

Shooting Star
by
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EXT. FIELD - DAY

Dressed in worn overalls, TODD(30) hoes a freshly planted field. Sweat drips from his brow.

He stops, leans on his hoe, and wipes his brow with a bandanna.

A horn honks. A distance away, out in front of a small farmhouse, stands MIKE(30), right next to a mail van.

Mike waves.

Todd smiles as he waves back.

He pats his leg and RED, an Irish Setter, runs toward him and barks.

Todd lifts his hoe over his shoulder and smiles as he and Red head off to the

MAILBOX

His smile falls as he pulls out a handful of envelopes, each marked with the word BILL in big red letters.

He glances at his small two-storey farmhouse, then past a parked pick-up truck and over the expanse of his small farm.

Red yips at him. Todd scratches him behind the ear.

TODD
It'll be right, boy.

INT. SMALL FARMHOUSE

The envelopes lie on a small table next to a phone. One is torn open.

Todd stands with the phone to his ear. A bill, the words LAST NOTICE clearly visible on the front, held in his hand.

TODD
Two weeks?! How am I gonna -- Yes
ma'am -- But -- Yes ma'am -- Two
weeks then -- Thank you, ma'am.

Worry lines crease his face. He hangs up the phone.

Red whimpers. He stares Red in the eyes, then he turns and walks away.

LOUNGE ROOM

Todd sits on the sofa. He stares straight ahead. Then he lowers his eyes. On the coffee table in front of him is a revolver.

Teary, he grabs the gun. His hand shakes as he points the barrel toward his head.

He swallows, then slowly gently pulls back on the trigger.

RUFF! Red barks O.S.

BANG! The gun.

Dust flies as plaster falls and when it settles a large hole is revealed in the wall behind Todd's head.

Todd is unhurt, but angry. He rises.

TODD

Red! You goddamn dog.

Red bounds into the room, with his tail wagging and his tongue lolling out of his mouth. He runs over to Todd but before Todd can scold him, he knocks Todd back onto the couch and licks his face.

Todd, anger forgotten, laughs as he wrestles with Red.

TODD

Hey boy! You hungry?

Red barks. Todd smiles and pats Red's head.

TODD

Then let's get you somethin' to eat.

KITCHEN

From his bowl Red eats a mixture that only a dog could love.

Todd sits at the kitchen table eating slightly more human food.

TODD

And they said we got to pay 'em somethin' in two weeks or they're gonna turn off the water. We can pay 'em after harvest but that's three months away.

(MORE)

TODD (CONT'D)

-- Dunno how they expect me to grow crops to pay 'em without any water to grow 'em? Dunno how I'm gonna pay for the house if...

Red barks.

TODD

That's right boy. I can't. I guess I'm gonna have to figure out a way to make everything grow faster.

Red's ears perk up, then another bark. Red makes a beeline out the back through a doggy door.

TODD

Ain't you got no manners, boy? You're 'spose to excuse yourself 'fore you go out to play with the squirrels.

Todd laughs at his own joke.

BEDROOM

Todd pulls his nightshirt over his head as he crosses toward the unmade bed.

Red barks outside.

Thin-lipped, Todd snaps his head toward the sound.

He stomps toward the window, throws aside the curtain, and he looks down at Red who is visible in the light thrown from the window.

Red faces away from the house and barks. Todd scans the darkness looking for the cause of Red's irritation. There is nothing but a starry sky.

Then he sees it. A star brighter than the rest with a small tail behind it.

Todd smiles with wonder, then an idea. He closes his eyes.

TODD

I wish...

Red barks. Everything brightens.

Todd opens his eyes. A look of surprise as he squints out the window at the brightness.

The star fills the sky, a disk of light.

Todd backs away from the window then...

BOOM! The room shakes.

Todd is knocked to the floor. Silence.

Todd listens. Red has stopped barking.

TODD

Red? Red!

Panicked, Todd runs from the room.

EXT. BACKYARD

Todd carries a large flashlight as he hurries into the backyard. It's snowing, the ground is covered in a carpet of white. Todd spins around anxiously.

TODD

Red?!

Red barks and a wave of relief runs through Todd's face.

Red runs to him and knocks him down. The flashlight flies from Todd's grip but lands in the perfect position to light them as they roll around in the snow together.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Todd lies in bed.

The cock crows. Todd opens his eyes and groans.

BATHROOM

Todd saunters past the mirror. His reflection catches his attention. He stares at himself for a moment. He plays with a lock of his hair. There it is, a gray one. He plucks it out and examines it, then he tosses it away.

EXT. BACKYARD

The snow is gone.

Todd in his overalls, eyes the verdant green yard with curiosity as he exits the house.

Red lies in his doghouse, looking droopy. Todd slaps his thigh and Red rises. His head is hung low as he saunters over to Todd.

TODD
What's the matter, boy?

Todd feels Red's nose. Red looks up at him and whines.

TODD
Go an' lie down. I'll go out on my
own today --

Todd glances toward the field on the side of his house, and his mouth drops open. He stands.

The field he just planted is green with growth. Todd breaks into a run toward it.

FIELD

From above Todd runs into the field which is waist high with crop growth. His hands raise with exhilaration and he looks up to the sky. Then he smiles and he spins and he laughs.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Todd holds a dog dish in one hand as he crosses the room.

TODD
Red! C'mere boy. Supper time!

He puts the dish down. Then he heads back to the counter, which is stacked with fresh produce.

Red limps in through the dog door, he seems listless, his coat dull. Todd turns and watches as Red slowly makes his way to his food bowl. Concern lines Todd's face.

Red sniffs his bowl and whimpers. Todd kneels near him and strokes his fur.

TODD
What's wrong, boy? It's gonna be
ok, we got ourselves a miracle
crop. We ain't gonna lose the farm.

Then a look of horror as his hand come up full of Red's hair.

INT. VET'S OFFICE

Red lies on the vet's table, Todd stands nearby looking haggard, worry lines around his eyes, seems like there's a few extra gray hairs too.

DR. ELLEN examines Red.

ELLEN
...I would say adrenal
hyperactivity. It's common enough
when a dog hits nine or ten.

TODD
Nine or ten, what?

ELLEN
Years.

TODD
Dog years?

ELLEN
Human years?

TODD
That's not possible...

ELLEN
Situation like these are difficult
to accept, Mr...

TODD
Todd.

ELLEN
Todd, dogs grow old just like you
or I...

TODD
But Red's only five.

ELLEN
That's not possible...

Todd nods.

INT. PICK UP TRUCK

Dark outside. Todd drives with one hand on the wheel and the other on Red. Todd is agitated and tears well in his eyes.

TODD

We're gonna find a cure, boy. No way she gonna put you to sleep. No way!

He slams his hand against the wheel.

EXT. SMALL FARMHOUSE

Todd hurries from his parked truck to the front door. He bypasses the mailbox which still has today's bills inside.

INT. SMALL FARMHOUSE

Todd enters his bedroom and lovingly lays Red down on the bed. Red raises his head a bit and whimpers.

TODD

You're gonna sleep here tonight boy, so I can watch you.

Red lowers his head.

Todd is hyper, he looks wrinkled and wretched, his hair grayer than ever.

TODD

You just relax, boy. We're gonna get through this.

Todd paces.

TODD

What she say it was? Drenal somethin'...Active...Drenal active!

He hits the side of his head with his balled up hand.

TODD

I'm such an idiot! How in the hell am I gonna cure you if I can't even remember what you got?

He holds his crotch and bends over slightly as he paces.

TODD

Adonal...Adrenal...Adrenal!

He squeezes together his legs tightly.

TODD

Dammit!

He rushes toward the bathroom.

TODD
Adrenal...Activia

And to the toilet where he relieves himself.

TODD
Activity...Adrenal
Activity...Adrenal Hypo Activity
Shit! that still ain't right!

He flushes. Then a light bulb moment.

TODD
Got it!

And he turns toward the mirror.

TODD
Adrenal Hyper...

And stops. His mouth drops open. He sees himself but in 10 years. He touches the mirror, then with sadness he realises what it all means.

INT. BEDROOM - FLASHBACK

In his nightshirt Todd stares out the window. Then he closes his eyes.

TODD
I wish...

Red barks. Everything brightens.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Todd moves his hand away from the mirror and touches his face.

EXT. FIELD - FLASHBACK

From above Todd, waist high in crop growth, looks up to the sky as he spins and laughs.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Todd shakes his head.

TODD
I don't want it.

He rushes to the

BEDROOM

Then toward the window.

TODD
I don't want it, I take it back.

Then he shouts out the window.

TODD
You hear me! I take it all ba --

His head snaps toward the loud YOWL from Red. Red's head drops to the bed and is still.

TODD
Red? Red!

Tear well in Todd's eyes. He hurries to the bed, lifts Red in his arm. The tears flow.

TODD
Oh no! Oh god, no! Red.

He holds Red close. Todd is tormented.

TODD
I'm so sorry, boy...so...so...I'm
gonna fix this...I'm gonna...

The window catches his tearful attention. He rushes over to it, Red held close.

A light shines on his face, which sports a look of hopefulness. In the dark sky a circle of light moves toward him.

TODD
It's gonna be ok, boy. It's come
back. It's gonna be ok.

He smiles as he closes his eyes.

TODD
I wish...

And everything brightens. A pulsing vibration can be heard.

He opens his eyes expectantly...

Disappointment lines his face...

The spotlight of a dark low flying helicopter shines on his window, then it moves away to play along the field of his small farm.

It's all too much for Todd to take, he slumps against the wall then down to the floor.

EXT. SMALL FARMHOUSE - DAY

Mailman Mike stuffs new mail into the overflowing mailbox.

A concerned look at Todd's truck. Then he scans the farmhouse. He shoots a perplexed look toward the field, which is full of dead plants.

Back to the farmhouse, and the look turns to a worried one.

Mike beeps the horn on his mail truck. He waits a moment for a response, but there isn't one. Something is wrong, he heads for the house.

INT. SMALL FARMHOUSE

Mike knocks then enters the front door of the house.

MIKE
Todd? You home buddy?

He listens for a moment.

MIKE
Todd?!

KITCHEN

Mike turns up his nose at the rotten produce on the counter. Todd isn't here.

BEDROOM

The door is slightly ajar.

MIKE (O.S.)
Todd?

And the door creaks open. Mike scans the room.

Surprise. Then anger.

MIKE
Who the hell are you?

An OLD MAN sits motionless on the floor, bent over, near the window.

MIKE
Where's Todd?

Some red fur overflows the Old Man's lap.

MIKE
Is that Red? What'd you do to Red?

But the man doesn't move. Mike bends cautiously nearer.

MIKE
I'm talking to you!

And Mike shakes him.

MIKE
You okay? Mister?

The Old Man gasps for breath as he sits up and grabs Mike's arm. Mike jumps back in surprise.

Then the Old Man mumbles.

MIKE
What? What was that?

Mike moves closer.

And whispered with his last breath.

TODD/OLD MAN
Shooting star...

Mike and Todd stare at each other. Then recognition

MIKE
Todd?

Too late, Todd's eyes shut and he falls away from Mike.

MIKE
Todd!

Mike shakes him and continues to call his name but there is no response.

FADE OUT.