

Torpedo

By Jakey Redfeet

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My naybor Pernell's daddy had a mule some years ago to work their tobacco field. The mule was called "Torpedo" but Pernell does not know why. Maybe that was his given name before they bought him. If he was alive today, they would say he has that attension deficient disorder. Torpedo could never keep his mind on what he was supposed to be doin. Say you were cultivating between tobacco rows. Everything would be goin fine until a bird flew by or a car came down the road. Next thing, Torpedo would be going cross ways in the field tearin up tobacco plants like they was the weeds. Pernell's daddy could handle this, but when Pernell got big enough, he was assigned to drive the mule. Pernell was always getting scolded becuz he could not get control quick like his daddy, an there was much more damage.

Finally, Pernell's daddy decided he could cure the problem by putting blinders on the mule. That seemed to work good until one day Pernell parked Torpedo under a shade tree while he took a break. You never tied up the mule because he would always prefer to stay in the shade rather than go out in the hot sun. This day, Torpedo must have seen better shade on the other side of the road or sumpin, an he headed across with the cultivator draggin behind him. At the same time, Emma from down the road was commin along in her ole black buick. Her attension was about like the mule's. She was always gawking at everything but the road so she would not miss anything to gossip about. As you might figure, they arrived at the same spot on the road at the same time. That pretty much ended Torpedo. However he was still somewhat alive and Pernell's daddy had to fetch his gun and send him on to rest with a bullet to the head. Now Emma, she was a carrying on like a blue jay following a kitty cat about her Buick bein done in an blamin poor Torpedo who could not object. Pernell's daddy only took that for so long an then he pulled the hammer back on his gun. He asked her what she would prefer: a ride the rest of the way home in his pickup or a bullet like he gave Torpedo. That finally brought quietness.

When they went on to Emma's, my daddy an I got our tractor and drug poor ole Torpedo way up in the woods for the varmints to feast on. That's what we did in them days. Nobody was going to dig a hole big enough to bury a mule with just plain shovels in that hot weather. If people were so inconsiderate as to die during the summer heat, even they would get a pretty shallow grave unless they were real special like a politician. In my opinion, you cannot bury a politician too deep. My daddy said that if the varmints knew why Torpedo had been delivered to them, they would probably have sent Emma a thank you note.

That was not the end of this sad situation. Pernell's daddy jist let it go as an unfortunate event, but Emma could not let it rest. She called the sheriff and demanded that he investigate because, in her opinion, it was Torpedo's fault. He should not have got in her way. Therefore, she insisted Pernell's daddy should have to pay for her old Buick which could not be fixed.

Hester, who was the sheriff then, did an investigation of the matter. Then he convened all the associated parties in his office. That included me an my daddy because we witnessed and decomposed some critical evidence in the form of Torpedo. The sheriff had officially questioned us about it one morning before. You could see from the papers piled and scattered all over his desk that did a complete job. When we all sat down, he picked up his written verdict and read it. He ruled in favor of Torpedo, much to the dislike of Emma. Hester said that becuz Torpedo was wearing blinders, he could not be blamed for not seeing Emma coming. On the other hand, since Emma had no blinders, she should have seen Torpedo and stopped. Also, the rules of the road required drivers to watch where they were going, whereas there were no laws that required mules to do so. Emma was undignified but the sheriff stood his ground and tole her in fact, she had to pay for the mule. She left in a huff, an Hester an the rest of us went the to Willie's Bar, where they had beers and Pernell and me had a coke. The sheriff cited it as an extremely difficult case since there were no eye witnesses. Emma lost her case when she claimed she did not see Torpedo, and therefore, she could not witness in favor of herself. If she had seen him, she would have been required to stop and would have gotten the blame anyhow.

Come to find out, all the time Emma had insurance that paid for both Torpedo and her Buick. Pernell's daddy bought them a used tractor similar to ours with what he got. Would you believe it but Emma bought herself an old VW Beetle with the motorsickle engine in the back. You could hear the rattley thing coming two miles away. Pernell's daddy always said she did that on purpose. If you did not see her coming, you could hear her and you would have no excuse to be run over by her. She was not about to be proved wrong in court again.