

JAX-IN-A-BOX

by Jeff Goode

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**Jax-in-a-Box**  
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

DARIUS, an older brother  
JACKSON, a younger brother

*(Lights up on: A LARGE CARDBOARD BOX.)*

*(Enter DARIUS, dribbling a basketball. He notices the box, decides to ignore it, at first. After awhile, though, he dribbles closer.)*

DARIUS

Is that you, Jax?

JACKSON

*(from inside the box)*

Go away.

DARIUS

What are you doing?

JACKSON

I said, "Keep walking!"

DARIUS

Aren't you supposed to be in school?

JACKSON

Aren't you?

*(Darius dribbles in silence.)*

DARIUS

Does your mom know you're in a box?

JACKSON

What do you care? You're not my brother no more.

DARIUS

No, but I bet your mom'd care if she found out you was cuttin' class.

*(pause for effect)*

Might even give me a reward for turning you in.

JACKSON

I'm not going back to that school!

DARIUS

I hear that.

JACKSON

Ever.

DARIUS

I thought you liked school.

JACKSON

Who told you that?

DARIUS

You get good grades.

JACKSON

Ha!

DARIUS

Better than I get.

JACKSON

That basketball gets better grades than you get.

DARIUS

Don't make me come in there, Jackson.

JACKSON

The only thing I like about that school is from now until 3 o'clock, everyone in the world that hates me is inside that building. And as long as I stay out of it, they can't get me.

DARIUS

Kids pickin' on you again?

JACKSON

Again? They don't stop, Darius!

DARIUS

So how do you think it's gonna go if they see you hiding in a box?

JACKSON

They can't see me, if I'm in here. That's the point, stupid.

DARIUS

You gotta watch your mouth.

JACKSON

The only thing they're gonna see is some idiot skippin' class so he can talk to a box.

DARIUS

All right, that's it, you're comin' out!

*(Darius plunges his hand into the box. And quickly pulls it back out.)*

DARIUS

Ow! You cut me!

JACKSON

I scratched you. Don't be a baby.

DARIUS

I'll show you who's a baby!

*(Darius plunges both hands in the box. And just as quickly pulls them back out.)*

DARIUS

Ow! Knock it off!

JACKSON

I'm not comin' out!

DARIUS

Fine, stay in there.

JACKSON

I will!

DARIUS

You need to cut your fingernails.

JACKSON

I did. And then I sharpened them.

DARIUS

You what?? Why'd you do that?

JACKSON

Cuz it's the only thing keeps people from grabbin' at me.

DARIUS

That's stupid.

JACKSON

You gonna stick your hand in here again?

DARIUS

No.

JACKSON

Then it's working.

*(Darius dribbles, considers leaving.)*

DARIUS

You can't stay in there forever, Jackson.

JACKSON

Not forever. Just until I graduate high school.

DARIUS

You're not gonna graduate if you don't come outta your box.

JACKSON

All I need is a D minus.

DARIUS

Everybody hates school, Jax, but we all gotta go. You think I like it in school?

JACKSON

You don't like it cuz you're bad at it. I don't like it cuz they all want me dead.

DARIUS

What? Nobody wants you dead.

JACKSON

Then I don't know where I heard it.

DARIUS

You think the whole school's tryin' to kill you?

JACKSON

I didn't say that. I said they want me to die. They say it to my face.

DARIUS

They don't say you should die.

JACKSON

And send me links to suicide kids like I should take a hint.

DARIUS

You're makin' that up.

JACKSON

I'm not makin' it up, Darius! Just cuz you don't wanna see it, don't mean it's not happening! That's why they do it, Darius! Cuz they think you're okay with it.

DARIUS

I never said it was okay.

JACKSON

No, you don't have to say nothin'. Just stand there and watch.

*(Pause.)*

Be nice if somebody had my back.

DARIUS

So all this is cuz you're afraid to go to school?

JACKSON

I'm not afraid!

DARIUS

You're hidin' in a box.

JACKSON

I tried to go. I can't. I get sick to my stomach.

DARIUS

You get sick being at school?

JACKSON

It's like I can't breathe. My hands start shaking. I tried to go today and I had to throw up in the parking lot.

DARIUS

Aw, no, yuck. Did anybody see you?

JACKSON

I don't know. I ran away.

DARIUS

Well, I guess you did the right thing. You don't want people finding out about that.

JACKSON

And the farther away I ran, the better I felt. Until I got here and I crawled in this box. And now I'm fine. As long as I stay in here, I'm fine.

DARIUS

You're not fine. You're in a box. This isn't fine.

JACKSON

It's quiet. There's nobody here to tell me what they think of me.

DARIUS

You gotta come outta there sometime, Jax. Look, you don't see me skippin' school just cuz I don't keep up in my classes. And all my teachers ridin' me cuz I can't get the same grades as my little brother.

*(Jackson pokes his head out of the box for the first time.)*

JACKSON

*(suspicious)*

You're right. You don't care about any of that.

DARIUS

That's what I'm sayin'.

JACKSON

So why are you here?

DARIUS

What?

JACKSON

You don't care what anybody thinks of you or me or your grades. So why are you outta school?

DARIUS

I'm not. I came looking for you.

JACKSON

No, you didn't.

DARIUS

Your mom sent me.

JACKSON

Why don't you call her, then? Tell her you found me.

DARIUS

I don't know her number.

JACKSON

You're here cuz you skipped outta school. What are you up to? If they sent you to mess with me, I'll scratch you.

DARIUS

Now, stop it! Nobody sent me.

JACKSON

I'm callin' my mom.

DARIUS

All right, stop... Look, I accidentally-- I accidentally asked out the wrong girl, okay?

JACKSON

What wrong girl?

DARIUS

Shaundra Kelly.

JACKSON

Ha! That's never gonna happen!

DARIUS

Thanks, bro.

JACKSON

So what did she say?

DARIUS

What do you think she said?

JACKSON

I think she smacked you and told you to step off.



DARIUS

She told me she'd think about it.

JACKSON

Ha! You're such an idiot! That means "no".

DARIUS

She said she'd talk to me at lunch.

JACKSON

It's almost lunchtime now. What're you doing here?

DARIUS

I'm not goin' in that cafeteria.

JACKSON

Why not?

DARIUS

Cuz you're right, all right? It's never gonna happen. And I don't need her laughin' at me in front of all her friends.

JACKSON

That would be funny.

DARIUS

Watch it.

JACKSON

You gotta eat some time, Darius.

DARIUS

I hafta cut weight for track anyway.

JACKSON

So you're afraid of a girl.

DARIUS

No, I'm not.

JACKSON

You're not in school, cuz you're afraid of a little girl.

DARIUS

You shut up. Come out of there.

*(Darius tries to grab Jackson who ducks back down in the box.)*

DARIUS

Ow! Stop scratching!

JACKSON

Stop grabbing!

*(Darius glares at the box.)*

JACKSON

*(inside the box)*

So what are you gonna do? Drop out of school?

DARIUS

I wish.

JACKSON

Over Shaundra Kelly?

DARIUS

Well, I can't now.

JACKSON

Yeah, your dad'll kill you, missing class over nothing.

DARIUS

Forget that. Your mom'll kill me if she thinks I gave you the idea.

*(Jackson emerges again.)*

JACKSON

Hey, that's right. That's exactly what she's gonna think if she finds out.

DARIUS

You better not be getting any ideas.

JACKSON

I could stay here all week and not get in trouble if she thought you put me up to it.

DARIUS

You better not.

JACKSON

Oh, man, and your dad would hear it.

DARIUS

You try it and you'll have one more person in that school that hates you.

*(Jackson goes back into his box.)*

DARIUS

Naw, come on, I'm sorry. I didn't mean it.

*(After awhile, Jackson sticks his head back out.)*

JACKSON

You're gonna have to go back, y'know.

DARIUS

I know that.

JACKSON

Can't stay out here forever. You look like an idiot. People think you're afraid.

DARIUS

Yeah, what about you?

JACKSON

There's worse things than looking like an idiot.

DARIUS

Tell you what. Why don't we both go back?

JACKSON

What good's that gonna do?

DARIUS

Prob'ly nothing.

JACKSON

Well, then let's not. Are you crazy?

DARIUS

What if I told you from now on I'll try to have your back?

JACKSON

You think that's gonna stop 'em?

DARIUS

Prob'ly not. But it's something.

JACKSON  
What if I don't believe you?

DARIUS  
I guess that's fair.

JACKSON  
But I guess it's worth a try.

DARIUS  
Gotta start somewhere. Come on.

*(Darius turns to go. Jackson stands up in his box, and eventually follows.)*

DARIUS  
You gonna lose the box?

JACKSON  
Don't rush me.

DARIUS  
Okay. But I'm not goin' in school with you like that.

JACKSON  
We got four more blocks.

DARIUS  
I'm just sayin'.

JACKSON  
Don't rush me!

*(LIGHTS FADE.)*