

Do you know about your great grandfather? If I tell you now, you have to promise to sleep.

Your great grandfather built an ark, an ark so big it would hang like a wooden island in the sea. He was not a shipbuilder. There was only a dream of a big-bellied ark wide enough to carry all the animals that eat the grass, and all the birds that unthread seeds from the trees, and all the things that creep noiselessly under the fields.

The blueprints of this dream became buoyant in your great grandfather one night when he was drinking wine, and the wine loosened up the vessels of blood and there was a great flood in his brain and this ark floated to the top, a bobbing skeleton. And he said to his wife when he came into their bed, I am going to make an ark. It will hold our sons and two of all beasts. She hand-fed him bread to sponge the wine loose in his stomach.

In the morning, she woke to heat the water for tea. (Your great grandfather slept late, curled around his curdling gut.) Two elephants stood, expectant as visiting relatives, outside the door of the house, their tusks scraping the roof, shedding tiles like leaves. The tiles cracked as they fell, and the noise startled the elephants, so instead they began to pluck olives from the trees. Their bleached tusks disturbed the birds who scattered twitching in the sky. When she opened her mouth to call to her husband, there was, at that time, in that place, no word for elephant.

When your greatest grandfather woke, he knew the elephants. He dreamt them. He said to his wife, "Our guests, the elephants, have arrived. Make them breakfast." And she obeyed.

And because it is late, this is where the story ends.

Now go to sleep.