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## There Is Less and Less Space

Amir Brka

The earth has done its work.  
We wouldn't have thought it,  
my brother and I,  
but a friend said to us  
"Your father's gotten slimmer."  
"Huh?"  
"His grave is sinking in!"

We went to the gravedigger  
to order the gravestone.  
"Don't worry,"  
he said,  
"everything will be just right."

But we wanted a solid gravestone,  
cost didn't matter to us.  
"Don't you worry,  
this one is good,  
this is marble,  
lasts forever."

Then we went to dig the foundation,  
and brought cement and gravel.

"Watch out, don't dig so close," the gravedigger said,  
"or you might run into bones."

Well,  
though a year has passed,  
the earth still needs more.

How much time does it need?  
So we backed away  
and made a big effort,  
it's not as easy  
as people often think.

On father's gravestone it said  
that he was a tourist;  
he'd traveled to Mecca.

I thought,  
is that necessary?  
Not to travel,  
but to write such an inscription.

And I thought  
of father's  
knotty toes,  
and backed away further from the grave.  
The gravedigger brought me back.

The man had unbearably green eyes.

I don't know what my brother thought.  
He kept quiet  
and smoked as he was digging.

While we paused, having a beer:  
"We were sloppy,"  
my brother said.

Yeah, but we'll get better,  
this is the first father  
we've ever buried.  
Now we've got experience,  
I said to my brother.

Father never buried any father of his own:  
he thought life was Good Field –  
our old hometown.  
But when death approached,  
nevertheless,  
he felt Evil coming.

"Do you see that beauty?"  
he said to me.  
"Take a good look,  
my son!

Nothing of that  
you can see  
when you're dead."

He'd come to doubt  
therefore  
everything else

except the body  
in which he never had  
really believed.

And he asked us,  
accordingly,  
to choose for his coffin's cover  
as thick lumber as we could  
and let him see it  
right away –  
while he still had eyes.

I couldn't do anything about it,  
(more precisely: nothing).

Then he went himself  
to the undertaker.

“Time for me to go,”  
he replied  
when anyone asked  
where he was headed.

Till then he thought  
that he knew.

Now I think  
that it was true  
when Schopenhauer said  
it's a bigger sin  
to give birth  
than to kill.

Though he got called  
a defeatist for it.

Pascal also  
holds  
that a pessimist  
is an optimist  
who thinks.

Mother came to check out our work,  
then went home by herself.

“She'll cry,”  
brother said,  
“Let's go to her.”  
I couldn't.  
He didn't understand me  
and stayed with me

till morning  
to explain  
what a fuck up  
I actually was.  
He only stopped  
when I asked him  
from what standpoint  
he was condemning me;  
from the graveyard perhaps?

The graveyard, anyway,  
is expanding faster and faster,  
as I noticed.

I thought some more  
about how  
one day without fail  
unless something significant  
changes  
we'll run out of space,  
and then  
because of that  
the future decisive struggle  
will be between the dead and the living.  
And I could already tell  
among the second category  
there will be more and more traitors.

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