

MOTHER-DEATH

The resuscitation team had little time for decency: his mother lay on the floor with her nightie hiked around her neck. The team seemed indifferent to the exposure: the shanks, the little body like a worm in a nutshell, the sagging breasts.

He grabbed an afghan from the couch, one full of strong flower-colors, and covered her parts.

The team kept thumping on her chest. They clamped an oxygen cup over her mouth. Nothing helped, as she sunk deeper into the floor, through the cement slab, lower than the potatoes.

HIS MOTHER'S BURIAL

While the grave-digger dug his mother's grave squirrels romped beneath an oak tree.

The old digger cut quilt-exact squares of turf and piled them on a tarmac. His shovel had a square end and cut through the sand and roots.

His mother would lie beside his dad, her concrete box containing her blue coffin touching his gray concrete box containing his brown coffin.

He had the digger pause while he stroked his dad's box: dead twelve years -- bones, shredded clothes, and little black beads for his eyes. The sand was carrot-red. Would their juices, in the sense of mush, blend through into some neutral space?

His mother preferred no coffin or cement -- just the corpse arranged feet down, head up, in the sand. He had touched her hands and kissed her forehead and knew how iced-over death is.

Spiney carrot tops struck him in the face, across his mouth.