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Shotgun Stories

By Jeff Nichols

Kid.
Kid!
What?
Come on out.
What is it?
Annie's gone.
- Where'd she go?
- Left a note,
said she's gonna stay
with her mother for a while.
What'd you do?
I lost 200 at Tunaco last week.
- What about Carter?
- Took him.
Shit, man.
Yeah.
Well, you might as well move
back in the house for now.
All right.
What if she comes back?
Don't take the tent down.
Might be time for you to find
something else anyway.
I'm fine with it.
Well...
- We gonna tell Boy?
- What for?
You got front room, too.
Son of a bitch!
- Boy?
- Yeah?
Whatcha doin'?
Stereo's broke.
What's goin' on?
Told Kid he can
move back in the house.
What about Annie?
She'd gone to stay
with her mother for a while.
Told me to come by and see if
you wanna stay in the front room.
Why?
Get out of this van for a while.
Who said I needed out?

The Lord.

Shit.

Don't you get hot in here?

I got this the other day.

- Does it work?

- Well, I don't know.

I tried to run it through the cigarette lighter.

But it burnt something out and

that's why the stereo won't work now.

What's it doin'?

It just cuttin' and off whenever it wants...

I got a tape stuck in there right now.

Yeah?

I'm no good with stereos.

I gotta get to work.

Let me know if you

change your mind about the room.

Hey, if I come out to the house later,

can, uh... can I use the VCR?

If you bring some Juritos.

See that?

- What?

- On his back.

What is it?

Well, he got shot right

at the liquor store.

No shit?

Gettin' outta here?

Yeah.

Wanna get cheeseburger?

Can't really.

OK, drop me off, then.

Told Cheryl I'll meet her there.

All right.

See ya.

- What's up, Shampoo?

- A lot.

- What happened?

- Man, I had a little accident.

My place got fire yesterday.

- Shit.

- Yeah, man...

Cops been all over,

should've found plenty of evidence.

I'm livin' in this piece of shit now.

Is that your car?

Nah, it's my girlfriend's mom.

- Who's your girlfriend?

- You remember Cheryl Pruitt?

Really?

Lucky bastard.

Where you stayin'?

Over at Son's.

Oh, yeah? Think he'd let me park
my car over there? -When?

I don't know.

Now? Tonight?

I don't know, man. You don't need
that shit right now, you know?

Just wanna buy him.

I'll think about it.

All right.

Bienvenidos, bitch.

What's up, darlin'?

- Who was that?

- Shampoo Douglas.

Really?

We had biology together.

He used to sniff formaldehyde.

Yeah,

that's him.

Is this thing working?

I don't ever use that thing.

- What's the count?

- Plus 2.

This thing not workin'?

Oh, geez...

- What's it now?

- Shut up...

Got it.

Won't you get that?

Yeah.

- Your brother's here?

- Yeah.

- Both of them?

- Yeah.

Go get 'em.

It's mom.

What is it?

Your father's dead.

When's the funeral?

You look in the paper.

You going?

No.

Friends, before I lead us
in the committal thoughts...

I want to simply offer the sentiment
I said at the church:

Cleaman was a man of faith...
and the most productive member
of this community.

So, in our last moments together...

...each of us will have to
assess these feelings...

as they touch us individually.

Let us bow for prayer.

Brace us, Father,
lead us in these moments,
and especially bless this grieving family.

In Thy name, amen.

Now let us hear the words of David:

The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down
in green pastures.

- What do you think you're doing?

- I got something I wanna say.

Young man, what do you want?

- Sir, I'd like to say something.

- That's up to the family.

Let him talk.

I couldn't let you bury this man
without saying a few things first.

You're all here because you think
this was a good man.

But he wasn't.

Just 'cause he stopped drinkin',
called himself a Christian,
got a new life,
start a new family, that...
that don't make him a different man.
This is the same man...

that ran out on us.
Then left us behind to be raised
by a hateful woman.
He made like we were
never born.
That's who this man was.
And that's what he's
answering for today.
Stop, stop it!
Stop, not here...
Please, just go.
You could've told me
what you were gonna do.
If I'd known, I would've told you.
You should know.
- Where is Mark?
- He's outside.
Is he all right?
He's doin' all right.
He was a different man, back then.
I know, momma.
Take this.
Try and get some rest.
Thank you.
How is she doin'?
As good as can be expected.
She didn't deserve to hear that shit.
She's heard it before.
Not at his goddamn funeral.
Those three...
Like a pack of dogs.
You can't expect a dog
to have manners.
We'll see about that.
- You can't go out starting fights.
- I didn't start this.
You got responsibilities now, Mark.
Keep this farm up.
Hell, I got two kids to feed.
Besides, Stephen and John don't need
gettin' mixed up in anything like this.
You do what you want.
Steve and John are old enough
to make up their own minds.

Fucker.

What time is it?

About eight.

This is one empty ass town.

It's like we own it.

If I owned this town, I'd sell it.

We don't own a square root of shit.

Is that true?

What the hell is this?

Good morning, Annie.

What the hell is this? I'm gone a week
and you move them in?

I thought you left.

So this is how you've been missing me?!

I have been missing you.

So, have you thought about
what you're gonna do? -Yeah.

Well?

I'm not stoppin'.

Damn it, Son.

Why'd you got that skillet for?

Look, I'm gonna make it
real simple for you.

Long you keep gambling,
the longer I stay gone.

It's not gambling,
it's a system.

I'm taking the skillet.

Wait a minute.

How's Carter?

He's fine.

You hear about my father?

He died.

It was past weekend.

Went to the funeral yesterday.

What happened?

I said some things.

You think that was wise?

Doesn't matter.

I want to see Carter.

Take him out fishing.

- Where?

- The hell is it matter where?

I'll drop him off for you.

All right.
Saturday at 2.
Lake at dam.
You look good.
All right.
Let's get to work.
Where are you goin'?
Work.
Hey, coach.
Hi, guys.
- What's up?
- Not much.
Whacha been doin'?
Oh, just goin' over some plays.
Did you know that somebody wrote
"Suck it" on the back of your van?
They did?
I didn't know that.
Probably outta get that washed off.
Yeah, I probably should.
So, you wanna play some basketball?
No, but you guys go ahead.
I'm just gonna grab Henry.
All right.
You guys need to work out
on overhanded lay-offs.
Remember those overhanded lay-offs
we were doin' on practice?
Go to van, Henry.
Fundamentals, guys, fundamentals!
Yeah, that was pretty good.
- Are you ready?
- Yeah.
Did you hear Son got shot
robbin' a liquor store?
No, man, he got caught messin'
around with somebody's wife.
That's not what I heard.
Don't matter how he got shot,
he's about to get another one.
My cousin worked for Mark Hayes.
Said Son showed up at
Mark's daddy's funeral...
talkin' shit.

Mark Hayes.
That crazy son of a bitch.
Never met him.
I wouldn't know.
You wanna get some dinner?
No. I'm taking Cheryl out.
Where are you takin' her?
Buffet, probably.
Special!
Yeah.
You need shirt?
Don't think so.
What are you doin'?
Me and Boy might get up to something.
You got a button-up?
Yeah, I got a button-up.
You promise?
Yeah.
I mean, I want to talk to my brothers
about it first, but...
Yeah.
I love you.
I love you, too.
I'll call you later.
Be sweet.
What are you doin'?
Watching you being a stud.
- You sleep out here?
- No, I ain't been to bed yet.
Wanna get some breakfast?
Yeah.
Where's Henry?
I tied him up out back last night.
I need a burrito.
Let's do it.
Seen my wallet?
What about full-court man-to-man?
No, man-to-man's no good.
Depends too much on how you
size up against the other team.
I think we gotta go with, like, a zone.
Full-court press so we can practice
some running against anybody.
I thought you ran one of those

last year?

Well, I took a defense off

Nolan Richardson,

but, I dunno,

we didn't have the depth to run it.

Yeah, that's always been your weakness.

What?

Well... I mean, it seems like

every game I ever been to your...

it's like the other team

is shooting layups.

Here, look at this.

Something I've been working on lately.

We set traps back here...

cut off the incoming pass.

Most of these kids can't

throw all the way down court...

so we bring up our five men.

We cut them off and grab that game.

Hey, Kid.

- What's up, Shampoo?

- Boy.

You talk to Son yet about me

parking my car over there?

Not yet.

Come on man, talk to him.

I'll talk to him

when I wanna talk to him.

Shit.

Heard y'all caused a scene

over that funeral?

Yeah?

Yeah, Mark Hayes is goin' on about it.

What'd he say?

He said he might have to

kick a little ass. -Said what?

Something about kicking y'all's ass.

You believe that shit?

I tell you what...

If you see him,

you tell him to come find me.

Shit, I don't see him!

What if I end up

cheatin' on her, though?

Well, you end up in a situation
where you're seein' two girls.
I guess you just gotta
love both of them.
What?
You gonna eat that?
I don't know, I start thinkin'
'bout houses and kids,
other women...
I see a nice bootie,
I'll still gonna look at it.
Whacha all doin'?
We're gonna see if this thing works.
Well, she runs.
- You found this thing?
- Yeah.
Damn, that's cold!
Cut it, cut it. Cut it!
Cut it.
See that? One fuel line looks
like that you got popped off.
- You know how to do it?
- No.
What are they teachin' you
at that college?
- Nothin' good.
- You hear that, John?
Here, take that.
You'd be better off
stickin' around here this fall.
That's good.
Good, you got it!
Deserves a cold beer.
Hey, y'all should know...
Especially about the shit
that happened.
Dad was proud of you.
You know you have
to put a bobber on that?
I know.
Henry, let's go.
Pretty boy,
ready to catch some fish?
What's up, buddy?

Watch out for that net!
I'm just jokin'.
Your daddy was gonna fish without
the bobber, can you believe that?
OK, let's get up on that rock.
OK. Now wheel it in,
just a little bit.
OK, that's good. Now we're
just gonna let it sit out there.
Hey Carter, you want
your sandwich? -No.
I need to clean my van up.
How much do they charge you
to keep that here?
Nothing, I know a guy
who works up here.
I still can't figure
why you sleep in that thing.
Beats payin' rent.
If I had an apartment,
I'd have to get a summer job.
This way it's like early retirement.
It's like... bein' a bum.
- Look at this.
- You got an extra sandwich?
Shit, man...
I gotta get her back in the house.
You need to stop gamblin'.
It's not the gamblin'.
I mean, she says that's it,
but that's not it.
She just wants me to...
stop screwing around.
Bring home that paycheck.
Be happy makin' 20.000 a year.
I can do better than that.
Better for me, better for her.
You know, I used to be able to divide
up to four decimal points in my head.
Top two players
come out Arkansas?
Sydney Moncrief
and Corliss Williamson.
What about Joe Johnson?

Nah, he don't play a year and a half.
I can fix that.
I can take that out for you.
What'll I listen to?
Hey.
Yeah, it's me.
So, I figure I drop them off to you,
about an hour.
You should put some rams on this thing.
I would if I had the money.
Thinkin' about puttin'
some lights up underneath.
That'd be tough, too.
Yeah, all right.
I gotta get some more quarters.
Watch Carter...
That your boy?
Stay here.
Yeah.
Wonder how he's gonna take it
when I give a speech at your funeral?
We didn't get a chance to talk
the other day.
We tried to catch up with you,
but you all ran out of there too fast...
like you might have been scared
or something.
I said what I needed to say.
You gonna have a problem with that?
Yeah, we're gonna have
a problem with it.
Let's not do this.
What'd you say?
Boy!
We'll see you.
Come on, boy.
- What's your deal?
- What?
Where the hell were you back?!
- C'mon, bud. -See you.
- See you, buddy.
So what's your fuckin' problem?
- So, I'll see you soon.
- OK.

Is Annie here?

No, she's out.

- Bye, Son.

- Bye.

So what are we gonna do?

Nothin'.

That ain't gonna be

the end of it. -I know.

So just say it. I'll go

over his house and beat him.

- Calm down.

- What?

I said, calm down.

Calm down? Is that what you
were doing back there, being calm?

'Cause it sure as hell wasn't
you being scared, was it?

- Fuck you.

- Pussy!

Stop it!

I don't want you messin'
with Mark Hayes.

That's just what he's lookin' for.

You see him, you stay away from him.

You hear me?

But that's the last time
you ever stay out of the fight.

Let's go.

We need to talk.

You'd do well to get out
of my property.

This fight I heard about -

I don't wanna see any more of that.

You should talk to

your brothers about that.

I have.

Now I'm tellin' you.

Before too long, somebody's life will
get hurt and it might be one of yours.

Listen here.

I don't like you.

I don't like your family.

And if anything happens to one of
my brothers, I'll come after all of ya.

So, that's it?
That's it.
Hey.
Hey.
That your kids?
Two of them. Er, one of 'em
just moved here.
Are we all right?
Yeah.
Can you help me with something?
What?
Hold on, guys!
Hold on.
What's goin' on?
It's not that hard!
I'm sorry.
It's my boots.
Ah, forget it.
What about this one:
Best ballplayer
that ever act in a movie
that wasn't about sports?
Oh, geez...
Well, there's Wilt Chamberlain
in "Conan the Destroyer".
You got...
Kareem in a Bruce Lee's
"The Game of Death".
I think Barkley did a voice in
"Fievel Goes West".
- Is that true?
- Yeah.
Where's Henry?
I put him up behind the Son's
last night.
They had a fight at work,
that's how he got shot.
One guy say he got while he was
cheatin' on Annie.
That's not true.
Cheryl's here.
Look, she got you a burger.
You guys heard the, uh,
new Aguilera single,

"Car Wash"?

Did you talk
to your brothers yet?

Talked to Boy some.
Haven't talked to Son yet.
I found out about that raise
on Thursday.
You know I don't care about that.
I know...
We'll see.
I think you got the right shot,
you head there.
Hold it!
Go get one of those sacks
out of the back of my truck.
- What are you doing?
- I wanna catch our snake.
What do you need that snake for?
Is Boy here?
You just missed him.
He left Henry?
Yeah, he says it's getting
too hot for him in the van.
It's too hot for his dog,
but he'll sleep in it.
He couldn't get that
window unit grunt in there.
That's a shame.
What you've been up to?
Spent a day at Tunaco.
- How'd you do?
- Ah, broke even, pretty much.
I'm being close to figuring that out.
You'll get it.
You still love Annie?
More than ever.
Even with her
livin' at her mother's?
Yeah.
I think I might ask Cheryl
to marry me.
All right.
Told her if I got that raise at Keo,
I'll put a ring on her finger.

That sounds good.
I worry about
taking care of her, though.
I mean, I don't have a truck,
I don't have a house.
Hell, I sleep in a damn tent.
That shit's hard.
I mean,
a lifetime is a long time.
Just for two people.
I don't even know if I can
stay faithful to her.
You just got to decide
if she's the one you're gonna love,
and love her.
Everything else
will take care of itself.
Yeah.
You're gonna be all right.
Henry!
Chow time!
Henry?
Jesus Christ...
We gotta clean this place up.
We got problem.
- What's that?
- It's Henry.
- What's up?
- Hey.
We need to talk.
What's wrong?
It's about Henry...
What?
Henry's dead.
Kid found him this morning.
Snake bit.
Said he curled up at his water
bowl. Bit him on the nose.
Shit.
Kid found it,
cut its head off with a shovel.
Sorry.
What?
Man, I wanna park my car

here tonight.

- No.

- C'mon, man!

No.

It's cool. I got this tarp, man.

Nobody'll see it's mine.

You're just gonna have
to talk to Son.

Yeah, all right.

What are you doin'?

Give me a hand with this, man,
it's just until Son gets back.

No...

Son had to get to tell Boy
his dog's dead.

Yeah, I heard about that.

What?

Snake bit, right?

Yeah.

How'd you know that?

I heard Stephen Hayes
talkin' about it.

What'd he say?

Said his brother Mark's the one
who put the snake back there.

What?

Everybody knows that.

You're sayin' Mark Hayes
killed Boy's dog?

That's what I'm sayin'.

You know where he's at?

He's probably still at the bar.

Let's go.

Damn!

Mark Hayes!

Hey.

They let you off the farm
for the day, huh?

Yeah.

- How the hell you've been?

- All right.

- Rain's help.

- Yeah, skyin' up.

Got a light?

I don't, man.
I finally quit cigarettes, I think.
Get out of here.
You like snakes, Mark?
What should we do?
I figured we bury him
in the back yard.
Kid started a hole.
Hello?
That cop over there says
Mark Hayes is dead.
Kid busted his skull open.
After he gets of out here,
he's gonna have to answer for it.
You are Son Hayes?
Yes, sir.
I'm sorry,
your brother is dead.
We, uh...
We did all we possibly could.
I'm really sorry.
There'll be someone
down here shortly...
to help you make
arrangements for the body.
I gotta get back inside.
To talk to this person.
OK.
Would you go by Annie's mom,
let her know?
Yeah, I will.
Somebody's gonna have
to tell Cheryl.
Hey...
I'll see you at home.
- Son?
- Yes, sir?
- Wanna take some time off?
- No.
You're sure?
This is what I do.
That doesn't mean it's gonna be
some time off.
I'll be here.

All right. If you change
your mind, let me know.
I'm also gonna need...
Thank you.
You been doin' OK?
You call me if you
need anything, OK?
Yeah, all right.
You happy now? You happy
now that my brother's dead?
Just calm down, all right?
You should never come
to that funeral...
You started all of this.
This started a long time ago.
It's OK.
Somebody's got to finish it.
Son.
Hey.
Sorry I didn't make it to the funeral.
Yeah. Thanks.
What did the cops had to say?
Said that Kid and Mark
killed each other.
They didn't say nothing
about Stephen and John?
Why would they?
They were there.
Who says?
I was there.
What happened?
Well, after Mark went down,
you know, Kid was kicking him,
John and Stephen
came out of the bar.
Stephen then overtackled Kid.
They were wrestling
on the ground for a while.
Knife came out.
It all happened really fast.
They helped him?
Like I said, man,
it happened really fast.
I figured the cops

are about to shop up,
so I got the hell out there.
I don't know, man...
It's really too bad.
You know, Kid was all right.
I'll see y'all.
I didn't know they were there.
What was that?
What was that?
Nothing.
I guess you heard by now.
You raised us to hate
those boys, and we do.
And now it's come to this.
- Hey, John?
- Yeah?
Could you hold this just a minute?
I need you at the shop.
OK.
Give me a minute.
Steve, what are you up to?
This damn thing.
Changed the fuel line on it.
Still stallin' out.
I'm gonna take John and the boys.
I'll swing by later,
take a look at it.
John tells me you ran into
Son Hayes yesterday?
Yeah.
- You exchange words with him?
- Yeah.
I don't wanna hear any more
about that.
I'm not willin' to lose any more
of my family in this fight.
I'll see you at the house
for supper.
Boy!
You're OK?
Yeah. It's just my radio.
Still not workin'?
No.
I can't stop thinking about

what Shampoo said...
about them other two
boys being there.
It used to be,
when I see them Hayes boys,
I'd just see our old man, but...
Now, with Kid...
They can take our daddy.
Good riddance!
But they ain't takin' Kid...
They ain't takin' Kid.
What are you gonna do?
I don't know,
I'm gonna go after them.
I gotta get done with this.
- Annie's not gonna like it.
- Well, I don't like it either.
You want me to come with you?
I just wanted you to know.
Let's go, boys!
What do you want?
Getting on my property.
What truck is that?
Hell!
Son!
Stop it!
Stop!
- Does that feel OK?
- Yeah.
Where's my brother?
He's upstairs.
He's still unconscious.
They wanna talk with you downstairs
about your insurance.
All right.
Why is this happening?
Can I help you?
I need one of these guns.
Oh, Jesus...
So, no one's ever
taken you huntin'? -No.
That's too bad.
Son never let us have guns.
Just take that off...

and this just slides right on.

And you screw this back on.

You got the shells?

Gettin' a fishy condition

'cause of plug in here...

so it can only fit 3 shells.

But I'll take that out for ya,

don't worry about it.

You try it out on a tire.

That's got a kick to it.

Hey!

Y'all get back!

Paul, take your brother

to the back!

Still call me if anything

changes? -Of course.

Go home, take a break.

- You need some rest.

- I know.

Hey mom, you stay here,

watch Carter for just a second.

I'll be right back.

Hey baby, stay here with

grandma, OK? Be right back.

- Do you mind?

- No, go ahead.

Here to see Son?

I don't know.

Why do you have that?

I was gonna kill Cleaman Hayes.

Nothing good can come

from killing that man.

If Son wakes up out of this,

this fight ain't done.

He'll kill them himself to finish it.

You don't know that.

He's been shot before

protecting us.

I know.

Son's all I have now.

I just wanna protect my brother.

I know.

What are you gonna do?

I wanna put an end to it.

Wait, wait!

- Hold on!

- What the hell are you doing?

Get down, you son of a bitch!

Steve, he don't got a gun!

Back off, Stephen.

Stop it!

I just came to talk.

Give me one reason

I don't kill you right now.

I'm done with this.

What?

- I want it to stop.

- It's gonna stop.

You got two boys, right?

What about it?

Son's got his boy, Carter.

And one day I'm gonna

have some of my own.

I just wanna protect my family.

Why should I trust you?

You can shoot me if you want,

but I'm done fightin'.

Back off, Stephen.

This ain't right.

Put the gun down,

he's unarmed.

You shoot him here like this

and they'll put you away.

We got a chance to stop all this,

now put the gun down.

I don't wanna see you here

ever again.

Wait.

What if Son wakes up and

doesn't see things this way?

Better hope he does.

- Take this.

- But I'm covered.

Just take it.

You'll need some traveling money.

Thanks.

You think he'll be all right? -He'll

be all right, just give him some time.

Come here.
All right. Freeze, guys!
That's what I'm talkin' about!
That's how you run
full-court press.
Drunk by noon on New Year's Day
in the hills outside of town someplace
with the smoke and the wine
and a stranger's eyes
Smoke and the wine
and the whiskey don't mix
Shakin' so bad,
think I'm gonna be sick
Buy another scotch
as I head to the door
and it won't make it better
but I wanna make sure
Hold me close
I love you more than you know
And I step outside
Drank away all of my
fears and my doubts
Stole away hearts
from town to town
Now the things I fear
come back here
Feel the cold ground
underneath my boots
at no good reason
it reminds me of you
Never made good,
though I tried and I tried
so I turn back around
and walk inside
Hold me close
I love you more than you know
Hold me close
I love you more than you know
and that won't make things right
Originally published 01/30/2012