



Hole For A Fence Post

I could see them through the screen, through the orange and red crayon streaks and the pencil holes. They had lived in my room before we added the new wing and as kids they'd crayoned the screen and shoved pencils through it. Flies and sometimes mosquitoes came in and I cursed them for it, at night when I could hear the miniscule whine near my ear. I put masking tape over the holes, but it never held for long.

I had the fan blowing over my bed and my bare legs and back; I was wearing a new bandana-patterned halter, like Mom's, that tied behind the neck with strings that tickled my back. My hair was a bob for the summer. I hated it. It made me look like a twerp, but Mom was right - it did keep the pricklies off my neck and shoulders. She said it would grow back by September.

I couldn't stand the heat. Humditty, Sam called it. He was big and rowed on the college varsity. I got dragged to races to stand in mud and shiver in wind and I hated it, but back at the boathouse he always grabbed me by the waist and launched me high over his head, probably to show off how strong he was. I dreaded that he would hug me because he stank after the races. Usually his team lost, though, so he didn't always hug me. Ralph - it wasn't even his real name. He changed his name every so often, I think because of that kid in *A Thousand Clowns*, the one up for adoption and at loose ends. His real name was Reginald. I loved to call him Reggie because he used to pretend to chase me, yelling "Time for Angie's Reggie-wedgie!" and I knew what it meant because once he did it to Sam. You pull up the back of some one's underpants, which is real uncomfortable. He never gave me a wedgie but I'd scream as if he might and I would run like the dickens. Anyway I couldn't call him Reggie if I wanted him to answer. He wouldn't answer to anything but his chosen name. Sam and Ralph were in the back yard, in the full blaze of the June heat, playing lawn tennis. It made me sleepy, weary, just watching. They moved as if in the pond, arms and legs wobbly and gooey. The game was really stupid. They stood apart, sometimes a few feet, sometimes the whole lawn, and just hit the ball back and forth. The ball could be bald or new - they didn't care - or frayed with pieces hanging where Culloden gnawed on it. Culloden was our big collie. He had only one front paw because the other got shot off. Sometimes it looked as if they were trying to rally, to see how many times they could hit it back and forth, but then one would just let the ball go by, or wave at it with his old racquet as if to show where the ball went, and I would groan. I counted the rallies, hoping they'd break the record of the last rally, but it made me weak to watch them.

≤ 2 ≥

Every now and then Ralph would cork off and smash the ball as hard as he could. It didn't matter what direction he was facing - he'd just wallop it as hard as he could. Sometimes it would whack off the house with a thud and Mom would yell about the windows, and sometimes it would sail over the pine trees into the tall grass of the recovering pasture. Sam would look where it had gone, think a moment, then drop his racquet right where he was standing, and Ralph would drop his racquet too right in the middle of the lawn, and then they'd drag themselves to the kitchen to sit at the big walnut table, rest their arms on the polish, and look dazedly out the window toward the sheep and the dip where the pond was, and the upper fields beyond.

This time Ralph smashed the ball almost straight up out of my sight, yelling "Lob! Lob!" and Sam began yelling too, "Lob! Lob!" running backwards, holding one hand up against the sun and stretching his racquet back the way the good players do on TV, and he kept backing straight toward the rose bushes against the fence, yelling "A lob! A lob!" and just as it came down and he took a huge swipe at it and fell backwards into the rosebushes, Mom yelled "Hey!"

She was standing on the edge of the patio - I hadn't even seen her. Everything was rigid, her legs straight and her hands on her hips. I don't think she meant to, but she looked like a general posing.

Ralph said, "Hi, Mom," but you could tell. The ball had bounced and came right toward Mom as Sam struggled out of the roses. I winced thinking about the thorns. That was the thing about Sam. He knew those bushes were there. He'd do things like that: fall into thorns, step on thistles in his bare feet, or test ice we all knew couldn't hold him and break through up to his waist in freezing water. Mom picked up the tennis ball and threw it at Ralph. She threw like a girl and looked a little stupid, but she was so mad you'd never say anything. That's why I clapped my hand on my mouth when Ralph, instead of ducking, deflected the ball, sort of aslant, toward Sam. Sam knocked it to the grass and twisted to inspect the back of his legs.

≤ 3 ≥

"Why don't you two do something productive, for Christ's sake?"

They looked at her the way they do. It made me feel awful. No matter what, now, the game was over.

"Why don't you finish that fence your father was working on?"

"Where? In the lower field?"

"Yes. In the lower field." The way she said it meant he knew already and was being smart, or he didn't know and he was stupid. Or both. That was the thing about Mom.

"That's a good idea, Mom. We'll go dig fence post holes."

I turned off my fan and put on my summer sneakers, the ones I wear in the pond because I can't stand the yukky guntch on the bottom. They were hard, all dried from sitting in the sun, but they'd soften up in a bit.

I walked toward the tractor shed, hating the heat, but a little frightened and a little excited by a great banging sound. It sounded as if the shed was being knocked down. When I walked around the corner and squinted into the dark I saw Ralph with a pinch bar, swinging it like a baseball bat against one of the posts that held up the corrugated tin roof. It sounded like the end of the world. He just kept hitting it, over and over, knocking big dents in the soft wood and shaking dust from the roof and making the metal sound like a huge drum, with us inside. Sam was making a racket himself, throwing shovels and the pickaxe and the shale bar into the bucket of the

240 so the steel-on-steel clanged like a heavy, cheap bell. I put my hands over my ears. Then Ralph threw the pinch bar into the bucket too, and sat hard on the seat and fired up the engine. When he lurched it out in reverse, spitting up dust from the big wheels, the shale bar and a shovel bounced out of the bucket and Sam put them back in while the tractor was still moving. Ralph could have stopped for Sam but he didn't.

They began arguing. I stood back a ways, in the shade of the shed despite the wasps that hung their legs in the air and zoomed from and to their nests. They were arguing over the post-hole digger. It was really hard to attach, and Ralph said the shear bolt was gone anyway but Sam said they should fix it and take it down.

≤ 4 ≥

"There's nothing down there but shale," Ralph said. "That's where Pop sheared the last bolt. That's why he quit where he did." They had a way of arguing, like complaining about mud at low tide or flood at high tide, or the weather, the humidity. They never really argued with each other. At least I never saw them.

"We'll get lucky. We'll dig where there's no shale," said Sam, but he said it as if he didn't believe in magic.

"This whole fucking farm is a bed of shale. But OK, fine. We'll get the fucking post-hole digger and we'll spend three hours looking for a fucking shear bolt and spend three hours inserting it, dig three rotations, shear the bolt, and then it will be just about midnight."

"I know where there's a shear bolt," I said.

They looked down at me. It was a little scary, so I ran through the wasps out of the shed, around the front to the tool shop, opened the latch, and entered the oily, dusty clutter. Dad had winked at me one winter morning when I was hanging around him, when he had put the bolt behind the orange-and-black license plate nailed to the wall. He later forgot it was there. He'd said, "Angel, some day you're going to need a shear bolt, and this is where you'll find one." He was always looking for shear bolts and fencing tools. He said there must be fifty fencing tools - he called them "tensing fools" - lying in the grass all over the goddamned farm and some archeologist some day would squander his whole career trying to interpret the scatter of tensing fools all over these one hundred acres.

It was dry and cool and a bit rusted, with its washer loose and its nut capped on the end. I screwed the nut down and up, back to the end of the bolt. The edges of the threads were sharp and left white lines in the pink of my thumb. I latched the shed door closed, then remembered that they'd send me back for a wrench, so I reopened the door and hunted through the green-topped tool box for the adjustable I'd seen. Sometimes you see things without noticing, and then later they come to mind when you need them.

≤ 5 ≥

Ralph had backed the 240 to the quick-hitch of the post-hole digger's teeth, which Sam was holding up.

"Don't you dare crush me, you son of a bitch," Sam was saying. If you didn't know them, you'd think he was talking to Ralph. He was talking to the tractor. Ralph eased the tractor back, perfectly aligned, the hitch accepting the points of the digger; Sam stepped back and Ralph lurched the tractor back. The digger skidded back toward the fence without making the clicking sound that says the hitch is complete.

"Lift it out. Lift it out." Sam was waving.

Ralph raised the hitch bar and the digger lifted out of the grass that had been growing since winter, then eased everything forward. When I stepped toward the digger, Sam violently warned me off with a hand.

"This fucking thing is just waiting to kill you, Angel."

"I'm not an angel. I'm a villain."

"It doesn't give a shit what you are, so stay back."

Ralph stamped on the tractor's locking brake and with the engine still running, descended. He and Sam positioned themselves at the back of the digger and with their shoulders against the vertical stanchions, getting rust on their tee shirts, began to rock it back and forth, pushing, sweating, swearing and swearing with increasing fury until a click sounded. They leaned against the machine, eyes closed and breathing heavily. Simultaneously they used the bellies of their shirts to wipe their faces.

"There. That wasn't so bad now, was it?"

"Wot larks."

"Can I ride in the bucket?"

"No. Stand up here with me, Angie," Ralph said, making a whanging sound as he patted the fender and sat himself in the driver's seat. "Those tools'll bang you all up."

"Can I ride in the bucket on the way back?"

"Yeah, if we leave the tools down there."

"Are we going to leave the tools down there?"

"No. They'll rust."

"Shit."

"Shoot," Sam corrected from the digger, where he bounced as the tractor headed toward the alleyway. "Don't cuss."

"You guys cuss all the time."

"That's because we're assholes. That's what assholes do."

"Well, I'm an asshole too."

"Hey. None of that."

"Why can't I be an asshole?"

"Because you couldn't be if ever you tried," said Ralph, watching the alley way and ducking branches.

≤ 6 ≥

"Well, I'm going to try."

"Don't, Angie. We got a world full of 'em already."

I frowned and stuck out my lower lip.

We looked for sassafras trees, grabbed leaves as the tractor moved by, and popped them in our mouths. We chewed them into pulp and said "Yum" but spit it out right away. It was like having chewing gum trees on our own farm, something we wanted so much that even when it didn't work we kept doing it, spitting out ugly mouthfuls of slobbery goop and wiping our mouths with the backs of our hands and smiling at each other.

I loved the blur of the big wheels' chevron treads, and the timothy and sometimes oats that grew outside the field, spilled from seeding or harvesting, and rye, all reaching up to my sneakers and being knocked down by the axel. Culloden rocked along behind on his huge front leg, tongue long and loose as he held his nose up to cut a path in the grass. I don't know why he didn't just use the tractor tire path. The

heat wasn't so bad with the tractor moving, but now and then the exhaust would boil down from the stack and feel awful. I brushed bugs off my arms, bugs that jumped up as we came by. The little green grasshoppers left a stinging feeling when they jumped off your skin.

Ralph had positioned the digger for the next hole in the line where single posts stood, their unevenness in height reflecting the nature of the field and how deep Dad had been able to dig before he gave up.

"You got that shear bolt?" Sam asked me, holding out his hand. It was still loaded with calluses from his rowing. It was three times as big as mine. I stared at it as I pulled the bolt from my pocket. It snagged and turned my pocket inside out.

"Was there a washer? There should be a lock washer. Where's the washer?"

"I don't know. It was there." I felt inside my pocket.

"Did you take it off?"

"No. I screwed the nut on further. I didn't take it off." Suddenly my throat tightened and I began to go blurry.

"We don't need the washer, Angel," Ralph said.

"We probably don't need the nut," Sam said. "A few licks of New Jersey shale and this bolt's kaput."

≤ 7 ≥

With the punch and ball peen hammer they got from under the tractor seat they knocked the remains of the old shear bolt from the shaft of the auger and pounded in the new bolt. Sam used the adjustable wrench to tighten on the nut. I wiped my eyes while their backs were to me. Culloden was lying under the branches overhanging the alleyway, not far away, rocking with his panting.

"You ready?" Ralph was on the tractor, Sam eyeing the digger's alignment with the other posts.

"I'm very ready."

Ralph stepped on the clutch, engaged the PTO, and let the auger begin to grind in the air. It screeched a little from sitting all winter. Sam motioned up with his thumb and Ralph gave it more gas. The auger descended slowly into the sod, threw grass in a whirl, spewed dry soil for a few inches, bounced and bucked a few times, gave a "ping," and stopped dead while the drive shaft spun uselessly. Ralph lifted the auger out of the gouge, turned the tractor around, dumped the tools, parked the machine in the shade and walked slowly back, looking toward the high thick foliage of the woods at the border of the bottom field. His shirt was pasted to his skin.

"So what was that. Two inches?"

"A capital campaign."

"You want the shovel or the bar?"

"Shovel? It's going to be dinner before we have anything to shovel."

"OK. You want the pickaxe or the bar?"

"Yes."

Sam picked up the shovel and scraped dirt from the mark left by the auger. I held my front teeth when he hit rock. I can't stand that sound, of a shovel's point scraping on a rock. It's worse than nails on a blackboard.

Sam dropped the shovel in the grass and lifted the pickaxe, and with steady heftings and blows began striking the earth. When he stopped, breathing hard, Ralph said, "Let me try," and standing over the mark, lifted and dropped the tall iron bar I could barely carry, sometimes ringing it against the rock when the rock didn't give, or chunking it in when the shale broke up. Sam and I stood close and watched, waving away the bugs and slapping at horseflies.

They both took off their shirts and laid them in the grass to dry. Their backs were

all wet and clammy - you wouldn't want to touch them - and the tops of their shorts began to grow semicircles of dampness in front and back.

≤ 8 ≥

I extracted timothy wands from their stalks and chewed on the ends even though they were dry. The ground was so dry I wondered what the worms did, where they went.

They took turns with the three implements. They told me to get out of the sun, to go sit in the shade with Culloden, that I was going to get burned, but I wouldn't. If they could take it so could I. When I asked if I could help, Ralph stood on one side of the hole and told me to stand on the other and together we lifted the shale bar up and down a few times and I worked really hard until the bar rang and stung my hands. I said "Ouch!" and let go and stepped back.

"That's what it feels like when you hit a ball on the wrong part of the bat," Sam laughed.

"I can't believe you did that," Sam added.

"What."

"Hit it back at her."

"I can't believe she threw it at me. You believe that?"

"I know."

"Anyway, I hit it to you. I didn't hit it back."

"Yeah, that was a nice shot. I was tempted to knock it back to you."

"See? Kettle calls pot black."

"The difference is that I was tempted but didn't, and you were tempted and did."

"Yalbut I didn't stomp all over the sacred bush."

"That was an accident. I was going for the lob."

"Accident my ass. As if you didn't know it was there."

"I was going for the lob."

They were talking down to the hole, moving back and forth between shale bar and pickaxe and shovel. Whichever one they weren't using they gave me to hold so they wouldn't have to lean over to pick it up. It was that hot. I liked the shovel the best because of the wooden handle all smooth, then I guess the pickaxe even though its sharpness scared me. I hated the shale bar because I had to hold it carefully and it was hot from the sun, and dry rusty. I always wiped my hands when Ralph or Sam exchanged it.

"You didn't have..." Ralph grunted as he swung the axe, "to go for the lob."

"You didn't have to lob it into the sacred bush, either."

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"I did not."

"You put me right into that bush."

"Well you could've let the point go."

"A lob like that? And miss a sure smash?"

"You couldn't have hit that lob if it'd been suspended on a string."

"Could too have."

"Are you guys fighting?" I asked. I just wanted to say something.

"Kiddo, if we fight, you'll know it," said Ralph, frowning at the hole.

"No shit."

"Promise me you guys will never fight."

"Can't promise that, Angie. The world's a..."

"I mean it. Promise. You gotta." Suddenly I was crying again, tears leaking down to my chin. I don't know why I was crying. It just happened. But I wasn't making any noise. I couldn't see very well. They sort of glanced at me and Ralph stopped with the pickaxe. He rested the head across the hole and kept his hand on the end of the handle, moving it a little. The sweat made the veins on Ralph's arm stand out even more, and shine. It was kind of a long time, so I looked at their knees, blinking. I didn't know what they'd do. I think they were looking back and forth at me and each other, but I didn't want them to see my face, even though I suppose they could tell anyway. Then they shifted their weight and I saw their hands come together, stay, and then sort of reshape as if there was a double agreement they hadn't expected when making the first.

"Yeah, OK, Angie. I promise."

"I promise, Angie. Very good idea."

"Well good," I said, trying to sound like Mom, all bossy, and wiped my eyes with the bottoms of my wrists.

Sam took the pickaxe and went down on a knee. The hole was getting so deep that the handle was beginning to hit the edge. "Know what I think?" He swung a few more times. "I think there's more deadwood than live wood in that oak."

Sam and I turned to look. It was so big around. The sheep had worn away all the grass underneath, lying in its shade. They were white as could be, much whiter than in the winter because of the sun and the rain. They were all lying down and breathing with their mouths open or chewing their cuds. Cleo's bell rang every time she panted. It rang clear because the sheep had just been shorn and the bell hung free on her neck. The ground all around them was littered with little branches.

≤ 10 ≥

"Maybe when we're done with this fence we can thin it out."

"Yeah, in twenty fucking years when we're done. There's got to be two tons of deadwood. How would you even get into that tree?"

"Remember the time Pop fired that Czech army rifle into it?"

"God what a noise. The recoil cut his lip. That thing was loud."

"I half expected the tree to blow away."

"Poor Pop."

"Poor tree," I said. They were talking about something that had happened before me.

"Yeah, poor tree, Angie. Give me the shovel."

I heard Randy coming through the grass before I saw him. It was up to his waist. He had on a straw hat, like Dad. It was one of Dad's. When Sam saw him coming he didn't say anything.

"Hey, guys," Randy said. He looked down in the hole. "Why aren't you using the post-hole digger?"

"Shear bolt went."

"How long you been at this hole? This is ridiculous." He left and strode through the grass toward the 240. I watched him start it up and worried, when he jumped it forward, that Culloden might be under it, but there was no sound. I went over to check anyway. Cully was deep in the shade at the base of the scrub trees forming the edge of the alleyway, propped up on his front legs with the little shot one crossed over the other. He thumped his tail in the grass as I came, swallowed, and continued panting, his tongue sliding back and forth between his two big shiny bottom teeth. I crawled in next to him and straddled his head with my legs. He was always picking up ticks so there were tons to pull off him. I was mad at Randy for making fun of my haircut and telling me I didn't need to wear a halter because I

didn't have any tits. Sometimes he'd say things that would make me think about them over and over, trying to figure out what would be the best possible answer, really fix his wagon, but as I sorted through Cully's hair, feeling and looking for ticks, I stopped trying to think of something to say back to Randy. It was funny because with Sam and Ralph the stupidest little things could suddenly make me feel like crying, but around Randy - I didn't hang around him too much - I didn't ever feel crying, even when he made me mad. Mom could make me crying mad all the time. But with Randy it was better to pull ticks off Culloden. I'd cut my nails so they weren't sharp enough to kill the little flat ticks, and there was no flat place to step on the bloated ones like the sidewalk where blood splotches marked all the ticks we'd killed since the last rain. So I tossed the fat ticks and flicked the flat ones away into the grass and told them to go get eaten by birds. Now and then I looked through the leaves to where Ralph and Sam worked the hole, just enduring that sun, and sweating. I could hear them laughing, and wished I was out there. I made a deal that when Randy came back with the post-hole digger fixed, I'd go back into the sun with them.

≤ 11 ≥

I wondered what Cully saw when he looked out too. I watched his eyes. He twitched his ear at a fly. Did he see anything, or was he just hot and thoughtless?

I didn't know how Ralph and Sam could stand it. Now they were really laughing. They weren't even trying to dig any more. I could see them hanging on their tools, staggering around like drunks, then hands on their knees, leaning over. I've never seen two idiots laugh like them. Finally I couldn't stand it any more. It made me so mad that it was so hot. I patted Cully and kissed his wet nose goodbye and just as I left the shade I heard the 240 coming back, and by the time I got back to the hole, Randy was back. Mom was riding on the fender. Ralph and Sam straightened up, and took their shirts from the grass where they'd spread them to dry in the sun, and wiped their eyes. Whatever made them laugh kept coming back like the waves after a boat has passed.

"Get out of the way," Randy waved, and whirled the tractor around. I thought Mom might fly off. She stepped down into the grass as Randy shifted into reverse. She walked up to the hole, lifting her glasses the way she did whenever she was inspecting some one's work.

"Hmmm," she said.

Ralph and Sam stepped back from the approaching post-hole digger, farther than they needed to, I thought.

"Where'd you find a shear bolt?" Sam asked.

"I didn't."

"So what are you using?"

"Nails."

"Nails?"

"Sure. Yankee ingenuity. It's all soft metal, probably softer than a shear bolt anyway. And cheaper. Hammered 'em in."

Mom was motioning to Randy with her hand, looking down at the hole. As Randy started up the auger and Mom put her hand on the hydraulic lever, Ralph grabbed me by the upper arm - it actually hurt a little and surprised me so much I suddenly was angry at him. I didn't know what he was doing - and pulled me back a few steps into the grass we hadn't trampled.

"What?"

"Just..." He didn't finish, but he let go of my arm. I rubbed it and frowned. I didn't like being mad at him.

We watched the auger descend and begin to throw dirt and little cubes of shale. The auger was wider than the hole that we had dug, so it went right in, throwing up a small crater lip around the hole. Then something stung me in the forehead. I thought it was a hornet, like one of those whoppers that nested right in the lilac bush by the kitchen. I was screaming before I even really felt the pain, but then I really felt it. Everyone was shouting and I kept screaming, trying to run away and back at the same time, holding my hands on my face and feeling something hard and the wetness that I realized was blood when I took my hands away. I couldn't believe the color of blood on my hands, and then it ran into my eye and mixed with tears. Sam was chasing me, trying to get a hold of me, but I kept running every time he got me still and Mom was yelling too, I could hear her yelling about the tractor, "Shut it off! Shut it off!" but the tractor kept running. Ralph caught me and held me by both arms, hard, then, as he and Sam kept saying now not yelling but in a hushing voice, "Stop screaming, Angie, stop screaming," Ralph held me all around my whole body with his sweaty arms, from behind, and Sam held my face while I tried to stop screaming, but I couldn't.

≤ 12 ≥

Now they were yelling at Randy: How long was the nail? How much was sticking through the auger? How the fuck should I know yelled Randy, still on the tractor. I looked at him with my unblooded eye, but saw red together. Because you nailed the fucking things in, yelled Sam, still holding my face. He was holding my face gently and screaming at Randy. Mom kept trying to get in, telling Sam to let go, to let her in, but Sam kept yelling at Randy about how long the nail was and Randy kept yelling back, more wild with every yell, How the fuck should I know? then Ralph said Pull it out, Sam. Just pull it out for Christ's sake. Pull it out. It can't be that long. Then Sam let go of one cheek - his hand was covered with blood now and he yanked and I started screaming again. Now blood was really pouring on my face, I could feel it like a flood, and some one untied my halter - I think it was Mom and I started screaming No No No No trying to cover myself but some one put my bandana-patterned halter on my head, right where it hurt the most. It had to be Sam, because he was on his knees, we were eye-to-eye, and Ralph's sweaty arms were still around me, and Sam was crying too, pushing the halter on my head and hushing me and telling Mom to bring his shirt but she wouldn't she kept asking what the hell he needed his shirt for at a time like this and he kept telling her to get the shirt and finally he yelled - I never heard him yell at her - and she got his shirt and he wrapped it around my top, mostly dry now, all under Ralph's arms, and then Ralph lifted me up with blood on his arm, and I said "I'm sorry Ralphie, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to" and Sam holding the halter on my head said "No, Angie, nut never came off. We never needed the lock washer," and even though I didn't understand at the moment, somehow I understood anyway. They started carrying me up through the grass and toward the fences while Mom said Take her in the tractor, for God's sake take her in the tractor, it's quicker, then, furious, "For Christ's sake it's nothing, it's a scratch. They won't even put a stitch in it."

≤ 13 ≥

I could hear Sam's and Ralph's feet making swishing sounds in the grass, then it stopped when we came to a fence and they handed me over like a sack of something. "I can walk, you guys," I said, but I didn't fight too hard. They weren't talking at all. It was really weird. Here they were holding me, carrying me, holding

me really tight and watching and holding my forehead and hushing me, but it seemed as though they weren't really paying attention to me at all, as if they were in a dream. And they were still sweating like crazy so when they carried me I tried to keep Sam's shirt between my skin and theirs because it was so slippery and gross and hot.

Mom and Randy beat us home in the 240. Mom was driving. She parked it in the driveway with the post-hole digger still attached and sticking way out.

"You've got to clean her up before we take her anywhere," Mom said.

But they put me right in the pickup, the green Dodge, with me between them. They didn't even talk about who was going to drive because at that time Sam was carrying me and Ralph started the truck while Sam planted me on the seat.

As Ralph backed out - I was hanging my head so I couldn't see. I didn't want to see - Mom came to his window and smacked the truck with her hand. I heard her ring hit the metal. "God damn it," she said, "you listen to me. Give her to me. Get her inside and clean her up. She looks like hell."

"She looks good, Mom," Ralph said. "We'll bring her back."

"She's not going... it's nothing! She's not going even to need a stitch. They won't even stitch her up. She won't even have a scar!" This last she yelled because the pickup was already moving, edging around the extending post-hole digger, and nosing out the drive.

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