The Fracking

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ON THE DRIVE FROM CHICAGO to Oklahoma I explain the oil and gas rights to Dax and Eddie. Dax observes that a lot of people in Oklahoma have a little piece of something—land or oil or gas or whatever. And I tell him that that just isn't true. "What about the Native Americans?" I ask. "What did they get compared to what they *lost*?" And then he just sort of nods his head and smiles and looks out at the red clay strata, as if we were talking about something minor, about something far less significant than genocide, than the murder of Native Americans for their oil rights. Sometimes I'm crazy about Dax, but other times I wonder about his political consciousness.

"They're your *family*," he says. "Maybe they'll agree with you, maybe they won't. Life goes on."

And I think to myself, "A little piece of something, my ass."

Eddie sits in the backseat, coloring a book and occasionally looking out the window at the black angus cattle bunched on hillsides. "The cows are all kissing and telling secrets," he says.

I've begged Dax to come with us to this Easter fiasco, with promises that he can observe the range of *bison occidentalis* (extinct). It's my first extended family event since the funeral, and I've rarely come back since leaving Oklahoma.

Historical sidenote: My first migration was to South America as an undergrad, to see the Guarini along the Argentine/Brazilian border. My second was to grad school up north, where I write 1000 words a day on an anthropological dissertation that is creeping along slower than Dax's Pleistocene megafauna, and where I freeze my ass off for nine months out of the year in what feels like the Arctic tundra.

I've made Dax promise to tone down the alien thing (he's a MUFON member and total conspiracy theorist), but here he's shown up with an alien T-shirt pathetically layered under a cardigan. The alien wears a Santa hat, its triangular face now peeking over the cardigan's V. I want to argue about the whole ensemble, but we're almost there. I'd love to see him wear the shirt to his own family's house, or to the Dean's party, but now is not the time. And Aunt Donna is not the audience. I changed my own outfit three times before we left the motel—partly because none of my dresses fit anymore (fact: cold winters increase eating) and mostly because I don't want to be criticized.

As we pull into the driveway of the familiar 1960s ranch-style, I explain to Dax that Easter is by far the creepiest holiday.

"They punch a guy full of holes and leave him there to die. He pops back to life and we celebrate by eating his body, drinking his blood, making our kids look for rotten eggs in the hot sun. And Aunt Donna wants to know why I don't want Eddie participating in an egg hunt." (I also worry about the choking hazard of plastic Easter grass.)

This is the first Easter without my mother. She died in August, so we've made it through all the rest of the holidays, except for the Fourth of July. It's been a long year, one during which my father began eating only hard-boiled eggs and green olives at home and eating out the rest of the time, talking to pictures of my mother more than he talks to anyone alive. He's also become a bit mystical—touching things to absorb some kind of spiritual knowledge: pieces of wood, pine cones, my mother's pillowcase. As I was about to drive

home after my mother died, after the funeral and the signing of papers, he laid his hand on the hood of my Civic and held it there until I backed out of the driveway. (And these are just the behaviors I've observed or he's described over the phone. I have no data for what he does in isolation.)

Aunt Donna answers the door, and, as expected, her eyes go straight to Dax. I sense that she's glad to see he looks a little unkempt—the long hair, the red fuzz between his ears and beard, the Band-Aid on his arm from a bicycle accident. Aunt Donna is a woman who revels in what she considers to be the substandardness of others.

"My god, what did you bring?" she asks, and I tell her it's quinoa. (I don't tell her I bought it at a Whole Foods in Tulsa.) She sets down her wine glass on the entry table and asks if it's a French dish. I smile to myself and tell her it's vegetarian and she says "uh oh." Then she hugs Eddie and says what a blessing it is to see him. She's big into blessings. It's typed on her Facebook page and etched into her sterling bracelets, even below us in black cursive letters on her coir doormat. *Be blessed*. The impossibility of the command annoys me. She threw out a lot of blessings during my mother's illness and she told me I was a blessing when I donated my kidney. It was one of the only nice things I remember her saying. I still hated her for not giving up her own. I push the bowl of quinoa into her arms, which gets me out of hugging her.

Then I introduce Dax as an archaeologist and an artist, explaining that he's two years into his doctoral program and that he creates upcycled art, mostly from bicycle parts, mainly chains. Aunt Donna tells Dax about her friend Arlene, whom she describes as "a real artist in Taos." I've seen Arlene's work. She makes ceramic pots that look Santa Fe-standard and professionally glazed on the outside, but when you peek down into them, you see a little butt. She calls them Moonies. Aunt Donna goes on about how many pots Arlene sells to the tourists each summer and acts disappointed that Dax is not selling his work.

"Well, maybe you don't need the money," she finally says, looking down at Dax's shirt, and making contact with the alien's almond eyes.

"Poppy!" yells Eddie.

My father stands in the wood-paneled dining room holding my mother's favorite coffee mug. He's talking to Uncle Ross, who has just had gum surgery, and my great aunt Bridge, who is in the latter stages of dementia. After my mother died Aunt Bridge disappeared for three days until her son tracked her

to a church in Tucumcari, where he found her with a lemon-sized bruise on her forearm and no memory of how she'd gotten there.

I hug my father, and tears pool in his eyes. He still gets very emotional about my mother, and something like this, with family and tradition, is just the kind of thing to set him off. He holds up my mother's mug, which says *As for me, make mine tea* with a brown rim stained in orange pekoe, and confides, "Like she's here." I smile and guide Eddie toward him. Dad lifts him up and tucks Eddie's head under his chin. Eddie is good for cuddling—never wiping off kisses, always hugging back. I wish his own father had been that way.

Historical sidenote: Eddie's dad was a limnologist I met at a conference. When Eddie was born he brought me a bouquet of brown-tipped white daisies from a grocery store and a onesie for Eddie that I never had the heart to put on him. He disappeared to take samples in the Michigan wetlands, and we never saw him again.

"Did you see the pictures?" Dad asks, taking my hand and pulling me into the hallway across from the guest bathroom, where Aunt Donna has a wall of family photos in overly ornate collage frames. This house belonged to my grandmother and now belongs to Aunt Donna, but it's a sad, strange version of the house I knew when I was growing up—like a taxidermed family cocker spaniel. Among Aunt Donna's alterations are the red paint, the sectional furniture, and the pantries stocked with boxes of wine.

Dax is laughing with my cousin, Justin, who works in the oil fields. They seem to have bonded over a discussion of some video game. Eddie hovers between their legs for a while, then comes over to me, points to Justin, and whispers, "He smells like Magic Markers." He squints and makes a face and I pull him behind me, hoping Justin doesn't see.

I call Dax and show him the family portraits on the wall, the pictures where some of us cousins look interchangeable—5x7s of various children, crazy and naked and slathered in birthday cake. Aunt Donna points out how cross-eyed I was. There's one of Aunt Bridge and her first husband, the mortician, standing with my mother and Aunt Donna, who are both pregnant and pastel and like a couple of Sweet-Tarts. I tap on the glass pane over a small black-and-white photo of my mother.

"This was when she was a kid," I tell Dax. "She's hiding moon pies in her underpants."

My dad, with Eddie on his hip, says, "That's your grandmother in 1952," and I smile and nod at Eddie until he does the same and says "Oh."

Then my father reaches out toward my mother's graduation portrait and strokes her cheek, her usually red cheek, disguised in the feathered black and white photography. Eddie seems perplexed by his action, but then reaches out and strokes the frame with his palm, petting it like the chinchilla at his day school.

"Dinner," someone says.

Aunt Donna suggests putting all the food on the table and just passing it around, instead of doing it buffet style like we used to. When I was little my grandmother would spread out all the casserole dishes on the credenza, and we'd form a line. We've always done it that way, and I'm irked that Aunt Donna has now decided to change it, now that my mother's gone, now that a Barcalounger has replaced my grandmother's divan.

As we wait to sit down, Dax slides his hand across my back. He's one of those guys who gets touchy-feely when people are around. I don't understand that kind of public physical gesture except as a way of claiming territory, which seems weird in front of family. I mean, why do it here? Does some primal part of him think he's in competition with my cousins? My father? I wish he'd stick his hand up my shirt more often in the privacy of my apartment, but he never does, not unless I initiate it. Yet for some reason now, here in Aunt Donna's home, in front of my grandmother's credenza and my mother's mug, he's decided to rub his hand around on one of my butt cheeks. I swat his forearm and he steps back and chooses a seat across the table from me. Eddie sits next to him.

"That's okay, I don't eat meat," I say before Aunt Donna saws me off a piece of ham with an electric knife, which Dax says looks like a *Pristis perotteti* (not extinct).

"Since when?" she asks, holding the serrated blade mid-air.

"I've been a vegetarian for a while now."

She looks around for something to spear with her oversized serving fork, avoiding the potato salad and pasta salad and macaroni salad, then shrugs and hands me back a plate with only a deviled egg on it.

"I'll let you help yourself," she says, then looking at Eddie—"*You* want meat, don't you?"

Eddie nods. I look down at my plate, the deviled egg sitting smack in the middle, the flecks of paprika beginning to bleed into the yolk, the white and yellow oval staring up at me like a belly button, some strange umbilical gesture connecting me to nothing.

"Who was the aunt who drank the battery acid?" asks Uncle Ross, carefully mincing his ham into tiny pieces that he can chew on just one side of his mouth.

"Eileen," says Aunt Bridge, wiping the lenses of her glasses with a Kleenex, looking through them at me. "She was second oldest daughter of your great-great grandparents." She puts on the glasses, a gold chain yoking them to her neck.

"Why'd she do that?" my father asks. I remember my mother once telling him the story, but he never listened to her when she was alive. Not really. Not in a way that you'd remember, not in the way that he does now, listening for her to whisper to him when he says *good morning* to her picture, when he sleeps in her favorite chair.

"She was in love with a married man," explains Aunt Bridge, trying to butter a roll with shaky hands. "She got caught with him somewhere—the old Vesta theater, I think—and then she went home that night and drank the acid from an old car battery. When they found her they could hear the acid chewing through her insides."

Eddie isn't really paying attention to the adult conversation and the rest of us have heard the story enough times that it doesn't affect our appetites, but Dax stops eating. It *is* quite shocking the first time, I guess, but then it becomes one of the more interesting pieces of family lore. Like the story of my second cousin losing an ear in Vietnam. Or of my mother's transplant. Another story we quit hearing from each other.

Historical sidenote: My great-grandfather, Argus O'Dell, ran a land office during the Depression. As the desiccated Oklahoma farmland dried up, it wrung out the farmers like water twisted from a rag, drop by drop, into Argus' lobby. So Argus started lending them money to keep up their farm payments, in exchange for the oil and mineral rights to their properties. He had seven children (including the daughter who drank the battery acid cocktail), and the rights then trickled down to them and then to their children, and so on, down to me and about forty other dispersed relatives, including the ones seated at the table, all getting a few hundred a year, checks that came in the mail from some oil or energy company, bled from the anemic earth.

I received the first check shortly after my mother passed away. The day it came in the mail, I sat down and stared at the paper rectangle—the glaring corporate logo screaming from the corner like a radioactive waste symbol. All I could picture were ducks lacquered in oil, farmers watching their skinny cattle graze around some devious black oil pump as it pecked away at the ground like a sci-fi monster. But then I started thinking about the chunks I could take out of my student loan debt if I were to use the money to pay it back. Or putting the money aside for Eddie's education. Or giving it to one of the wildlife organizations that sends me the return address labels depicting pandas and chimpanzees.

So I used one-third of the money to put toward a Visa bill, a third for Eddie's new backpack, and a third to take Eddie to the zoo. (The zoo was an eco-retribution effort.) But it obviously wasn't enough.

"I wonder if we can talk about the oil money," I begin. Everyone stops eating and looks at me, their faces hovering above clouds of mashed potatoes. "Mom's shares passed to me after she died, but I've been thinking a lot about what all this really means."

They begin passing around dishes again.

"I feel like we need to think about—to talk about—our relationship to the land this stuff comes from. I mean, do we even know where this land is?" I continue. "We don't live on it or work on it. We don't do anything for it. Somehow it doesn't feel right to be making money off it."

"I know where one plot is," says Uncle Ross, holding a glass of iced tea against his swollen cheek. "It's the place where they always put up that crazy elf village at Christmas, where the elves are all working on rusted-out cars and sitting on hay bales. We can take the Tahoe out there later if you want to see it. It's about five miles past the car dealerships. Kids used to find arrowheads out there."

"I wonder if there have been any *occidentalis* findings," Dax says.

"Dinosaurs!" shouts Eddie.

"But my point is—have we really looked at the environmental impact here? What procedures they're using? Are they fracking? What are the potential environmental hazards?"

"Well, I don't even know what all this fracking is about," says Aunt Donna. "It sounds pornographic."

"It's where they pump a bunch of fluid into the ground to break up the rock," my dad explains. "To fracture it. In order to release the oil and gas." He says it scientifically, not like he's taking my side, but as if he's trying to share a piece of information like another dish being passed around the table.

Aunt Donna turns to my cousin, who hasn't talked at all through dinner, who just sits there silently cocooned in a brown pullover, looking hot and uncomfortable.

"Well, let's ask Justin," she says. "He's in the business. Justin, what's the company you work for?"

Justin trowels his potatoes with his fork, staring down at the rows he's made.

"Barton's Nipple Up."

Dax has to set down his fork.

"*What* is it?"

"It's an oil drilling term," explains Justin.

Eddie is paying attention to the adult conversation now. The word *nipple* seems to be what does it.

"So are you like a supervisor there?" I ask.

"No. I'm just a—, I'm a—"

I swallow a word, heavy down my throat, like a piece of metal equipment. I feel horrible for asking, suddenly taking in the slivers of black beneath Justin's fingernails and noticing that no one took a roll out of the basket after him.

"That's got to be interesting," says Dax, and I quickly forgive him for wearing the alien T-shirt and for touching my ass.

"Whatever," says Justin, seemingly unbothered by the moment.

I continue.

"I know that there are tons of risks associated with fracking." I tick them off my fingers. "Contamination of the ground water. Air pollution. Cancer. One screw-up and it's an environmental disaster."

Everyone has pushed the quinoa around on their plates, creating a vista of little anthills down the length of the table. Aunt Bridge, who's been silent since the battery acid story, mumbles something about Tom Brokaw, shakes her head, and gets up to leave the table, blowing her nose on one of Aunt Donna's cloth napkins. The motion rattles the little chain on her glasses.

"Fish kills, acid burns," I continue. "We're exposed to all these crazy chemicals. Ground water being contaminated with methane—in Wyoming, Pennsylvania. Am I the only one who gets creeped out by oil companies sponsoring commercials for vacationing in the Gulf? Showing us pictures of little kids frolicking in the surf? Photoshopping out the tarballs and mutant crabs, when they just finished dumping millions of barrels of *shit* into the oceans?"

If my mother were still here, she would say "That's enough." She would be appalled by my use of the word *shit*.

"So what is it you're proposing that we do?" asks Aunt Donna. "Give the money back to the oil companies? Endorse the checks over to Mary Ann Jump's family? Mail it to Martin Sheen?"

"Who's Mary Ann Jump?" I ask.

"Well, she lives on one of the plots. Killed herself last year. Her husband drove her to it."

"When was it that she killed herself?" asks Uncle Ross. "Last June?"

"No," says Aunt Donna. "Earlier than that. Nobody kills themselves after Memorial Day."

The ice has melted in my tea, so I finish the watery glass.

Everyone's finished eating, except for Eddie, who hasn't touched anything

on his plate, including the ham, and leans forward to whisper, "Mom, could I please have a Caesar salad?"

I take his request for Caesar salad as an outward sign of alliance with me and my vegetarian life choice: the child protecting his mother.

Aunt Donna makes a little gasping sound.

"A Caesar salad?" she announces, piling empty plates on top of one another. "You're just a little boy. You should be asking for chicken nuggets and PB and J."

I ask, "What if we pool our money and then give it to some kind of environmental non-profit, to counteract the damage that's being done, that we're being paid for?"

Suddenly the two-leaf dinner table looms like a giant crevasse, a deep and silent canyon among us all.

"Wouldn't that be big?" I ask. "Wouldn't that be huge?"

"Why not just give it to the landowners?" says Uncle Ross, starting up the electric knife again.

I'm already wondering why I've even tried.

"You mean the farmers?" I say. "The land's not really theirs. I mean, then it would be more right to give it to the Native Americans who lived there before. The Kiowa?"

"Apache," says my dad.

"Okay, well, how do we decide? That's why I didn't want to feed back into this ownership myth. Another option might be giving it to the hospital. Or whatever. Just do *something big* with it."

Aunt Donna clanks her fork against her plate and looks at me sideways, the whites of her eyes sharp like pieces of broken eggshell. I know she's telling me to drop it. I, too, clank my fork against my plate. And then, suddenly, looking at each other across the dinner table, I remember us looking at each other across my mother's hospital mattress, across a hand-stitched rag quilt, across my mother's jaundiced shins protruding from the gown. The blood in her mouth. The cracked yellow lips.

Aunt Donna stands up and says, "Eddie, why don't you and me see if we can find us some Caesar salad in the kitchen?"

Eddie pops off the metal folding chair and follows her away from the table.

Uncle Ross attempts to come to my rescue, his cheek noticeably swollen.

"Well, it's nice of you to think of all this, but we could use the money. We're taking a vacation to Breckenridge next year."

"But what if you're too sick to go? Because all the fracking has polluted the groundwater and you end up with tumors the size of these rolls?"

I hold one up. It's the shape of an ear.

"Then I guess we'd have to go to Branson instead," he says, winking at me.

I turn to Dax for moral support, but he looks across the table and says, "So Justin, how long have you worked at Nipple Up?"

Aunt Donna has propped up Eddie on the black granite countertops of her kitchen island. She's shredding a head of lettuce, as a rhinestone cross swings from her neck like a plumb bob. I take Eddie down and stand him on the floor.

"Mama," she says, "we don't need your help, we're doing just fine." I hate that my aunt is calling me *mama*. And that she and Eddie seemed to have bonded over a head of iceberg lettuce. I suppress the urge to remind her that Caesar salads use romaine.

"Mom, I'm shakin' it," explains Eddie, who's clearly been instructed to shake the bottle of salad dressing and that it's very important that he do it thoroughly. Unfortunately he's shaking it between his little legs, which reminds me of the masturbating monkeys at the zoo, so I send him into the other room where I don't have to watch.

I scoop up the pieces of lettuce Aunt Donna has shredded and, because I don't know what else to do with my hands, I begin to shred them further. Smaller and smaller, into some kind of green confetti. Our hands look very similar, very vascular as they work, like my mother's.

I hear words between us. *Look, if that's what you want to do with your share of the money, then fine. But don't come in here making us feel bad because we need and use the money.* I can *feel* her thinking them. We're related, she's my mother's sister, there must be some kind of psychological connection, something hormonal, pheromonal, some rise in body temperature that allows me to understand her without her vibrating the words off of the walls of this renovated red kitchen.

"Does Eddie call his dad on holidays?" she asks.

"No."

"Oh. Well then. Maybe we could hide Easter eggs later."

I'm shredding the lettuce like I've got talons.

"Do you remember the year we tried to eat outside in the wind?" she asks. "Or were you gone then? You've been gone so long, I forget what you were here for. I know your mom and dad were here. Not sure I could stay away from family as long as you do."

And it's then that I start to cry.

Historical sidenote: My third migration was supposed to be traveling to Rapanui off the coast of Chile, to see the Easter Island statues, to lie in the surf and contemplate the visions of eyes that have stared from the shore for hundreds upon hundreds of years. But then Eddie came.

His father came first. And then Eddie came. And then his father left.

Aunt Donna wraps her arms around me as I cry.

"The women in our family, we're pushy. We can be too hard on things," she says.

I assume by *things* she means *people*. But then she says—into my ear, so close that I can smell the broccoli casserole on her breath, so close that I can almost hear my mother's voice—"They didn't want it."

"Should we use the knife?" I ask, looking down at what's left of the lettuce.

"They didn't want my kidney," she says.

I take a deep breath, wondering where this is going. "But it would have been a match," I tell her.

"I've got cirrhosis," she whispers, and she makes it sound like a venereal disease.

I didn't know why she'd said no to the kidney donation, just that she had.

My mother didn't talk about it; there wasn't time or energy. And of course I was willing to donate—a breathing tube, a catheter, a few days in the hospital and a few weeks of bed rest. She was my mother. And so I spent three weeks with her, stretched out on her living room recliner, playing Skip-Bo, watching endless episodes of House Hunters next to the woman with whom I shared not only a blood type and vascular hands, but also matching slashes across the right sides of our bellies, like some kind of tribal initiation, some kind of assurance that we were related. It was the most time I'd spent with her since I graduated high school. It was the first time in a long time that she'd approved of something I'd done. *Why aren't you getting married? Then why did you sleep with him? You know that midwifes aren't real doctors, right? And what kind of life will that be for him? You're not coming home for Thanksgiving?* Eddie spent most of those three weeks with my father. Neither of them was very helpful with our convalescence, but occasionally they'd come in to read us a book or play a hand of cards or tell us what was happening in the outside world.

"Should I call Aunt Donna?" I asked at some point.

"We don't need to call her in yet," my mother had said, fanning her cards—as if Aunt Donna were the second opinion, the medical expert, the haz-mat team, the last resort.

The last thing I remember saying to my mother, the last thing that she could respond to, was: *What's the next episode?*

"A California woman searches for a home with a doggie door," she said.

Aunt Donna calls in Eddie and lets him dump the bottled dressing over the salad.

"Did you have that nose ring before?" she asks me.

"Yes."

"I don't remember seeing it," she says. As the men bring the plates in from the table, she looks around and asks, "Does anybody know where Aunt Bridge has got off to?"

We all spend the next two hours looking for Aunt Bridge, checking the bathroom, the cars, the basement. Dad is clutching my mother's mug, like he's reassuring her that it will all be all right, and Dax and Justin go off in Justin's truck to scour the nearby roads. Eddie helps Aunt Donna search around the house. I keep thinking about the lemon-sized bruise, worrying less about the bruise itself than about the fact that Aunt Bridge didn't know where it came from, that the body could endure trauma with no one having a memory to attach it to.

I take the Civic out onto the red dirt roads, rattling across the prairie as pink dust clouds rise behind me, and finally, near the edge of a buffalo wallow, I see her, staring out across the circle of silt.

"Aunt Bridge, how you doing?" I pick burs off the hem of my dress.

"I think they need to plow some of this out here," she says. Her salt-and-pepper hair is tethered only by two lopsided bobby pins. The glasses hang askew on her breast.

"I'm not sure that they farm this," I tell her.

I run my hand over the planks of her shoulders and down her back, warm and real and fragile, and suddenly I'm telling her everything.

"The truth is I only learned how to pronounce *quinoa* a few months ago. At the co-op when I had to ask where it was because I needed it for a recipe, and the checker acted like she didn't know what I was talking about. 'Oh, the *kin-wah*,' she says, like it was *Limoges* or *Louis Vuitton*."

I tell her about my talk with Aunt Donna. I tell her that I feel guilty for living so far away. And then I tell her that Eddie has never met his father.

She nods, and I can see the sky—expansive, yawning—reflected orange and yellow in her glasses.

"They found her over there," Aunt Bridge says, pointing, and I wonder if she's talking about Eileen who drank the acid, trying to calculate if Aunt Bridge would have would have been around then, would have been there to see her cramping in agony, to hear the hissing in her stomach.

I take the thick part of Aunt Bridge's arm and walk her back to the car. When we get to the road, she looks at me sympathetically and asks if I've talked to my mother lately.

"You should tell *her* these things," she says.

"I'll think about it."

I help her into the Civic, now turned from white to fleshy pink by the red dirt, and we motor back toward the house.

On the return to Chicago, Dax stops to refill the gas tank, and it's there that I have to show him the technique of rolling down the window to open the car door into heavy Oklahoma wind.

"If you try to work against it you'll never get it open," I explain. "You have to let some of the air in first." All of this has to do with pressure and physics, but I could never explain it that way. I just do it because it's how my mother taught me.

Once we're on the highway, I hand a pack of sunflower seeds back to Eddie, who's wearing his coloring book as a hat and looking out at the cows. At some point we'll discuss what happens to those cows. But not today. Eddie sucks the salt off the sunflower seeds and spits them back into my hand. I throw the seeds out the window and wonder if they'll take along the roadside.

"Dax is a good driver," Eddie observes.

"Yes, he is," I agree.

"That means I'll be a good driver too," he says.

And I have no response.

We make it past the Fourth of July and the anniversary of my mother's death. Aunt Donna calls to tell me that they've stopped drilling on Mary Ann Jump's property, due to the discovery of some archaeological remains. Because I'm still fixated on the idea of Aunt Donna with cirrhosis, I try to listen for slurred speech, picturing her lounging in a silk robe like Ann Bancroft, with a cigarette in one hand and a highball glass in the other. I consider asking her condescending questions—*You taking care of yourself? You're not still drinking, are you?* But I don't.

Instead we chat about the weather and my dad and Uncle Ross having skin tags removed, and Aunt Donna promises to send me some "proper clothes" for Eddie and another one of Arlene's Moonie-pots. Eddie loved the last one and is using it to collect pennies.

Historical sidenote: In a field in northwestern Oklahoma, a university archaeological team unearthed the remains of a woman, an ancestor of the present-day Wichita tribe. They estimated that she died around the age of thirty, and markings across her forehead indicated that she had been scalped after being shot with two arrows.

A storage pit and several skeletons from the same period were found in 1957, but they were discovered some twenty miles southeast of this woman's remains. The woman's people would have been farmers and hunters whose staple was bison. While still in the process of exhuming the delicate skeleton, the experts could only theorize about why she may have wandered so far from her tribe.