

Shovel

by Mark Lyons

markielyons@yahoo.com

OVER BLACK:

SOUND:

Cheap aluminum scrapes concrete over and over, rhythmically.

RAYMOND DRE (V.O.)
I've learned at a very early age to
hate money.

FADE IN:

EXT. RUNDOWN NEIGHBORHOOD - DUSK

RAYMOND DRE CORNELL, 12, black, shovels snow out of a
driveway.

RAYMOND DRE (V.O.)
But I've also learned we need it.

Vapor trails huff out his mouth and nose as he breathes.

RAYMOND DRE (V.O.)
My mom and dad weren't arguing
about the money, but listening to
them, it wasn't making them any
less sad, either.

Raymond pauses and takes a breather.

He glances down towards the corner of the street, past a
bent, crooked stop sign and a telephone pole.

The street sign on the pole reads 'Lanterman Rd.'

RAYMOND DRE (V.O.)
My dad said we'd be fine, but it
sounded like he didn't know if he
was lying or not.

Raymond gets back to shoveling.

RAYMOND DRE (V.O.)
And then it started snowing.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

Raymond Dre shovels a different driveway on the block.

RAYMOND DRE (V.O.)
At least nobody in the neighborhood
was home. I didn't have to work
around any of the rusted cars or
beaten pick-ups. They were all at
church. I suppose I should've been
there, too, but I was helping a lot
more by shoveling.

He's almost finished with the driveway.

RAYMOND DRE (V.O.)
 Besides, I had already mourned.
 I didn't have any tears left.
 At least not right now.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER

Raymond Dre shovels a drive on the opposite side of the street.

RAYMOND DRE (V.O.)
 I began the night out at the funeral home, but it didn't take me long to get sick of hearing it... I suppose enough that the sentiment was meant for good intentions, but I felt disgusted hearing it over and over... 'If there's anything I can do...' 'If there's anything I can do...' There's nothing anybody can do to make me feel better about my brother dying.

EXT. HICKSON HOUSE - LATER

Cheap and beat up. The curtains are drawn shut.

Raymond Dre stares at it from the sidewalk. This drive hasn't been shoveled yet.

He skips over the Hickson driveway and begins shoveling the next drive.

Tears turn to slush against his cheeks.

RAYMOND DRE (V.O.)
 Randall... Maybe I'll never run out of tears.

EXT. CORNELL HOUSE - LATER

Raymond Dre shovels his own drive.

RAYMOND DRE (V.O.)
 Why do funerals and caskets have to cost so much anyways? Funerals aren't like weddings. You don't hire photographers to help you remember them. And the casket just gets buried anyway.

Suddenly, he feels eyes on him and he spins around.

From the Hickson house, a blonde woman, MARIANNE, 30's, peers out from behind a curtain.

She stares at how her driveway's the only one not shoveled.

She notices Raymond Dre watching her and she quickly retreats from the window, shutting the curtain again.

Raymond turns back around to his driveway and finishes.

He walks up on the porch, leaves the shovel outside, and kicks the snow off his boots.

INT. CORNELL HOUSE - LATER

Raymond Dre takes his coat off and pours a glass of water from the kitchen faucet.

He reaches inside a closet and pulls out a basketball.

He walks in front of the television in the living room, lays down on the floor, and waits.

He hugs the basketball.

FADE TO:

INT. CORNELL HOUSE - NIGHT

Raymond Dre still lays on the floor, hugging the basketball.

His parents, REGINALD and VALENCIA, 40's, walk in.

They each give Raymond a hug, and Valencia gives him a kiss on the cheek.

They sit down on the couch and all three stare at their reflections in the blank television screen.

No one says anything.

Finally, a loud knock at the door jars them and Reginald answers it.

MR. GUSTAFSON, 40's, stands in the doorway.

GUSTAFSON

Hey, Reggie. Can I see Raymond Dre a minute?

Reginald steps back to allow Gustafson in. He looks at Raymond Dre still laying on the floor.

REGINALD

Raymond. Somebody'd like to speak with you.

Raymond stirs up and politely walks over to Gustafson.

GUSTAFSON

Hey, little man. I appreciate you shoveling for me.

Gustafson offers a hand and Raymond shakes it.

Gustafson pulls a twenty from his pocket and holds it out for him.

RAYMOND DRE

I can't take that much, Mr.
Gustafson.

Gustafson puts the bill in Raymond's hands for him.

GUSTAFSON

You deserve it tonight. You did a
lot of work out there and I know
not too many of the others will be
able to pay you very well.

Raymond Dre looks at his dad for permission. Reginald nods.

RAYMOND DRE

Thank you, Mr. Gustafson.

Gustafson nods at both Raymond and Reginald and turns back out the door.

Raymond Dre looks down at the twenty. Reginald goes to shut the door, then pauses.

He looks back at Raymond.

REGINALD

I don't think they're finished with
you yet, Raymond.

Raymond looks outside.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

Several NEIGHBORS, white and black, trudge through the snow toward the house.

INT. CORNELL HOUSE - TIME LAPSE

Several fingers pull crumpled bills out of their pockets and purses and jeans. Ones, fives, tens, even a few twenties.

They hold the money out for Raymond Dre to take.
Every time, Raymond offers the money back to them.

The money adds up and soon becomes a messy wad.

INT. CORNELL HOUSE - LATER

Raymond Dre counts the bills into two equal piles.

Valencia stands, grabs Raymond's glass of water earlier, and takes it in the kitchen.

Raymond folds one pile and tucks it into his back pocket.

The other pile of bills, he holds out for his father to take.

REGINALD

I'm not going to take that,
Raymond.

Valencia peeks in from the kitchen.

RAYMOND DRE

Please? I know it's not a lot, but
I know every bit helps.

REGINALD

(firmer)

I'm not going to take it. I'm not
going to have you-

VALENCIA

Reggie.

Reginald stops and peers at her in the kitchen.

She mouths 'Come here' to him.

Reginald looks at Raymond and swallows.

Finally, he walks into the kitchen and out of Raymond Dre's earshot.

Raymond sits down on the couch and begins sliding his snow boots back on.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Reginald stares at Valencia. She meets his eyes.

VALENCIA

Swallow it.

REGINALD

What?

VALENCIA

You know damn well what. That
little boy in there went out and
busted his ass for this family
tonight, and you're not just going
to shrug it off like it's nothing.

REGINALD

I don't mean to just shrug it off. I'm not going to take charity from anybody, let alone barely a couple dollars from my own twelve year-old son that I have no idea how I'm going to be able to support after all these death bills.

VALENCIA

Barely a couple dollars? Do you know how much that is to him?

Reginald thinks about it.

VALENCIA

This ain't about what you want or what you're taking. This is about what'll help him feel better and get through this. He wants to give that money to you. You better realize and appreciate what he's trying to do and take what he offers. Even if you just save it for him.

Reginald's quiet.

After a moment, he realizes his error. He nods and walks back into the-

INT. LIVING ROOM

Raymond Dre's already dressed to go outside again.

Reginald looks at him, then at the wadfull of bills Raymond holds out to him.

Reginald looks to the pocket Raymond put the rest of his money in.

Finally, he takes the money out of Raymond Dre's hand.

Valencia watches from the kitchen.

REGINALD

I'm going to put this away for you, okay? Whenever you want it. If I need it, I'll use it. But I'll always replenish it.

Raymond's already slipping his coat back on.

REGINALD

It'll take a little bit of time, but we're going to be just fine, Raymond.

Raymond nods his head.

RAYMOND DRE
I won't be gone long.

Raymond Dre picks up the basketball and walks out the door.

Reginald moves to the window and looks out.

Outside, he watches Raymond Dre pick the shovel up off the porch.

Valencia walks up next to Reginald and stares out the window at Raymond.

With the basketball in one hand and the shovel in the other, Raymond walks down the street.

Reginald looks at Valencia and, for the first time in days, they give each other a small smile.

EXT. HICKSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Raymond Dre stands in front of the house he had skipped.

He sets the ball down in the snow and begins shoveling a very small path from the sidewalk to the front porch.

Only a walkable path. He doesn't touch the driveway.

He also shovels the snow off the steps and what had piled on the porch of the beat-up house.

Marianne, the white woman, peers through the curtains at Raymond Dre on the porch and abruptly shuts them again.

This time, though, the door opens and she steps outside as Raymond Dre finishes the last shovelfull.

MARIANNE
Thank you for shoveling.

She folds her arms against the cold.

RAYMOND DRE
I didn't shovel the driveway because I know the pick-up's wrecked. I thought I could at least shovel the walkway for you.

MARIANNE
I really appreciate it.

Raymond nods.

RAYMOND DRE

I'm sorry your husband might not be home for a while. I wish he could. I know he didn't do anything on purpose.

MARIANNE

Your name is Raymond, right?

RAYMOND DRE

Raymond Dre.

MARIANNE

I wanted to make you some hot chocolate when I saw you shoveling earlier, and I tore my cupboards inside and out, but I'm sorry. I don't have any.

RAYMOND DRE

I was okay without it. Thank you.

Marianne sniffles and wipes her nose with a wad of tissues in her hand. Her eyes are red from crying.

MARIANNE

I'm so sorry about your brother. I can't tell you how sick he is about it, and he knows he deserves whatever happens to him.

Raymond just nods that he understands.

RAYMOND DRE

I know you have a son, and a little old baby to take care of.

Raymond Dre reaches in his pocket and pulls out the folded bills. He organizes them the best he can for her.

RAYMOND DRE

It probably won't help much, but it's part of what I made shoveling all the drives tonight.

Marianne shakes her head as he holds the money out to her.

RAYMOND DRE

It should help for a little while, I hope.

MARIANNE

No. I'm not going to take that from you.

RAYMOND DRE

My dad says we're going to be fine. I think your family needs it more than we do right now.

Marianne shakes her head again and cries.

RAYMOND DRE

Please. It'll make me feel a whole
lot less sad.

She looks at Raymond's pleading eyes.

Finally, she takes it.

MARIANNE

Thank you... very much, Raymond
Dre.

Raymond tries to look past her into the house.

RAYMOND DRE

Is it okay if I talk to Bradley?

Marianne wipes her eyes again and looks back in the house.

MARIANNE

Of course.

BRADLEY, 12, blonde hair and big red glasses, isn't far
behind her.

Marianne lets him stand in the doorway to talk with Raymond.

RAYMOND DRE

I saw the kids were mean to you on
the bus yesterday because of your
dad.

Bradley lowers his head.

Marianne looks at him. This is the first she's heard of it.

RAYMOND DRE

Tomorrow, just sit next to me.
They won't be mean if they see me
talking to you.

Bradley smiles at him.

BRADLEY

Okay.

Raymond nods at them, turns back around, and walks the
shoveled path back to the sidewalk.

MARIANNE

Thank you again, Raymond. I WILL
give this back to you when we're
better off.

Raymond Dre stops, smiles back at her, and shrugs.

RAYMOND DRE

If there's anything I can do...

Marianne gives him a smile as she closes the door.

Raymond picks the basketball back up and walks down the street to the corner of Lanterman Road.

He bounces the ball as best as he can in the snow along the way.

RAYMOND DRE (V.O.)

It's going to be hard living here.

Raymond comes to the bent stop sign and the telephone pole.

Dozens of flowers are now piled around the base of the stop sign and pole and a memorial plaque reads 'Randall'.

RAYMOND DRE (V.O.)

I wonder if a day will ever come
when I can leave Lanterman Road and
not think about the spot where my
brother got hit by the drunk blonde
man in the pick-up truck.

Raymond Dre lays the basketball down in with the flowers and stands back up.

RAYMOND DRE (V.O.)

But I've learned at an early age
that if you're happy with who you
are in life, then bad memories fade
fast. And soon...

The basketball sticks out like a sore thumb among the bouquets of flowers, but Raymond smiles at it nevertheless.

CUT TO BLACK.

RAYMOND DRE (V.O.)

Only good memories are left.