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THE COFFIN IS TOO BIG FOR THE HOLE (An excerpt)
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I don't know why, but it keeps coming back to me. This dream. Every time I get frustrated, it comes back to me.

It's the funeral. My grandfather's.

We were all at the cemetery. All my folks – my wife, my kids, my brothers, sisters, my cousins and their kids. There were so many people that I couldn't even say for sure who was a relative and who wasn't.

You see, my folks started drifting apart when they got married, one after the other. Grandfather was very cross at first, about the breaking up of the extended family.

You see, there were so many rooms in our old house. It could accommodate at least fifty people. But when he died, there was only my family still living there – and the two old servants who had been with him from more than fifty years ago.

Yeah, the funeral.

You see, the coffin was too big. It was so big we had to hire sixteen coolies to carry it from the funeral coach to the grave.

But the problem was not so much the weight although it was very heavy all right. It was so damn heavy that the sixteen of them nearly dropped it to the ground when they got it off the coach. And we men from the family had to rush over to save it.

You don't want the coffin to crash down. I'm sure you understand that. What if the thing gets busted open, right there in front of all the people?

There were at least two hundred of them there. I don't know who most of them were. But I just had this feeling that most of them didn't really belong to the family. I had a feeling that we were being watched. I don't know why, but looking back, I still feel that way. Being watched.

Anyway, we saved the coffin from crashing down and prevented the possibility of the thing getting busted open. Then the lot of us carried the damn thing to the grave.

As we carried, we were cursing inside: why grandfather had to get such a heavy solid thing and why the damn coolies were not strong enough to bear in. No wonder, you know. Most of them were opium addicts and just out there to make a fast buck when a coffin needed carrying. I'm sure they didn't know this was going to be a real heavy thing.

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But we were feeling proud too. I did, anyway. I mean, how many people had a grandfather who enjoyed the honour of getting buried in such a rare, refined, solid, polished, grand and heavy coffin?