron Diaz's iconic smile would light a room. Curious, I peered out the window. I live at the end of a long enough road that I should not see headlights coming my direction at six in the morning. I, quite uncouthly, stared out at the perpetrator to see what was going on.

The giant, unmistakable, box truck that is regularly rented to move people's stuff to their new place was the culprit. Recently, part of the property adjacently connected to mine was divided and sold to nice enough (and very excited) man. He had been caught up in the constant rent hikes that plagued the nation, and was understandably excited about owning a piece of property and building a home on it. Now, I am more than happy for anyone who manages to buy their first home, especially in today's economy, but it was too early to be listening to anyone constantly banging around in a moving van. There was nothing I could do, though. It was not like I could be upset with the guy for getting a head-start on the day, and the sooner his family had their own roof over their heads, the better.

I sat down on the corner of the bed for a few moments while I mustered the motivation to handle the day. A soft clang that signaled the opening of the back of the box truck startled my dogs, who in turn started barking. This was my sign that I was burning daylight, so I stood up and let the dogs out into the back yard. While the dogs did their business, I poured myself a large cup of sweet tea -the best way to start out the day in my opinion- and sat on my couch and stared like the Nosey Nancy that I am. Instead of unloading the truck, Matt (my new neighbor) and his family were sitting in lawn chairs in the driveway, but the truck was opened and ready to be unloaded. This struck me as odd, but I waited to see what the plan was. No waiting for an answer was necessary, for as I finished my thought, the garage door opened and Matt's wife came out holding a pot of coffee. Just like me, my new neighbors liked to start their day with their beverage of choice.

Athena let out her "I'm done and ready to come back inside" bark. So, I let the dogs back in before setting out myself. I had decided that I am going to go say good morning at least. Matt, just as enthusiastically as every other time I had spoke with him, jumped up and shook my hand to say good morning. He introduced his wife, Kara, and two young boys, Tyler, twelve, and Joseph, six. I asked what the plan was for this morning, and he said they were going to sit and wait a bit before beginning to unload.

"For what?" I asked.

"This," he gestured behind me, "this is why we moved here."

I turned around to see the morning sunrise. I see the sunrise almost every morning and it still takes my breath away on days like today. Most days the clouds are blocking the sky, or there is too much fog, or something happens to block the view. Not today, today was a perfect sunrise. I sat down and took in the moment with Matt and his family. I spent the next two hours helping him and his oldest son unload the truck and position his heavier appliances so that his wife could keep an eye on their

youngest. I then took a moment to invite them over for a barbeque dinner that evening, which they graciously accepted.

I then spent the rest of the day cleaning and preparing my house for visitors, which it so desperately needed. Followed by shopping for dinner supplies, and finally, a quick nap before hosting. Matt and his family arrived and we all enjoyed burgers and fries to our hearts content. Matt explained that he is a second generation American and he still gets to travel to his family's native land every couple of years or so. We spent the rest of the night talking about our travels and comparing notes.

As the sun starts to set and the day draws to an end, I cannot help but to think to myself that this is how communities should be. I had just spent almost the entire day with someone that I never knew before, just helping out and building a familiar relationship. I know that in the future, Matt and I are going to be good neighbors, and that I am going to try and continue to foster relationships with the people in my community. I encourage you to do the same.