Salt

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I spilled Daddy’s ashes on the kitchen table.
The delivery box seemed securely taped,
Yet he filtered through cracks.
It was his second attempt
to reach my house by mail.
The first ended at our local post office,
NO SUCH ADDRESS stamped on it,
returned, ashes sifting.
My stepmother retrieved it
from the research center,
mailed it the second time herself.
“What is it?” her postmaster asked,
blowing Daddy off
the counter. Reaching for more tape,
my stepmother said,
“That’s just my husband.”

I spilled Daddy’s ashes on the kitchen table.
My husband rushed the box outside,
opened it on the deck. Inside the cardboard shell,
the plastic urn’s seal had broken. A quarter cup
of Daddy went free. Winds picked him up.
He dusted my backyard.
Fine powdery silt. Velvety, gritty, grey.

Daddy’s urn was larger than Mama’s. He’d
kept it in the trunk of his car
so they could listen to country music
together forty years more.
Then he met my stepmother, finally
asked my husband to build a casket
for Mama’s urn.
My husband crafted their casket
from walnut and pecan;
signed the bottom,
"With All my Love."
As they were sealed
in the mausoleum across
from my stepmother's first husband,
they too, had been married forty years.
I said, "I suppose you think my parents
are nuts."

I spilled my father's ashes on the kitchen table,
then I made lunch.

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Home
by Jonathan Travis