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Grandma Cope's Funeral

R. Scott Yarbrough

Grandma would much rather have dropped
dead of a simple life
in the apple orchard between the two
Appaloosa horses, or even been eaten
by a Brown Bear while checking
the water level in the cistern, but nature plays
those tricks of asking what you want -
then giving converse.

Cancer ultimately kills its host.
It ridiculously feeds a selfish
ego that supposes it might just cheat
death to become the living body. It reads
its maps and splits and blooms
too quickly, too big, too pretty
for a sordid adolescence it can't outlive. In reality,
its death is just as untimely and tragic
as the victim it slowly fills.

That's how we get to the Funeral.

It was a good, routine New
Mexico foothills funeral: nasal singing,
too small of church, and a good
eulogy. Then the absurd set in as
it always must. There's only so much
we can plan: the opening
of the casket at the end heebeegeebeed
me; anything that makes a room-full
of cowboys and war vets squirm
is questionable. And to boot, since Grandma was dying
of cancer, she was allowed the convenience
of picking her own "I'm wearing
it forever" dress. She had ultimately dressed
herself for the funeral, gone down
to JoNell's cosmetic, and then slid
herself into the coffin for a nap. The mortician
never should have closed
the coffin while members of the family
were still viewing. Her body
was elevated to look 'natural'
for viewing and thus
she had to be shoved
down by the shoulders

so that the lid of the coffin closed
wouldn't bend just the tip of Grandma's nose for eternity;
it's a mortician's measure of space. Then,
they locked the coffin. Twice. I suppose
they were afraid she might just slip
out the bottom half and run
crazily into the darkened woods forcing
Persephone to restart the seasons
and humanity to have to wipe
all the calendars clean to start
the Copian converts time table miracle.

"No resurrections please." Begin

the black car bright light parade to the burial.
Grandmother "Darling" [The Daughter's wife's Mother]
was late to the funeral. She missed
the service and barely
made the graveside. Through her handkerchief, she asked
me to jump down to open the coffin. I told
her it was locked - which was true.
She made me swear "Ree" looked
Pretty; I did, because she was. Back

at the church we ate covered dish: Fried Chicken
with double batter, baked Yellow Squash dotted
with black pepper corn and butter, Collard
Greens with pepper hot vinegar,
Coconut Pie just crisp with vanilla on the top, apple
cobbler from Mama Ree's orchard of special Wine-Sap
Sour Apples, Pot roast from the neighbor's slaughter
of "Chalupa: the Cow," chicken enchiladas made
from "Winston," the fighting cock, Mama Ree's favorite
Rooster.

He was a pretty pitiful enchilada, but the Hatch Anaheim
chilies
made up for it and seconds and thirds and
what would it have mattered in the scheme of things if I
had opened it?