

The Hauling of Tom's Estate

By Buck Marchinton

In honor of Paul Matthews, with apologies to Robert Service

There are strange things done in the summer sun

By the folks who haul for pay;

The Georgia roads bear their heavy loads

As the trucks go on their way;

I have worked like a Man filling many a van

But the hardest 'twas ever my fate,

Was the time away down in the county of Towns,

I hauled away Tom's estate.

Now Tom Deitz hails from the hills and dales, where the Cherokee once did roam.
When it came to his stuff, there was never enough to fill up his modest home.
Be it record or book, every cranny and nook was stuffed with his objects of need.
Like a dragon with gold, he would gather and hold all the fruits of his own brand of greed.

In the spring of the year, with the end drawing near, Tom called for a dear old friend.
Now, I am no slouch, and came to his couch when he summoned me at the end.
“Paul, you’ve been so kind. Now I’m leaving behind the fruits of my great success.
Can I leave it to you? For you’ll know what to do.” I – fool that I was – said yes.

If I had known then what I painfully ken, I’d gently but firmly decline.
Yet with nary a plan but with crowbar in hand, I pried at the Deitzian shrine.
A billow of dust and the odor of must assaulted me in the face.
I figured my sneeze was the first hint of breeze for many long years in that place.

From back wall to door, from ceiling to floor was stuffed with the things that Tom kept.
How could I but doubt that we’d move it all out? A lesser man would have wept.
Though swift came the thought to burn up the lot, or dump it all off a ledge,
I chased the thought out; for each Eagle Scout is always as good as his pledge.

Bank boxes and totes with sticky notes, and piles of dog-eared sheets,
And roaches that camped on magazines damped by some bottles of brew a la Deitz,
All the model cars and mason jars and boxes of bills unpaid;
I took my best guess and I combed through the mess to figure what went and what stayed.

There wasn’t a breeze in the locust leaves, and the sun was uncommonly fierce,
I worked in the gloom that was dark as a tomb, so deep that my light couldn’t pierce.
I heard then a noise – an echoing voice rang out through the heat-shimmered airs:
“To your promise be true, you executor you, and settle up all my affairs.”

Now a promise made is a debt unpaid, I told my self o’er and o’er.
Though my brain was baked and my limbs they ached, I kept coming back for more.
Through patina of rust and the clouds of dust that rose up with every touch,
My friends asked me, “Son, just what have you done to piss off the man so much?”

My loyalty proved as the boxes I moved, I hauled each one out in the light.
I started to hope that my body could cope, for the back of the shed was in sight.
So we loaded the truck, always cursing the luck as we fumbled with bag or trunk.
I truly surmise we could all sympathize with those who hauled pharaoh's junk.

I shoved the muck in the back of the truck, and took the refuse to the dump.
A handcart I plied to the trailer outside, and hoped that the pile wouldn't tump.
Though my energy waned, my cheerfulness feigned, we only had one box to stow.
And now we were done with shed number one! We only had four sheds to go.

A nightmare I had that featured the lad for whom I toiled and bled.
He sat in my chair with a careless air, and then he smiled and said,
"Though Heaven's okay, at the end of the day, there's only one book (though it's good).
I'm coming on back, so if you can re-pack, just bring my stuff home if you would."

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-FBM, 2009