

CROSSING OVER

It is so loud. Bells, voices, flashing lights scare me. A few minutes ago a lady in a gray outfit took me from my parents. They'd waved and smiled and acted like it was a party. But I saw the tear on my mom's cheek—she was afraid, too.

That lady placed me here, strapped me down tight and told me to turn my head to the left.

“You'll feel better looking here,” she'd said, pointing to a scratched, plastic thing.

I feel alone, but I still hear lots of voices and other noises, so I know I am not.

Six year old boys shouldn't have to do this by themselves. They'd said there was really no other option. They promised they'd be right there . . . and that anyway, Gramma was on the other side.

I look through the plastic and see brown squares laid out neatly side by side. Every so often there is a green circle laid on top of them. I notice a blue snake with other smaller snakes coming from it. They are sprawled out like the lines on my grandmother's face.

I rub my eyes. I see glowing streaks side by side but flowing in opposite directions, white one way and red the other. The streaks go right over the blue snake. Straining, I can make out a shadow over the whole picture, but I can't find anything anywhere that casts the shadow. Weird, the whole picture is shrinking down, down, as the noises all mix together, hurting my ears.

A big yellow light appears through the window-like thing to my left and I have to close my eyes for a minute. The light is hot, and I feel sweat on my forehead. Then the light is covered up by blackness. The light still fights to get through though, making everything all gray. By my face on the scratched plastic are little clear comets, like drops of water—their heads rushing to

the left, tails drawn out behind them. The droplets are racing right to left, more coming right to left, still more, right to left. A long parade of the tiny things running away.

Darkness, along with the frightened water droplets, are all that I can see through the window. A force pushes me backward. I can't lift my head. My ears are roaring, "Run away, follow the water, run to the light." I try to scream but don't really make any noise at all.

I cannot follow the comets of water. I cannot move. I cannot turn my face from the window. I see only blackness, hear only pain. Just as I think I'll explode from the pressure, the darkness goes away, stillness hugs everything. I am weightless, floating. I feel brave. My ears aren't hurting, and there is no movement or sound. I want to taste the cotton candy whiteness.

And with that thought I pop above the nothingness into a land of glory: the light to my left is no longer scary, just a smiling mellow glow. Piles of snowdrifts are below—I love snow. And the bluest, clearest sky I have ever seen spreads above as far as I can see.

I can pick up my head now. A yummy smell tickles my nose and makes my tummy growl. The grey uniformed woman appears. She looks proud of herself, like my tabby cat when he brings me a dead bird. Instead of a dead bird, she's holding a pack of peanuts. Peanuts are my favorite.

"Tommy, we are way up in the air now. Captain Jones says I can serve you a snack." She points to a cart full of sodas and goodies. "We'll soon cross over into Canada where your grandmother will be waiting at the gate for you."

I lean back with my elbows bent, hands behind my head. I stick my legs out, crossed at the ankles and smile like daddy does when it's Friday night.

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