

Rob's Send-off

by Robert Crisman

Rob od'd in the yard and they couldn't call 911, for all the usual reasons. Plus, Joey had warrants. And they couldn't just call in and split. Leaving aside the fact they'd be homeless, the cops would come in and see that the house was made for od's and turn the place over. They'd roust old what's-his-name out of the attic and he'd drop every last dime that he had on Joey and all of them down here.

Okay, no call, but Roanne said, "We've got to get Rob *out* of here, Joey."

Joey had this old trunk, an old steamer trunk he'd swiped from his mother. They could cram Rob inside and then drop him somewhere in the dingles.

Roanne felt this sad, weary feeling well up. Something...this cheap ugly *shit*. If she could have cried...

Is this what it comes to, this....life?

Rob, garbage now. Toss him...

What else to do?

They wrestled Rob out of the bathtub and lugged him out to the trunk. Rob weighted eight million pounds, and the *stink*--they all got the dry-heaves. They dropped him halfway. Rob's head hit the floor with a *thunk*.

Michelle almost puked. Just what they needed. She was screaming by this time--"Shit, fuck, *goddamn!*"--and crying, and just about ready to shriek through the ceiling. Roanne had to bark her down off a full-blown hysteria jag.

They had to fold, twist, and bend Rob to get him into the trunk, but they did it. Joey grabbed for the lid--and puked his guts into the trunk, all over Rob.

That did it. Michelle yelled, "Oh *God!*" and rushed for the bathroom to heave til she croaked.

Roanne stood there. Every last nerve in her body had died. She stared dumbly at Joey sprawled on the trunk. Then she laughed. It just busted on out of her, man, not loud, but *deep*. She could no

more control it than fly to the moon in a 1956 Buick. She went and flopped in a chair, still laughing, her whole body shaking, tears rolling. She brought her hand to her eyes, looked away, and kept laughing.

Rob's send-off, a pukefest. Joey there, rolling around, face puffed like a blowfish. Michelle, *ack! ack! ack! ack!* in the bathroom-- absolute soundtrack perfection.

Horror rendered as nightmare cartoon.

