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Zebulon Huset

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Man Digging

by Zebulon Huset

There's something ominous about a man digging a hole in the middle of the night—unless it's merely a metaphor for a man contemplating his life's choices, a faucet is definitely leaking somewhere in the unlit house—but if there's actual earth being moved, a hand-driven shovel eating its way toward some preordained depth, whether to retrieve, or deposit something, it's just not good; that much is clear when you see him, inevitably in just his white undershirt and soiled slacks, heaving that moist loam onto the neatly trimmed lawn (possibly a cemetery's)—though, if it is a cemetery, neatly trimmed is an oblong adjective, more applicable to some graves than others, an old one where the tombstones are irregularly spaced as a boxer's grinning teeth, hills and tufts of weeds, occasional trees, but the tombstone at the head of this mound of freshly unearthed earth is definitely new, a recent burial—a son, or wife, perhaps the ex-lover of a mad scientist set on powering up his own cadaver replacement for the love he'd always taken for granted. However, if he's burying, it's even worse. A secret. A severed head, a whole bloody corpse—two. The moon is full, regardless, a bright spotlight. Sharp shadows stab deep into everything. The wet soil looks black in the blue light. Black as blood. Black as our imaginations, which would undoubtedly be disappointed if the man were digging up a Barbie that the dog had stolen from his daughter and buried, or burying a scavenger hunt clue for his son's birthday party. Even then, we wouldn't believe our eyes. Nothing at night is as concise as it appears—all camera tricks—he's still that dark shadow of a man scraping toward his decaying purpose while we sleep soundly, perhaps for the last time.

