

It Is Enough

by Richda McNutt

Jacob put down the phone and looked at his wife. “I don't know what my mother is thinking. She's either cart wheeling into crazy land or turning into a ghou. She insists on having my grandfather's visitation at his house and is preparing his body herself. There's a neighbor's son there now making a coffin. It was bad enough that she didn't insist he go to a hospital — now she won't use a funeral home. Is that even legal?”

Reba hung up the phone after telling Jacob of her father's death. She knew she had probably upset him, but this was one time that she was going to stub up. Her father had spent eighty years of life in this old house in Egan Holler and if he wanted to die in his own bed, looking out the window at his beloved mountains — well, that was fine by her. The hospital would have been full of futile busyness and noise; the gravity of his death warranted no distraction. She had left her home and routine in the city to spend these last months with him, and had been surprised how easily she had slipped back into the rhythm of this somewhat primitive life. It would have been horrible for Jacob — he had not grown up here, and had no familiarity with the people or the way they lived. She understood that it would be too difficult for him to try to get here for the funeral. The nearest airport was a hundred miles away, and there weren't even daily flights. Then he would have a nerve-wracking drive on these steep, curvy mountain roads. He wouldn't enjoy playing chicken with the coal trucks that took up most of the narrow two-lane. She would be fine — there were many good people here who had kept her company during Dad's decline, and they would continue to give her support.

Preparing her father's body was her final act of honor and love. She gently bathed the shrunken frame, then dried it and rubbed

lotion all over him for the last time. She realized it was silly, but she had done it each night before he went to sleep, so why not do it again? She dressed him in his soft cords and flannel shirt and combed his remaining hair. He didn't look "natural" or "lifelike," but why should he? There was no remaining spark - he was as dead as the devil's heart.

Larry was almost finished with the coffin, and she needed to get the house and herself ready for the gathering. Where was she going to put all the food that would be brought? No one would come empty-handed. There would be fried chicken and pork tenderloin, homemade cakes and pies, and fresh garden vegetables. The refrigerator wasn't going to be big enough to hold all that wasn't eaten, but she would worry about that later.

Jacob called the next night to see how she was holding up. Reba told him how wonderful it had been to see all the people come to pay their respects. She told him how his grandfather Enoch would have enjoyed seeing everyone. Death gatherings were always a social occasion in the mountains, and there was nothing disrespectful about it. It was a good thing to have friends and family reminiscing about the dead person's life, and it reestablished connections between and with people that didn't see each other very often. Weddings and funerals were the only times that people seemed to visit anymore. It had been quite late when she finally got to bed, cause she hated to just go off and leave the ones who insisted on sitting up with the body, but they finally shooed her off, cause she needed to be rested for the funeral and burial.

She told him about the funeral, the three preachers, the people who came together from different churches in the community to make up a choir so they could sing her dad's favorite hymns. She told him that his grandfather had been planted in the country cemetery under the big old oak tree that you could see from the road. He would have the company of birds and squirrels and

chippers — plenty of activity to keep him entertained. And she was sure he would rest easy — there would be a crazy quilt of red and gold and brown leaves in the fall; a blanket of snow in the winter, and a delicate spread of wildflowers in the spring and summer.

“You know, Jacob, I never have been big on religion, but I think I understand what they call the gift of grace — it was my dad's life.”

And Enoch walked with God, and he was not — for God took him.

