

**Payton** (0:15)  
January 14, 2021

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In the darkness you hear the “shroonk” of a metal shovel cutting into dense, gritty, soil. Then a pause, then the almost-whisper of the loaded blade forced through the air, a briefer pause, and the rattling clap of the dirt collapsing onto the ground. It sounds like an attack: the sudden insertion of the blade, the suspension of shock, the fading gasp, the crumpling fall. Repeated in the darkness, it is foreboding and mysterious. From away and above, a sharp pinpoint of bright blue light suddenly appears. A narrow beam illuminates the innumerable dust motes in its path from above to where it points, impassively, on a growing pile of shoveled earth. This new light reveals, just outside its tiny focus, the silent silhouette of the blade in its arc that deposits each shovelful on the growing mound. Through the dust you can see that the tool is being wielded by a figure on the far side of this dirt mound, whose identity and labor is hidden by the height of the mound being dug and the depth of the hole. In this room—for clearly we are inside, you and I, witness to this effort—it is unclear who is digging, and for what purpose. I turn to you, and in the gloom, you catch my eye. In silent agreement, we step forward, expectant and unsure.