

# GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

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Cast

Eight TO 10 Year Old Girl

65-80 Year Old woman—the girl's grandmother.

Time—Near Future

Set

Straight Back Chair

Futon Lounger

Props

3 stuffed animals, preferably old and worn

Scene opens with girl on floor lounging with her animals. Grandmother sits watching her with letter in hand.

### **Girl**

This is my friend. He's a blue whale. My Mom gave him to me on my birthday last November. He belonged to my grandmother, Grace. I never got to meet her. She died. But she left me a letter. Oh I also got this polar bear. And this elephant. I don't know their names because she didn't put them in the letter. I have to name them.

### **Grandmother** (Reading from Letter)

My dear granddaughter, these were my friends when I was a little girl. And someday they will be yours. Their very first names are a secret, only I knew them because I named them. And now my darling you must give them new names after you get to know them. And you may keep the names secret or shout them to the world.

### **Girl**

My mom told me to read up on each of my new friends. So, uh OK here goes.

(Clearly speaking memorized material, struggling with pronunciation.)

The **blue whale** (*Balaenoptera musculus*) is a marine mammal belonging to the baleen whale suborder Mysticeti. Reaching a maximum confirmed length of 98 feet and weight of 190 tons, it is the largest animal known to have ever existed.<sup>[2]</sup> Wow! That's so big. I guess I need a really big name. Maybe Mr. Humongous or Big Billy Blue or --- I don't know.

### **Grandmother**

Sweet girl. Remember that you must get to know each animal, know its nature so that the name harmonizes with that nature. Think about your own name—Jo. It means one who is curious—and oh my dear the name so fits you.

**Girl**

(Picks up Polar Bear)

I wonder what she named him. Maybe she even talked to him. I talk to my dog all the time. I mean he's not a stuffed animal, he's alive, but sometimes when I'm sad I like to hold him and talk to him. He listens. I know he does. I bet my polar bear will listen to me once he gets to know me. He's a hypercarnivore. That means he eats mostly meat—especially seals. The Inuit call him Nanuq.

Shhhhhh. I kinda like that name. ( to the bear) Maybe I'll name you Nanuq. Would you like that? Are you listening to me?

( to girl) **Grandmother**

Jo, my wee Jo, he will listen to you. I remember once, I suppose I was 5 or 6, I told him about a horrible dream I had. In the dream he was walking on the ice looking for seal, but the ice kept breaking into smaller and smaller pieces until he was adrift on a piece just big enough for him to stand on. And he called my name. I heard him. " Grace", he shouted and I woke up, filled with fear and a kind of great longing for something lost. I told him all this and he listened and I swear I heard him whisper...  
"You can save me". And I tried Jo, I did try.

**Girl**

My grandmother was a biologist. She had great adventures—all over the world. Sometimes my mother reads me something she wrote—I like the stories best. They are so exciting.  
I pretend I'm right there with her. (Sigh)

Grandmother

( to girl) I would have loved that—to have you with me. Maybe if you had been born earlier you could have...well who knows.

**Girl**

And this is the last gift from my grandmother. She told me in the letter how she got it.

**Grandmother** (reading from Letter)

I was nineteen taking a gap year before college. It was in Thailand. There was this elephant refuge where injured or abused elephants found a safe place to live out their years. As I walked out the gate a woman sat cross legged on the ground weaving an elephant with rope. I watched in fascination. Her fingers worked so quickly that I couldn't make out what she was doing and then suddenly there it was—an elephant. She held it up to me. I took it, marveling at the intricacy of it. She motioned me to keep it.

I tried to pay her for it. But she just gave me this penetrating look and made it clear that it was a gift. I always treasured it and now it is yours.

**Girl**

Now it's mine. It must be over fifty years old. I can just imagine her holding it and looking for the beginning, the end. But I have looked and I can't find them either. It just is. Someday I wish I could see a real whale, a real polar bear, a real elephant. But in school I learned there aren't any. They're extinct. I don't like that word. It's too hard to pronounce. It's sharp in my mouth like a razor. It feels like the end of something and I guess it is, like a period at the end of a sentence. But I don't like periods. I like question marks. Question marks make me feel like, like -- anything is possible.

(reading from letter) **Grandmother**

Jo when you finally get to read this, I hope you can feel my love for you though we shall never meet— except maybe in dreams. Shall we do that, meet in dreams? (Girl gives a small nod.) I want so much for you, but especially the daily grace of Nature. I regret I could not save the whales, or the polar bears, or the elephants. But just because they are gone now, do not think that they might not return. For all our destructiveness, humanity is also capable of great compassion, great ingenuity, of turning the impossible into the possible.

Remember a question hovers on the edge of the possible.

(directly to girl) And Jo you can be a part of that. Indeed you must be a part of that. Soon it will be your turn. Ask the questions; find the answers.

Girl

( turns to Grandmother, drinks her in through time and space)

I will, -- oh yes,-- I will.

End