



**G**randpa, look what I found!” And in the dust, between the railroad tracks, there was the stub of a flare.

“That’s a flare,” said Grandpa. “Train engineers use those to signal people when a train is coming.” Then there was a rumbling. We moved off the tracks and onto the grass. We both sat down in its coolness. We watched the small dot get bigger. The rumbling got louder and louder. Then the train was upon us. Grandpa and I recited the colors of the train as it went by. “Red, blue, yellow, green, white, red, blue, yellow, green, white.” The train got faster and faster, and we recited the colors faster and faster. When the last car was running by, we said, “And there goes the good old caboosie!” We laughed and laughed and laughed, even though we had done this every day for a long time.

Then there was a blur; my eyes popped open like a toaster. I whipped off the covers and started running downstairs. On the way down, I ran into Mom. She said, “Whoa, whoa, where are you going so fast, Johnny?”

Making sure I wouldn’t forget the dream, I blurted out, “I’m going to tell Grandpa something.”

In the distance my mother said “Johnny” in a worried voice. But my name was not fast enough to catch me today. I ran right into his room. My eyes were focused on the bed where he always lay, but

---

*Jeremy Zinn wrote this story while in the seventh grade at Hawken School in Lyndhurst, Ohio. It is reprinted from the October/November 1986 issue of Merlyn’s Pen in celebration of Merlyn’s tenth anniversary.*

“always” was not now. The white bed tortured me with no one in it.

“No, you can’t leave me now. Please come back; you have been gone long enough. I miss you.” My words were drowned out by sobs. “I miss you” echoed through the room.

“I miss Grandpa, too,” said a voice. I looked, and there was Mom standing at the doorway. Then she continued, “You must remember he is not coming back, but he can still live in your mind.”

“That’s not good enough,” I said as I stomped up to my room. I looked back, and there was Mom standing in the doorway, staring at the bed and probably thinking about dinner.

I went into my room and sat at my desk. I challenged myself to try to pile everything from the floor on my desk. Higher, higher, higher, lean, BOOM! I laughed. This was fun. I looked at my feet. There stood the elephant. It was a beautiful elephant carved from oak. Grandpa had given it to me. I remembered it like yesterday.

“Good morning, Grandpa.”

“Good morning, Johnny. Come here, I have something for you.” I looked at the little animal.

“What is it?” I said.

“It’s an elephant that I made when I was a little boy.”

“What are those things sticking out of his face?”

“Those are tusks. They are made out of ivory.”

“Oh! I know what that is. It’s the stuff that tastes bad.”

“When have you tasted ivory?”

“When I have been bad.”

“Oh, that’s Ivory soap,” said Grandpa. My face turned red.

“Time for dinner!” I blinked and awoke from my daydream. I had thought tusks were made out of Ivory soap. But then I reassured myself by saying, “But that was when I was stupid; now I can add!”

Mom was a little sad during dinner but cheered up when she saw that I was in a better mood. After dinner I got into my pajamas and went to bed at the usual time. That night I lay in bed staring at the ceiling and listening to the hum of the fan. I thought to



myself, *Maybe if I think hard enough, I can continue my dream.*

“Grandpa, what do you think it’s like on the moon?” I said, as he handed me my rod with a nice big worm on the hook.

“Well, I think it will look a little like Colorado, with mountains, cool streams, high meadows, and flowing waterfalls.”

“I think gypsies live there, and they dance and sing all night, and they explore all day. When are we going to the moon,

Grandpa?”

The **only** people in  
the world were **me,**  
Grandpa, **and** the  
**fish.**

“Let’s see, we’ve made the hot air balloon, but we have to figure out how to blow the balloon up.”

Then he pulled in another big fish and slipped it

onto the fish string.

“Grandpa, how are we going to eat all these fish?” I said.

“Don’t worry about that. Concentrate on getting that big fish you wanted.” At that instant, there was a tug at the end of the line. “Do you need help?” asked Grandpa.

“Nooo,” I whined. “I’m almost six years old.”

“That’s pretty old,” said Grandpa as he patted his warm hand on my back. “Pull it in. Pull it in.” With all my strength I pulled the fish in. The only people in the world were me, Grandpa, and the fish. Grandpa took the fish off the hook and let me touch it. That was the biggest fish I had ever caught. But then all happiness stopped.

I said, “Will the fish die?”

“Maybe.”

“Will you die?”

Then Grandpa said, “This is something I want you to remember for your whole life: God is the fisherman who pulls us out of the sea and into the light.” Then there was a blur.

In the silent and pitch-black night I said, “Good night, Grandpa.” ★



## Acetate Bones

high wave, my arm in  
torn ointment, in shreds.  
you in your hospital bandage,  
moan like god with liver damage.

low and slow with its  
foggy lamentation, i sit  
behind my gastro-white veil,  
listening to you horn your scream.

i pretend i am asleep,  
finally, from those drugs in  
waxy silhouette paper cup, they  
look so cute in my palm landscape.

you tear at her skirt, you  
want her to wait to stay  
and be your teddy, you  
want her to keep smiling with  
those fat, grand husky teeth  
they shine and they could easily  
crunch those pills they leave  
in our lettuce and salad.  
mummy came home tonight,  
disfigured and torment

itching up his leg, i unravel  
i unravel to your atrophied skin no  
bones, i whistle in your  
marrow fat, abolished  
and wizened like god’s  
fine purple phallus.  
you came home, mummy,  
across the urethane ice  
and through the  
fluorescent-tight lights.

i’m in lube and salve, mummy.  
ligaments popping and  
stretching around my waist,  
i peek through my shroud.

high of morphine my  
pins in legs, i like them  
with their pus and layers  
they keep me busy.

wouldn’t you, wouldn’t  
you do the favor of nourishing  
me? on my IV addiction,  
i can roar louder than you.

—Caitlin Berrigan,  
Eighth grade, Mendocino Middle School,  
Mendocino, California