

If I Had a Hammer

A satirical look at Assault Hammers, in one Unfortunate Act

by Brad Kozak

Dramatis Personae

- **Station Announcer** – Think James Earl Jones – a dark, and commanding voice.
- **Ernest Franks** – an earnest, and somewhat pompous anchorman, who's always frank.
- **Vera High** – the token woman/Asian reporter, who's about the only one here with any common sense.
- **Biff Wingman** – typical airhead talking head. Probably an ex-jock, hired more for his looks than talent. A little stupid, but eager to please.
- **Dr. Payne** – the only other person in this episode with common sense.
- **Sgt. Cayenne** – Officious official. Think “Cliff” on *Cheers*.
- **Senator Phillip Buster** – Old School politician, he's a hale fellow, well met...and crafty and calculating. Might have a regional accent.

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[STATION ANNOUNCER]

We interrupt this program for an Urgent Report!

[ERNEST FRANKS]

This is Ernest Franks for Eyewitness News. Reports are just coming in of chaos at a local Value Depot in the greater metro area. Police and Ambulances are on the scene. Early indications are that there are at least several fatalities. Our reporters are racing to the scene now, in our eco-friendly, green, electric-powered remote Eyewitness news vehicles. More on this breaking story as we get the details.

[SFX - white noise/static]

[ERNEST FRANKS]

This is Ernest Franks for Eyewitness News. Our crack reporter, Vera High, is on the scene. Come in, Vera...

[VERA HIGH]

Yes, Ernie, I can hear you. I'm on the scene here at this Metro-area Value Depot, where authorities tell me that they have locked down the store, and are in the process of arresting an assailant who' apparently attacked a group of people gathering for a personal appearance of Senator Phillip Buster, in a kind of mini-town hall event.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Vera, Ernest Franks here. Do we know the name of the suspect? What kind of weapon was involved? How many dead? Was there a lot of blood?

[VERA HIGH]

Yes, Ernie, I can hear you. We don't have much information yet. Reports range from two to twenty dead and wounded. Area hospitals have been put on notice to expect large numbers of casualties. So far, that's all we know. Back to you.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Thanks, Vera High. And I'll bet as tragic as this story is, you're happy to be off that undercover crack-bust story you've been working on for the last three months.

[VERA HIGH]

Yes Ernie, I hear you. And thanks for outing me. All that work, down the drain.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Oops. Sorry about that Vera. Well to recap, there's been some kind of mass murder/ assault at a metro-area Value Depot. There have been casualties. We don't yet know...wait...I'm hearing something now...let's go back to crack reporter Vera High. Vera...can you hear me.

[VERA HIGH]

Yes, Ernie. I can hear you. And I wish you'd stop calling me "crack reporter." If I'm to have any chance at that drug story without getting myself killed, it might be nice if you'd stop trying to associate my face with the word "crack."

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Sorry about that Vera. What new details do you have?

[VERA HIGH]

Well, Ernie, Police liaison John Boot has just informed me that they have ID'd the suspect, who was arrested with the murder weapon in his hand. And the details aren't what you'd expect. Jack said the name of the suspect is Maxwell Leigh, 24 years old, from the greater metro area.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

I find that difficult to believe.

[VERA HIGH]

I'm sorry Ernie...how's that again?

[ERNEST FRANKS]

I said, I find that difficult to believe.

[VERA HIGH]

What do you find difficult to believe?

[ERNEST FRANKS]

That someone named "Maxwell Leigh" could be a serial killer.

[VERA HIGH]

I'm sorry?...

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Serial killers and assassins always have three names. This guy can't be guilty. He only has two names. Not three. I don't make the rules. But I do enforce them.

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[VERA HIGH]

Um...Ernie, I have it on the authority of the police that the name of the suspect they have in custody is "Maxwell Leigh."

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Well he may be a suspect, but he can't be guilty. He needs a third name.

[VERA HIGH]

Oh, fine. Whatever. Oh. Wait. This just in. Um...I'm now told that the suspects name is Maxwell LEE Leigh.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Now that's more like it.

[VERA HIGH]

Well I'm glad we cleared that up for you.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

So...what did Maxwell Lee Leigh use to murder the people? An AK-47? An Uzi? An M-16? A Glock? The public has a right to know!

[VERA HIGH]

No, Ernie. It wasn't a rifle, shotgun or handgun.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

A knife then? I'll bet he used a big Bowie knife. Or a machete. Or perhaps one of those Highlander katana swords. Those look dangerous!

[VERA HIGH]

Nope. Ernie, he used a weapon sold right here at Value Depot. A hammer.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

I'm sorry Vera...our connection must be bad. Maybe it's a satellite thing. Can you repeat that?

[VERA HIGH]

Sure, Ernie. Maxwell used a hammer. One he got right here at Value Depot.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

A hammer?

[VERA HIGH]

Yes, Ernie. A silver hammer. One of those 20 ounce jobs they use for framing. Nasty looking head on it, and a huge claw on the back side, for pulling nails. Quite an impressive-looking instrument. And he had a crowbar on him when he was arrested, as well.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

You're telling me that the assailant used a hammer to murder people at a Value Depot?

[VERA HIGH]

Yes.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Well was it an assault hammer?

[VERA HIGH]

Well, Ernie, there's really no such thing as an assault hammer. A hammer's a hammer. You can use it to nail things, or hurt people. It's not the tool, it's the tool who's using it.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

But he assaulted people there in the store with this hammer?

[VERA HIGH]

Yes. That's what I said.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Well, then. It's clear that this was an assault hammer. Those are dangerous, you know.

[VERA HIGH]

Any tool can be dangerous in the wrong hands. I can't tell you how many times I've thought of taking that silver pen on your desk that you keep reminding me was an award for "Anchor of the Year" and driving it through your temple. Would that make it an assault pen?

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Vera, you're breaking up...we'll...uh...get back to you as soon as you have more details. Go talk to a cop or something.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, to recap, police have taken one Maxwell Lee Leigh into custody for the grisly murder/assault at a local Value Depot. The assailant was armed with an assault hammer and a crowbar. We go now to Charity Hospital and our intrepid reporter Biff Wingman. Come in, Biff.

[BIFF WINGMAN]

...iff Wingman, here, Ernie, and I'm coming to you from the trauma center at Charity Hospital, where many of the casualties have come in from the Value Depot massacre. I'm here with Doctor Noah Payne, head of the Trauma wing here at Charity. Dr. Payne, what can you tell me about the victims?

[DR. NOAH PAYNE]

Well, Biff, they're in a lot of pain. Mostly head trauma and blunt-force injuries. Lots of blood. We'll know more when the x-rays come back.

[BIFF WINGMAN]

How many injured and dead, doctor?

[DR. NOAH PAYNE]

Well, Biff, all the dead were injured first, so I guess it's how you want to count them. We've got six dead and six are only wounded, so I suppose you could say it's six dead and twelve injured if you wanted to pump up the numbers for your ratings, but really the total people we're treating is just twelve. When do we go live, by the way?

[BIFF WINGMAN]

Um...we ARE live right now, Doctor.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Doctor, Ernest Franks back here at Eyewitness News HQ. What can you tell us about the condition of Senator Buster?

[DR. NOAH PAYNE]

Hello, Mr. Franks. Senator Phillip Buster was admitted to Charity's Trauma unit and promptly discharged. Turns out he wasn't injured at all. Several of his aides were seriously hurt when they fell on him to protect him from the assailant. Turns out, he'd just fainted from all the excitement. Closest he'd been to an aide since that Zippergate thing a few years back, and I guess he thought it was a sting operation.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Ah. Yes. What can you tell me about the wounds and the weapon. Are you sure no guns were used?

[DR. NOAH PAYNE]

Ernie, lemme tell you. When you've seen as many hammer wounds as I have, you learn to spot 'em from a mile away. These are mostly claw hammer wounds - deep and messy. But there were a few blunt-force trauma wounds, with that distinctive "waffle" pattern that indicate the assailant turned the hammer around and used the head instead of the claw. Or maybe he just caught someone with his upswing. I don't know.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

But doctor, can you tell for certain it was an assault hammer? Can you determine the caliber?

[DR. NOAH PAYNE]

Well, Ernie, there's no such thing as an 'assault' hammer. A hammer's a hammer. It's a tool. It can be used for good or evil. Depends on who's wielding it. It's not the tool, it's the tool who's using it.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Yes, I've heard that. But what about the caliber?

[DR. NOAH PAYNE]

The caliber? There's no such thing with a hammer. I expect this was a pretty heavy hammer...probably around 20 to 23 ounces or so, given that it was framing hammer, from the wound markings.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Well, you heard it here first on Eyewitness News. Maxwell Lee Leigh used a 20 caliber assault hammer on his victims, the count which currently stands at 18 – twelve wounded and six dead. We turn now to our Eyewitness News Ballistics Consultant, Retired Sergeant Peter Cayenne, vice-chair of the Committee to Ban Assault Weapons. Sergeant, what can you tell me about assault hammers?

If I Had a Hammer

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[SGT. CAYENNE]

Well, Ernest, any assault weapon is dangerous and shouldn't be in the hands of the general public. Assault hammers are a new category for us, but we have to take any and all weapons seriously. A hammer is no different. Assault hammers have no place in the home or workplace. We submit that they should be restricted to law enforcement and military use only.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Well, obviously! I mean, there's no reason to put some kind of killing machine out where just anybody can lay their hands on it. How ridiculous is that! So tell me, Sergeant, what makes an assault hammer an assault hammer. Is it the caliber?

[SGT. CAYENNE]

Well...um...it's not that simple, really. It depends...on a lot of factors...um...really I guess it comes down to how it's used.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

So what you're telling me is that...any hammer could be an 'assault hammer' if it's used to assault someone?

[SGT. CAYENNE]

Well...yes. But if the hammer is black, then we automatically assume that it's an assault hammer.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Why is that?

[SGT. CAYENNE]

Because it's black. Black is intimidating. It looks very butch. Paramilitary. So it's gotta be for assault. Just like all serial killers and assassins have three names. John Wilkes Booth. Lee Harvey Oswald. Maxwell Lee Liegh. It's the way things work.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Um...okay...just a second...let's check in with our cra...um ACE reporter, Vera High at Value Depot, come in Vera...

[VERA HIGH]

Yes, Ernie, I can hear you. Nothing new to report here. Just mopping up. Literally. Ton o' blood associated with these kinds of wounds. Looks like an abattoir here. Kind of disgusting.

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[ERNEST FRANKS]

Vera, Sergeant Cayenne brought up an interesting point. Was the hammer that Maxwell Lee Leigh used one of those black assault hammers?

[VERA HIGH]

No, Ernie. I told you Maxwell's hammer was silver, with a wooden handle. Hickory, I think.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

So Maxwell used a silver hammer, huh?

[VERA HIGH]

Yes, Ernie. He did.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Well, Sergeant, Maxwell's silver hammer. Any comment?

[SGT. CAYENNE]

Ernest, obviously, black is not the only color assault weapons come in. We also have anything in a camouflage pattern on our watch list. Apparently, now we're going to have to add "silver" and maybe "chrome" and "pewter" to our list of assault colors. Can't be too careful.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

I'm getting word that we have U.S. Senator Phillip Buster on the line. Senator, Ernest Franks here at Eyewitness News. Congratulations, sir on surviving that vicious attack at the Value Depot. Can you tell me, what went through your mind when you saw the deranged assailant swinging that assault hammer at you?

[SENATOR BUSTER]

Well, Ernie, I can't tell you much. I didn't even see the guy. One minute I was talking to my constituents. The next, I was on the floor with two aides on top of me. I thought it was some kind of hidden camera, gotcha video, or a Zippergate-style sting operation. Only when I realized that somebody was bleeding on me did I pass out. When I awoke, I was being wheeled into the hospital. They kept me there for observation for an hour or so, but that was all there was to it for me.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Senator...assault hammers. As I'm sure you've been told, the assailant came after you with a silver assault hammer. Your thoughts?

[SENATOR BUSTER]

I'm a huge believer in our cherished 2nd Amendment rights. But assault weapons – of any description or kind – have no business in the hands of the general public. I don't care how useful it may be to some, and I won't listen to the howls of protest from special-interest groups, I simply will not rest until I have a bill enacted into law that will protect the public from these dangerous weapons.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Just a moment, Senator. Vera High, our reporter on the scene at the Value Depot has a question for you...

[VERA HIGH]

Senator Buster, Vera High here. You've just proposed banning so-called assault hammers. But isn't it true that the hammer used in this assault is a common framing hammer, and that banning framing hammers won't stop people from using other types of hammers? Furthermore, have you considered what this ban will do to the housing and remodeling industries?

[ERNEST FRANKS]

Senator, Vera wants to know if you've considered the effects of your legislation on housing and remodeling, and if you believe it will solve the problem.

[SENATOR BUSTER]

Well, Ms. High, my constituents expect that Something Must Be Done. We simply can't allow special interests to dictate policy to us. Protecting the public is our number one concern. The remodelers and home builders will simply have to find a safer way to do what they do. I'm sure technology will have a solution that's not nearly as dangerous as these assault hammers. In fact, once this bill is the law of the land, I'll possibly push for a ban on the manufacture of assault weapons, except for special cases, like personal security details and such.

[ERNEST FRANKS]

But Senator, won't that make these hammers prohibitively expensive, even for your own security staff?

[SENATOR BUSTER]

Son...you've never written a Congressional appropriations budget before, have you? Take a look some time. You build a better hammer, and we'll fund it.

– 30 –