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THE CEMETERY

by William C. Anderson

It's not too often that one encounters a woman who waxes her mustache. Even in the state of Wyoming.

We were gassing up at a Rock Springs service station when I happened to notice the old dusty camper parked next to Rocinante. "Howdy," said a husky voice emanating from the pickup.

I looked into the craggy face of the elderly woman peering out at me from under a fly-bedecked fishing hat. "Evening, ma'am," I replied.

"Overheard you askin' the gas attendant for a place to park for the night."

"Right. It's been a long day. We're ready to put the nosebag on our beast."

"Then jest follow me. I'll show you the best spot in these parts."

I finished gassing up, paid the attendant and buckled into the cockpit. Scratching gravel, the camper started up and shot out of the station, the woman waving out of the window for us to follow. As she drove off, we noticed the sticker on her rear bumper reading, PRESERVE WYOMING WILDLIFE — SHOOT AN OUT-OF-STATE HUNTER.

I looked at my wife. "Think we should follow her?" She shrugged. "What have we got to lose? I'm tired."

It took some doing to keep up with the camper as we drove through Rock Springs, then turned up a country road for a few miles. The camper finally blinked its left-turn signal, and we followed as it turned off the road and rattled through an open gate. We were almost through the entrance before we saw the sign.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Dortha. "This is a cemetery! Where in the world is she taking us?"

"Or out of this world?"

The old camper pulled over to the side of the road and parked in a tree-shaded lane. I pulled up behind and stopped. The woman bounded out of the cab and ran over to our motorhome. "Slicker'n moose dung, ain't it?" she said, beaming expansively.

"Nice," I said. "But I do have one question. What the blazes are we doing here?"

"Pitchin' camp, pardner. What else?"

"You mean right here? In this marble orchard?"

"You betcha. Don't sit there flappin' yer gums. Time to put on the feedbag." She addressed the redhead. "Got a venison roast cookin'. You set the table, dearie, while I whip up some biscuits."

"You have a roast cooking?" asked Dortha.

"Yep. Should be about done. Come on. We'll take a gander at it." Before the wife could protest, she found herself being propelled toward the camper. Amused, I followed, as the woman went to the front of her pickup and unlatched the engine hood. She took an old pair of mittens out of her mackinaw, put them on, and reached inside the engine well to come out with a large object wrapped in aluminum foil. "Aha!" she said sniffing it. "Smells larrupin' good."

Dortha blinked for a moment, then finally mustered the courage to ask. "What smells larrupin' good?"

"Supper," said the woman. "Don't tell me you ain't never done any motorblock cookin'?"

"I'm afraid I haven't," said Dortha, peeling back the foil and sniffing. "But it smells heavenly."

"Only way inna world to cook venison. This was kind of an old buck, so I seasoned the roast up good, sealed it in this here foil, and put it on the motorblock. No use lettin' all that engine heat go to waste. Best oven inna world." She sniffed again. "Not bad for road kill."

"I've never heard of such a thing," Dortha, entranced. "How long do you cook it?"

"Old duffer like this, ya cook it about a hundred and twenty miles." She headed for the door of the camper throwing back, "Come on, mule skinnners. Wash up for supper. Let's look alive."

I looked over at my bride. She watched the retreating woman, and then swept the marbled plots with puzzled eyes, finally planting them on me. "Let's look *alive*?"

It isn't every night one has a banquet in a grave—
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