

The Shovel

by
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Based on the story
by
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EXT. HANK'S HOUSE - DAY

ANGLE ON the outside of a small house. Everything is still. The front bumper of a car parked in the driveway is barely visible on the edge of frame.

From inside, the sound of a woman's LAUGH. She LAUGHS again -- a sexy GIGGLE -- and her feet DRUM as she runs across the floor.

A single title against black: The Shovel.

EXT. PAUL'S BACK PATIO - NIGHT

Late at night. The moon high, the sky black. Bright clouds scud across the sky.

PAUL MULLIN, early 50's, sits in an Adirondack chair on the brick patio at the back of his house. He's dressed in jeans and a T-shirt damp with sweat. He has a pad on his lap and a couple of yellow, #2 pencils. He writes. Stops to think.

Paul lifts a bottle of beer and takes a swig, then writes again. Behind him, insects BUMP against the screen door.

Paul stops mid-sentence, listening to other, stranger sounds coming through the darkness. It's the kind of night where noise carries a long way.

A sharp THUNK. A muffled, scattered THUD. The SCRAPE of steel against stone. Silence. THUNK. THUD. THUNK. THUD.

A little further away, a dog BARKS.

Paul looks toward the lawn. Beyond the patio, the grass runs to a line of trees marking the edge of his property.

He puts the pad and pencil down next to his chair and stands up. He crosses the bricks and his lawn, then stops. The SOUNDS are louder now. Closer. THUD... THUNK... SCRAPE...

Paul moves quietly into the shadows.

EXT. HANK'S FIELD - SAME

HANK, Paul's neighbor, is digging a hole. In his mid 30's, he's whiplash thin and wound tight. He's buried to his knees, shirt soaked with sweat and covered in dirt.

Breathing heavily, Hank lifts a shovelful of dirt and throws it high in the air. It lands with a THUD.

Working quickly, he turns back and stabs the shovel into the dirt. THUNK. Tosses the dirt high again. THUD.

Behind Hank, out of his line of sight, Paul appears around the side of a weathered barn. Paul walks silently toward Hank, stopping a dozen feet from the hole.

PAUL
Evening, Hank.

Hank YELLS, jumping a mile. He spins around.

HANK
Jesus! Motherfucker! Paul...
Christ, you scared the shit outta
me!

PAUL
Sorry to bother you.

HANK
You can't sneak up on someone like
that! What the fuck you think
you're doing?

PAUL
(stepping closer)
Well, I was just sitting on my
porch, listening to a nice quiet
evening. Now I'm wondering, what
are you up to

Behind him, inside Hank's house, a dog is BARKING.

HANK
What's it look like?

PAUL
I figured that part out. One thing
I know is the sound of a man
digging a hole. Nice looking
shovel you got there.

HANK
Yeah, well, I'm kinda busy right
now, so--

PAUL
Yeah, well it looks just like mine.
Remember? You borrowed it a few
months ago?

Hank stares hard at Paul, then looks at the shovel.

HANK

What do you know? It's your shovel,
all right. I'll bring it back when
I'm done. Okay? Right now I got a
little work to do.

Hank stabs the shovel into the dirt. Paul waits, then can't
help himself.

PAUL

Kind of strange, digging a hole in
the middle of the night.

Hank tosses dirt on Paul's shoes and keeps digging.

HANK

Too hot during the day.

Another load of dirt lands on Paul's feet. He steps out of
the way.

PAUL

What's it for?

HANK

Dog died.

PAUL

Dusty? I could've sworn I heard her
barking over at the house just now.

HANK

Wasn't her. Another dog. Not her.

Hank throws another load of dirt. The dog BARKS more
frantically.

PAUL

Didn't know you had two dogs.

HANK

Shit... It's an old dog. Never
came out. He died and I gotta bury
him and as soon as I'm done, I'll
bring you your goddamn shovel back.

PAUL

I'm just saying, Hank, I'll
probably be going to bed and I
don't need it tonight, so--

HANK

No, no, no! I'll bring it back tonight. I wouldn't want you to live another fucking minute without your precious shovel.

PAUL

I just don't want you to go out of your way, that's all. You've had it for four months, what's another day, right?

Choking the shovel, Hank takes a sudden step toward Paul.

HANK

Would you just get the fuck outta here?

Surprised, Paul steps back from the hole, hands up.

PAUL

Okay, Hank. Okay... okay.

When he's a safe distance away, Paul turns and disappears around the barn.

Hank stabs the shovel deep into the black dirt.

EXT. PAUL'S BACK PATIO - NIGHT

Returning to his patio, Paul picks up his bottle, pad and pencils and opens the screen door. He stops in a slanted beam of the light, listening.

The sound of DIGGING drifts through the trees, louder.

Paul waits, then goes in. The door BANGS home.

EXT. PAUL'S HOUSE - MORNING

Paul opens the screen door in a clean T-shirt and boxers.

The shovel is on his back steps, angled against the house.

Paul picks it up. Looks at it. Then carries it inside.

INT. KITCHEN - PAUL'S HOUSE - SAME

Paul comes into the kitchen holding the shovel. A coffee maker is going on the counter.

He stands the shovel against a chair, blade up, and sits down at the long wooden table across from it. There's a glass of juice by his elbow. Paul looks at the shovel.

He reaches over and picks up a cordless phone. He punches the button to get a tone and starts to dial, but then hangs up. He puts the phone down and stares across at the shovel. The heavy blade -- sharp and scarred -- stares right back.

EXT. HANK'S FIELD - DAY

The huge teeth of a BACKHOE bite through dark earth. The blade swallows a mound of dirt and drops it heavily on the grass next to a growing hole.

A DEPUTY stands next to the backhoe, holding a new shovel. He holds up a hand, shouting over the noise.

DEPUTY

Okay!

The machine pulls back. As the engine dies, the deputy steps into the shallow hole.

DEPUTY (CONT'D)

(to the driver)

So, Jimmy come back in like an hour.

Ten paces away, Paul and the SHERIFF look on. The sheriff is handsome, in his late 30's. He squints at the sun, low in the eastern sky.

SHERIFF

All right, so, what night this happen again?

PAUL

Saturday.

SHERIFF

So you waited three days to call me.

PAUL

Yeah... I didn't know I was supposed to call the sheriff whenever I don't see my neighbors for a couple of days.

SHERIFF

Let me get this straight. You heard a noise which was weird enough to get you up in the middle of the night, stumbling out here in the dark, but when you saw Hank out here digging a hole that wasn't strange enough for you to call me?

PAUL

Well I've seen plenty of strange things over here, believe me.

SHERIFF

That a fact?

PAUL

Yeah. You'd be surprised what you see through the trees.

SHERIFF

(with a sidelong glance)
Oh, maybe not.

PAUL

What do you mean?

The sheriff steps closer to the deputy, digging deeper now.

SHERIFF

I hear you've been watching Joanie pretty closely.

PAUL

Who said that?

SHERIFF

Joanie. Couple of weeks ago. Said you were making her kinda nervous.

PAUL

That's not true. Well, I noticed what kind of busy calendar she had, that's all. Got a different guy over there whenever Hank's gone. Except for the last few days. No Hank, and no Joanie. So I got to thinking.

SHERIFF

(looking at Paul)
Thinking what?

PAUL
I don't know. Hank said he was
burying the dog.

SHERIFF
(to the deputy)
He said he was burying the dog!
(to Paul)
Dusty?

PAUL
Yeah. And Dusty was barking over
in the house. Said it was another
dog.

SHERIFF
They don't have another dog.

PAUL
Yeah, I know that.

SHERIFF
All right, so then what happened?

PAUL
Nothing. He yelled at me and kept
digging and I left. Then later I
started to wonder where they were.
And how, wherever the hell Hank is,
how he knows that I know that he
was, you know, digging the--

SHERIFF
(interrupting)
Did you actually see anything else,
Paul? I mean, now that you got us
both out here?

Before Paul can answer, the deputy calls out.

DEPUTY
Sheriff! We got something!

The deputy drops his shovel and bends down, digging carefully
through the earth with his hands. When he stands up, he's
holding a woman's sandal.

PAUL
(stepping forward)
Jesus.

SHERIFF
Stay there.

The deputy leans down, digging through the earth again. This time he looks up with a grimace on his face.

DEPUTY

Oh, yeah... It's her, all right.

The sheriff turns away. Paul stares dumbfounded at the hole.

The sheriff takes a deep breath and exhales. Paul stares at the hole, blinking, shaking his head.

PAUL

He did it. Hank killed her. You know, he could be anywhere by now.

The sheriff looks at Paul. Behind him, in the grave, the deputy is poking a foot through the dirt.

DEPUTY

(leaning down again)
Hang on. There's something...
Holy shit.
(standing up)
It's Hank.

PAUL

What?

The sheriff squats down over the hole.

SHERIFF

(loud, over his shoulder)
It's Hank.

The deputy looks past the sheriff, at Paul.

DEPUTY

That ain't all. There's a goddamn dog in here, too.

The sheriff turns to look over his shoulder at Paul.

SHERIFF

Hello, Dusty.

He stare at Paul, seeing him in a whole new light.

INT. KITCHEN - PAUL'S HOUSE - LATER

The sheriff and Paul sit next to each other at Paul's center kitchen island, coffee mugs by their hands.

The sheriff has a small pad and a pen out. There are already notes on the paper.

SHERIFF

All right, let's go over this again. After midnight, you heard him digging.

PAUL

Right, yeah.

SHERIFF

With a shovel.

PAUL

Right.

SHERIFF

Yeah, 'cause see, we took a quick look through his house, garage... Guess what? No shovel.

PAUL

No, he was using mine.

The sheriff taps his pen against the pad, then makes a note.

SHERIFF

You never mentioned that before.

PAUL

Well, I didn't think it mattered.

SHERIFF

Where's this shovel now?

PAUL

In the garage.

SHERIFF

How did it get there?

PAUL

I put it there.

SHERIFF

You put it there.

PAUL

Yeah. Hank brought it back and he left it out...

Paul stops, suddenly uncomfortable.

SHERIFF

What, after he buried his wife and himself?

PAUL

I guess he couldn't have.

SHERIFF

Be kind of hard to do, I'm thinking.

PAUL

I just assumed it was him. It was there the next morning.

SHERIFF

Think I could take a look at this shovel?

PAUL

(heading for the hallway)
Sure. It's uh... I'll get it.

SHERIFF

Paul? Sit down.

Paul takes a seat as the sheriff puts down his pen.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

You gotta admit this looks a little suspicious.

PAUL

Come on...

SHERIFF

Hank burying himself with your shovel. You being the only witness. There anything you want to tell me, Paul? Be easier to do it now.

PAUL

Oh, come on, Sheriff. I-- I don't know what happened! I'm just telling you what I saw. I just... You know, I probably shouldn't say anything else without a lawyer.

SHERIFF

That might be smart.

PAUL

'Cause I didn't do it! Hank must've
killed her.

The sheriff gets up. Crossing behind Paul, he goes to the
sink and pours himself coffee

SHERIFF

And why was he in the hole?

PAUL

I don't know. Well, maybe one of
her boyfriends came by and saw what
happened. What Hank had done. And
killed them and buried them both in
the hole.

SHERIFF

But he was on the bottom.

PAUL

Maybe Hank hadn't buried her yet.
And so the boyfriend threw them
both in-- in the...

SHERIFF

What about Dusty? I mean, I don't
know.

PAUL

Well, neither do I! I don't know
about any of it! All I know, it
wasn't me!

The sheriff rinses his cup. He takes a towel off the faucet
and dries his hands.

SHERIFF

You have an active imagination.

The sheriff moves a large kitchen knife out of the drying
rack and puts it down on the counter, near Paul, then sets
his cup on the rack.

PAUL

Oh, come on, sheriff! Why would I
kill him? Why would I kill either
of them?

SHERIFF

I don't know. Maybe you're one of
these "boyfriends" you keep talking
about.

PAUL
Me? No. No, no, no. That was--

SHERIFF
Good. That was who? Let's talk
about who you saw over there.

PAUL
Just some guys. Different guys.

SHERIFF
Yeah, I got that part. You
recognize any of them?

PAUL
Yeah, a couple of them.

SHERIFF
A couple, huh?

PAUL
Yeah. A few.

SHERIFF
See, that's what I thought.

The sheriff stares hard at Paul.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)
I want to ask you a question. I
want a straight answer, okay?

PAUL
Okay.

SHERIFF
'Cause I mean, I think you're in a
world of shit here.

PAUL
Okay.

SHERIFF
You ever see me over there?

Paul is speechless.

PAUL
No... Well, yeah, you were...
(everything coming clear)
Oh, Jesus.

SHERIFF

Whoops.

The sheriff slowly crosses behind Paul and stops.

PAUL

(stunned)

Hey, this is crazy. Someone's gonna find out. This is a small town. Everyone is gonna know.

The sheriff takes out his pistol and leans in to whisper in Paul's ear.

SHERIFF

Like you knew I brought back your shovel?

He comes around Paul's side and Paul sees the gun. The sheriff settles back into his stool. His gun on Paul, the sheriff picks up the heavy knife that he placed near Paul earlier. He slides it slowly close to Paul's hand.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

You just have to keep things simple. I had to protect myself.

Paul looks at the knife. Then at the sheriff.

PAUL

You're joking... You can't do this.

SHERIFF

I think I probably can.

Paul stares at the sheriff, eyes wide.

CUT TO BLACK.

There is a single, thunderous BLAST.