

Exoskeletal

by Laura Ellen Scott

The-the-the-the-the-the buggo *kid*, he was hiding in a crawl space behind the hall closet and shoulda been found way sooner since there's a freaking draft coming through the false wall. Which, by the way, is just a piece of primer painted board covering a hole. So I think if anyone did sloppy work, it was you. *Nnyerrt* me. No ways. S'okay though, kid's in the kitchen now, surrounded by the premier boys and crying like, well crying like a kid. He managed to bite Terry through to the shoulder, but the scene's under control now. The magicians will take it from here.

Oh wow-wow-wow, would you listen to that? Lucky kid, he still has tears. They also serve who only stand and wait in the dark with the mice and the spiders and the insulation . . . Aw man don't give me that. Nobody just does a job anymore. Creativity and instinct, pardner. Those are basic tools these days. You go write a report that omits your oversight, and I won't say a thing. I'm no project manager, no skin off my

—wait. Uh huh, there he goes. *Annnnd* pop. That's about it then. Better mosey, unless you want to get tapped for clean up. Thanks, no, I'll catch a rickshaw back, gotta follow through. Show 'em that we're not all feckless ass burns. Yeah well, don't be like that. Dang, inattentive and sensitive; just how does that work?

Right, the premies are headed for the scrape. We're up next, you coming with? Shake it off. You can second-hand me, if you want.

Whoa.

That kid is completely terraced — chalk it up to hormones. Tell you what, if people only knew what the buggo does to your insides before it shellacs your outsides they'd think twice before dancing.

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And guys like us, we'd get parades. Guys like us, oof-oof! Im-*mune* to romance.

Put all the shiny into Bag A. And don't forget to tag it with the customer number. Righteous. The magics left some Popeyes. Love the skin.

Okay, so what's the tot? About twelve ounces of shine, three skeins of zwikky, and maybe two liters of sweet? Kid was cooking, man. A real Casanova. But we can handle the whole yield, we pack it right. Hey there, watch out. And work faster. Zwikky's coming unwound. Unwinding itself, azzamatterofact. Shouldn't do that. Not the quality stuff.

Bad sign.

The shine might not be real.

Work faster, love:

*Buggo, buggo into my bucket,
Break my heart before you chuck it.*

Ho ho! You feeling it? A little stir in the inseam? Happens, nothing to be ashamed of. Just move your bum already. Smell that stuff, it's sexy ozone. Makes your hairs stiffen. In a good way. Is it warm in here or is it just me (that was a joke)

. . . which means the sweet is going off. We may be a bit fucked. Like trapped fucked.

Here I'll.
Get that.
You almost got some on ya.
My guts are crawling like.

I hate to tell you this, but I mighta been buggoed, man.
Too much time on site. Feels like the house is moving, with
my bowels going in the opposite direction.
You might be in trouble darling, because I am the gimbal

in a gyroscope made from meat 'n chitin.
And this ain't no random hidey-hole.
So I don't care if the chicken was bad, I only wanna know
are you gonna finish yours?

Gonna eat your skin? Gotta love the skin.
Gonna eat your skin. I think I have to.

