

ghost on 3rd

At dusk, with my grandpa Cecil  
and his soothsayer fishing buddy Russ,  
I am on all fours  
hunting crawlers.



They hold flashlights  
and PBR's  
as, with my tweezer-fingers,  
I wait to attack.



Don't let go, Junior, one says. That's a keeper, all right.  
I follow the light beams—back and forth,  
back and forth—attack, squeeze and pull  
until the night crawler gives  
or splits in two.

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Grandpa, it's twenty-five years later  
and I'm half a world away.  
You, skinny as hospital tissue,  
lying in a nursing home bed.  
Me, on my knees crawling in garden rows  
searching for crawlers—engulfed in dirt,  
bull snake and mosquitoes.

The last time we fished  
I had to ask for help  
to lift you from the boat onto the dock,  
bluegills and bass gone to grass carp  
the size of Harleys.



This will never end, though.  
I will take the girls.  
I will tell them about the fish hook in my mother's head.  
How I saved you from not jumping overboard—  
how we hammered fish for years.



Sleep, Grandpa, sleep.  
You are the ghost on third  
and I'm sending you  
home.

