

A Noise in the Trunk

By Jeffery Greb

“Damn, she’s got a lotta noise in her trunk.”

Sammy looked to see what Mookie was talking about. He saw a young woman sashaying up the block, having just left the bar next door.

“Come on, Mookie,” he said. “We’re already late. The Horse will be pissed.” It was well past midnight. “Put your goddamn gloves on, idiot.”

Mookie followed, snapping rubber gloves onto both his hands. “Just sayin’.”

They waited at the darkened door of the restaurant. After a moment a shadow took shape out of the darkness. It was Harry the Horse Ricci, all six feet five inches two hundred and sixty pounds of him. He unlocked the door to let the pair in.

“Get in here.” He locked the door behind them. “You’re fuckin’ late.”

“Sorry, Harry. I mean, Mr. Horse. I mean . . .” Mookie stopped talking and tried a sheepish smile.

The Horse glared back in silence. He turned to Sammy. “You’re a half-bright kid. Why do you hang around with this dumbass?”

“He’s my cousin, sir.”

A vacant quality came to the Horse’s eyes as if he was weighing the familial bond. “Alright,” he finally said, “let’s get this thing done. Each of you grab a tablecloth from a table – away from the windows – and don’t make a buncha noise. Follow me.” They did as instructed and walked in file behind his massive frame and through the swinging doors into the kitchen.

On the floor beside a prep table, they recognized the restaurant’s owner. The handle of a chef’s knife pointed from his chest to the ceiling above. There was surprisingly little blood.

“Holy shit! You stabbed him. Why didn’t you shoot him?” Mookie asked.

Harry the Horse contemplated the question while the pair worked at sliding the tablecloths under the body. He sniffed then said, “Quieter. Besides, I wouldn’t waste one of my burners on this piece of shit.” He leaned a little closer to the crouching duo. “Don’t think for a second I won’t use one on the both of you, you fuck this up.” They nodded rapidly.

Once they transported the body to the door using the tablecloths as a sling, the Horse unlocked it and said, “Pop the trunk.”

Mookie gingerly placed his share of the burden on the floor, went outside, and looked up and down the block. He walked to the back of the car and opened the trunk.

“You need to dump that dipstick,” said the Horse. “He’s nothin’ but trouble.”

Sammy looked quietly at his hands holding the tablecloth.

“Coast is clear,” Mookie said as he came back inside. “Come on.”

The boys shuffled over the sidewalk with the body between them while the Horse remained inside the restaurant. They strained hoisting the weight and dropped it heavily onto the plastic they’d lined the trunk with and the shovels they’d deposited earlier. A frozen grimace stared at Sammy from within the trunk. He covered it with a corner of one of the tablecloths.

After getting in the car, Mookie excitedly fumbled with the keys. Sammy looked out the passenger window and watched Harry the Horse lock the door and then dematerialize into the gloom.

Once they were underway, Mookie said, “Jesus, Harry the freaking Horse!”

“What about him?”

“He just freaking stabbed that guy.”

“He’ll stab us too if we’re not careful.”

“Nah,” said Mookie, “he’ll shoot us. Remember?” After a moment, he said, “Hey, it’s a long way to the Barrens. Let’s smoke a blunt.”

“You wanna get high? Didn’t you hear what *you* just said? Wait until after.”

Mookie turned up the stereo and sang along. Sammy considered what the Horse had said to him. He knew he was right, but how could he extricate this thorn of a cousin from his life? Just dump him, as the Horse suggested? After all this time?

“Ah shit, man! We’re gettin’ pulled over!”

Blue and red flashing lights danced in the car as they slowed to a stop on the shoulder. As Mookie placed the car in park, a bright spotlight from behind seemed to illuminate every crevice. Sammy was going to tell him to relax, just be cool, nothing to worry about, no reason for the cop to want to search the car when Mookie cut the engine. After the music quit, they could hear a thumping, a noise in the trunk.

“Oh fuck! He’s not dead!”

They stared wild-eyed at each other, until Sammy looked past Mookie and saw the policeman at the driver’s window with his hand on his gun.