

# Across the street.

*by* Kristen Tsetsi

The weird thing about funerals is that the first and the last thing you see in the cemetery are the trucks with the dirt beds and the yellow cabs. Two of them pull up days before to dig the hole, and you can see the ground coming up in scoops to make space for the box they'll lower into it.

You don't know the age or the sex of the body they'll be dropping. It's not like it was in the news.

The trucks leave, and you don't see anything else until you look out the window a few days later, and then there they are, the people wearing black and standing just close enough together so you know they're all there for the same reason, but far enough apart to give room to their thoughts. Their hand fidget and their feet make side-to-side swipes in the grass.

Hardly anyone cries if it's an old person. When someone gets old, you expect this kind of thing to happen.

All of their cars block the path and the people in the back lean into one another to say things while the pastor or preacher or some other speaker reminds them all of the week before when the person in that box was still alive.

When the talking's done, they get in their cars to go wherever they go, and just as soon as that last car clears the path, the yellow-cabbed trucks are back and the men get out.

The next day, when you go to take a look - man or woman? how old? - the dirt's raked so flat and smooth, like a sand trap on a golf course, that you aren't even sure which one has the new body. It isn't as easy to find as you'd think. But then you see the fresh tracks

of those truck tires in the grass.

