



The Rubicon

Troy University Department of English
Student Literary Journal: Issue 2, Spring 2010

The Rubicon

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1 Poetry

The Fifth Ennead

by Eric Anderson

*You will decide on a matter,
and it will be established for you,
and light will shine on your ways.*

There exists some strange scientific truth
That says you shouldn't stare into the sun,
But how do you know it will burn unless
You try it for yourself? Does every eyeball
See the same inside a Rembrandt or a
Hidden scene, a Magic Eye? Interpretation—
The colorblind conundrum—When you see blue
I see red, but we both say yellow
Because it is the word that we've been taught.

How can you ever know what lies inside
The eyes that stare into your own? You think
They see the same colors the mirror shows
You every day? And they try to see
Inside, to pry apart the folds,
to pick your shaken, fuzzy, snow-globe brain.
They'll tip you upside down and wait for snowflakes
To float lightly to the base. But they'll never
Find the answers that they seek inside.

I'll light a candle in a dusty room,
Knowing that the light can never crawl
More than a foot in each direction, glowing
Like a dying sun whose rays can't seem
To make it down to earth. All it needs

Is one person to see it standing there,
 To enter in the dusty room, inspired
 To light candles of their own until
 The room is fully lit. Then everyone
 Will one day stand in light and know
 The colors they all see.

Until that day, they'll walk around with their eyes
 closed, afraid of glancing at the sun.
 They'll search for reason in the madness,
 For the colors in their eyes,
 And find a candle in a dusty room.

[2]

by Stephanie Fockler

Burn retinas with plasma
 Till all that's known is seen
 By the mechanical impressed eye.
 Kant snaps "no,"
 But who shapes the shaper?

I'll sit here by myself
 till it molds itself to me
 hermit shell
 a new cast of myself
 another skin
 a mask
 a spiral into me

To look no farther
 But expand
 Further
 From the center

glenn beck is talking
 about pinocchio on a bar graph

Fox was talking about something. CNN and MBC were
 chatting it up as well. Chatting up a storm. Blissful ignorance
 of ignorance and maybe if we discuss long enough
 we'll have enough words to build a world
 that followed them, static

noise whispering pitifully
 from the tv
 an eardrum
 vibration

The great human consciousness
 is jabbering on about Lindsay's dress
 And Angie's babies
 and who's an aries
 As if People and Stars
 were the new polestars
 of the voyeuristic life
 the philanthropic vibration

enough to stir a breeze

dead writers snipping in Paris
 used and returned phrases
 recycling
 the human brain
 changing a little
 but essentially the same
 from the last century
 the riviera wind
 carrying
 animosity and jealousy

The TV playing in the living room, to make the noise
 Outside dining room table talk. Dad says "What do you
 Think about it? Here's what I think." Thought as food
 To be fed. The safe meal at home; no poison from the
 Outside, while the tv murmurs

the tv's white noise
 vibrations in the air
 like the wind

saying

"Do you know what I mean? You know? What I mean?"
 not really, sorry.

During an Afternoon Walk

by Jesse Kelley

Lincoln was looking up at me;
 I picked him up. Luck is free,
 And when I flipped him upside down,
 A different rear is what I found.

"ONE CENT" he read, no museum,
 I had found an older gem.
 Upon realizing his distinction,
 I began my contemplation,

And now instead of him I held
 The story that he had to tell,
 About a pocket he called home
 Traveling where his master roamed.

But when he saw the sunny day,
 He knew that he'd been given away.
 Since the point of his conception,
 Exchanging hands was his tradition.

For seventy years, he never stopped,
 Spending time where people shopped,
 But now he is tired and old and dull.
 His value truly next to null.
 When I discovered my little friend,
 He was preparing for his end.
 To slip through a sidewalk crack,
 But unwilling to turn his back.

Throughout his life and all he saw
 He liked the sidewalk a best of all.
 George and Tom did not invade,
 Sweaty palms he could evade.

He thought in peace that he would leave,
 But then, sadly, he met me.
 So I threw him back upon the ground,
 And hoped that he would not be found.

Orpheus

by Daniel Logan

And I, being Parson, felt alone
to see the sun turn
its violet cheek

I am the kisses you gave
though unrequited
and crucified

I remember that night
You scraped the ocean floor
With weeping and with blood

(I would have you stay
unstained and afloat)

You were twice over resurrected
But the sun darkened each time,
As if to tip its hat

(We knew what would come
Of the almost-gone look back)

I plumbed those depths daily
But never found an end
The only truth being gravity
I loved you
and dove in.

Moriarty

by Daniel Logan

What I want you to do
Is smell
that old sweat
On a new brow.
Watch as the rough
wood rejoices
to be swept up in
the Woodchip Revival.

But everything about the moon

And elegant cigarette stance

And shy-sideways-sweaty-palm glance

I was never meant for maintenance, dear,
I must always pump electricity
Gasolined with intentions of infinity
But the pump don't work
And this incredible insanity
Is what I transcribed,
And wrote down furiously
Upon spying the calmly insistent morse code
Quietly tapped out by the kiss God left
On a burning sidewalk shimmer.

Divided Firmaments

by Daniel Logan

Rock Candy Night:
We know this
For we see
Aphrodite
Lick the other side
of dark Midnight Sky
with pink, lusty tongue.

The Sea weeps:
He is betrothed
to Rock Candy Night
And by the soft, pregnant
Light of dear Sister Moon
He writes wedding vows

And I'll tell you now:
Sun comes to comfort
But it is no comfort
to dry on a lonely slab of rock
As church bells ring,
And you can only eat the sky
in teaspoonfuls.

Instead, Sea traces the baby bear
Looks for gumball miracles
out of a Fortune Cookie Bible

God felt
Sea's sorrow

Pressed holy Fingers
into the blue

and with divine tenderness
made one
out of two.

Biology

by Candace Turlington

it's awkward, this sort of
induced fit,
 almost like your
substrate
 doesn't quite match my
enzyme

something is off;
 my *active site* is

defective

misshapen

if only there were
 some way to force it

we both like it rough
 but the biology's all wrong
 i forgot
 you're not a *protein*

you're just an *acid*.

2 Prose

Accompaniment

by Eric Anderson

The hum from the speakers clicked off as the young woman turned off her microphone and placed it back into the stand. The applause continued for several seconds after she vacated the stage, which was unusual, if not unheard of. She did have a pretty voice and could carry a tune, although most of the applause probably came from the blonde hair and short skirt. Still, she was good, much better than most of the people who chose to put themselves up on stage at McCormack's, braving the crowded room for a shot at fame and fortune. Too many young men picked up the microphone for practical jokes or drunken dares, turning their performances into opportunities to meet single women scattered around the bar. Then there were the ones who practiced day and night for six weeks only to forget the words the moment the spotlight hit them. But, sometimes, people got lucky too. And Joel had seen them all.

He gave the crowd a second to settle down and pulled out a box of matches and a Cohiba Siglo VI cigar. He lit it slowly, taking special care to make sure it had an even burn all the way around and then tossed the match into an ash tray on his left side. He only bought the expensive ones now, so he could light them once, leave them sitting in an ashtray for five minutes and not have to worry about them going out. With the cigar clenched neatly between his teeth, he popped his fingers one way, then the other, laid his hands lightly on his piano, and began to play.

For the most part Joel never played any song in particular. Sure, a couple of times a day he may pop out "The Entertainer" or "Maple Leaf Rag" if someone asked for it, but the rest of the time he just played whatever came to him right then, and everyone there knew it worked. McCormack's hadn't had more than five minutes of silence since Joel started playing there twenty-one years ago. His music was just as much a part of the bar as the drinks were, except his part was free.

As his hands skimmed over the keys, Joel glanced to his left where the girl from the stage was now deep in conversation with a man in a suit and an eternal grin. There were usually at least two agents around the bar every night, keeping their eyes out for unexpected talent. They'd buy the performers a drink or two and discuss their potential, pouring on the compliments until the poor kids were practically on their knees, begging them to show them the path to the good life. Occasionally one of the suits would even come talk to Joel to see how well the singer kept the tempo or followed the key. Joel always answered truthfully, because he knew that no matter how many times the men walked up to him they were never there to give him a deal. He was just the accompanist.

Another performer took his place at the edge of the stage. Joel finished up a riff and then stopped playing to give Lenny a chance to announce him. A small crowd on the front row cheered when the boy's name was called out, probably a group of Frat buddies who talked him into doing this in the first place. Joel flipped over the sheet music, glanced at it for a couple seconds, waited for a cue from the singer, and then began.

Joel understood his place in the bar. Every single person who came there knew his name, but not a single person ever came up to him after a show with a “congratulations,” or a “job well done.” If the singer was a hit, the crowd would cheer and random people would pat Joel on the back and ask him if he’d ever heard such a good singer as that. But, if the singer was bad, the crowd knew it too. Women were exempt from the rule and would usually get off with some light applause no matter how bad they were, but if a guy walked up on that stage and started wailing about some long-lost love in a smoker’s voice, things could turn ugly pretty fast.

It started with yells. Boos, loud yawns, they’d throw anything out if the guy on stage didn’t have quite the right twang in his voice to be trying that kind of song. Just like always, there was one guy, this time sitting at the bar with a half-empty beer still clutched in one hand, who started yelling for the singer to get off stage before he beat his candy-ass. This quickly divided the crowd up into the people who agreed with him and the people who thought he just needed to shut the hell up. Chairs scraped against the floor as some stood up, and then more scrapes as their friends stood up to try to get them to sit back down. By this time the guy on stage realized that his singing was not going to be taking him anywhere that night and started making his way for the back door.

At this point was when Joel decided what he wanted to happen that night. The room was his, to push or pull in whichever direction he chose. He knew that in that split second before the conflict arose, he could begin playing a soft and easy tune that floated gently around the room, calming roaring spirits and dropping lifted hands. The notes would melt away the angry words and meld the people back together into one crowd, one voice, that sat in the bar every night listening to the piano.

But that night...that night Joel decided to play faster, stronger, and more dangerous. Each chord he hit ripped through the crowd like yet another insult added onto an already heaping pile. He played both sides as they argued, giving each a voice, showing their duel in his hands. He punctuated every yell and every curse with vibrant strings of jarring notes and stopped just long enough to allow them to decide. In the moment of open silence, Joel knew what lay ahead. He knew what stretched through each man’s mind as they decided exactly what they were planning to do. But Joel decided for them, giving them no chance to back away. He punched the keys and forced the blow which threw the sides across each other. He played the crowd as the bar erupted into violent smashing sound.

The music rolled around the room, knocking over tables and throwing stools at men standing three feet away with their backs turned. Joel composed the fight, fitting in every scream and every crash with the rhythm of the song, causing the tide to rise and fall with the sway of the piano keys.

Throughout it all, the piano alone was safe from being hit. Everyone knew never to hit the piano player because he’s the only one who could ever calm them down again. And if the piano garners a strike or a glancing blow from a poorly thrown bottle, the music stops, and Joel will not play until the culprit gets bounced. A man’s own brother would toss him outside after just a few seconds of a piano-less McCormack’s.

Once he had them under control, Joel began to play with them. While one hand threw out blatant jolts of infuriating power, the other sewed subtle lines of doubt into the work. Confusion added panic into the already fevered mind of the swarming brawl. He led them around and around the room, through anger, hate, and primal fear. He knew that he could end it all, just ease up on the dissonant chords, let out the careless flowing runs and within seconds every face there would be gazing down in guilt. When he wanted to. For now, Joel was in control, and the bar was his accompaniment.

un[mistak]able itch

by Wendy Broyles

Digging his winter-rough knuckles deep into his eye sockets, he rolled over on the dingy blue carpet and caught his body lurch into a yawning stretch. Tired and bored, the only thing that would tear him away from his pillow was a sharp, unmistakable craving for nicotine, a craving that would not be ignored. Working—that’s a loose term—his weekly scholarship hours for yearbook, the day dragged. *I wish someone would schedule a damn picture*, he thought. Then, he thrust his strength into sitting up. His fingertips itched for a cigarette. Standing alone in the tiny, crowded room, he shrugged into the dark gray sweatshirt hoodie he wore every day. Half a pack of Pall Malls and a lighter in one hand, he glanced towards the black office phone, willing it to ring. *I need to do something...anything...* He sighed, stepped through the office door onto the cold ceramic tile that covered the rest of the world between him and his smoke break. It was maybe five steps from pillow to hard floor and at least forty more to fresh air.

He pushed the front door and was greeted with a burst of cool air. The cement just outside was dark from a light rain, and the air smelled cold and wet. Taking a deep breath of the crisp clean air, he already had a cigarette to his lips ready to light. Deep-seated habits are startling sometimes; he was hardly ever conscious of the action of opening the cigarette pack to take out one. Ignoring his small surprise, he cupped a hand to block the breeze and struck at the flint of his lighter. Nothing happened. He tried again. *What the hell?* Shaking the lighter a little, he could tell there was lighter fluid in it, but it wasn’t working. Juggling the defective lighter and the slightly crushed cigarette pack, he dipped into his pocket to fish out a couple more lighters.

It was during his struggle with the last lighter and a desperate thought that the only other smoker in the department had been out sick all week that she walked by. Mounds of thick red curls billowed over her shoulders. She had a round, sweet face and a dancer’s body. He had to photograph her. “Do you have a light?” he called just as she reached out a slender, pale arm to open the front door. There was almost a falter in her step. She paused before turning to respond. That moment was agony. This looked like the kind of girl who usually shook her head and kept walking, the kind of girl who really never did talk to strangers.

One hand rummaging around in her purse already, she turned away from the front door, dropping her grasp on it with reluctant surrender. Concentrating on the search, she moved towards him slowly. “See if this one works for you.” Her voice was quiet, almost fragile, as she reached out an intricately designed silver zipper.

Grasping it willingly, with smug confidence he struck at the flint, cigarette ready and heart hopeful. In the same instant and as suddenly as the happy flame burst forth to greet his waiting cigarette, came a rushing flow of memories, mingled with questions. *Emily. I remember her name. Cold soaking rain falling on the river. That’s why my lighters don’t work. Playing truth or dare. I drank so much last night. In that dirty little riverside bar just outside town. Don’t know how in hell I got home after all that.* He winced and dropped her lighter. *She doesn’t smoke. Why does she have a lighter?*

All the while, this Emily stood only a couple feet away, oblivious to any prior encounter and

looking on with nervous eyes. He knew that look especially; he had already photographed her. "I'm sorry," he breathed, bending down to pick up the fumbled lighter. The apology meant so much more than she could know, and he was only remembering pieces of last night's events. *David and I were so drunk. Photographers shouldn't use date rape drugs to photograph women, even if they are women who would never talk to us otherwise.* His mind and his pulse raced. The boys were really harmless deep down inside. They drank so much, though, and there were a couple of really beautiful girls across the room...too beautiful not to photograph. *So we took advantage of their privacy...* He couldn't possibly say anything to her now. *At least I know she got home safely enough.*

Once more, he struck his thumb against the flint of her pretty lighter. A flame danced between his cupped hand and his lips. With a snap, he closed the lighter and returned it to her delicate hand. He hesitated at her touch. The soft flesh of her hand sharpened his newly refreshed memory. *Some questions will never have answers.* He let her go with that thought in mind. *Maybe it's best you don't know...Maybe we shouldn't do this anymore.* Then, he focused on taking a drag of his long-awaited cigarette. Full of the comforting warmth of addiction satisfied, he thanked her. "Thank you." *Thank you for letting me take your picture.*

Blushing slightly, she jerked a dismissive shrug and smiled for the first time he'd ever seen. "No problem." And then she turned and walked away into the building.

In a cloud of smoke and confusion, he finished his cigarette. Tossing it aside, he moved to return to the yearbook office, but not unscathed. This would certainly leave a mark on his conscience. *Smoker. Photographer. Addiction is a definition.* He mused on the way back inside. The office seemed so much smaller upon his return. *Maybe the truth is always disappointing. My heart is bitter,* he thought with dismay. *I've never regretted something I've done like this. We've done it so many times...the alcohol and the improv photo sessions.* Wide awake now, at least he had something to do. He laid his lighters on the carpet to dry out and prepared to finish his latest roll of film so he could develop the pictures...

Later that afternoon, he took the pictures over to Dave's apartment. Dave was working on a huge painting for some class. "What's up, man? How you feelin' today?"

"I want you to look at these." He dropped the stack of photos on the table beside Dave's paints. Dave set down his brush and palette and picked up the pictures.

"You developed them without me." It was not a question, though Dave's face looked as if he'd just asked a what's-your-favorite-color breed of question. He flipped through the photos slowly, admiring them. He glanced up between pictures a couple of times, trying to read his friend's expression. "These are really good. Our best yet, I think." Dave paused, mid flip. He glared. "What's wrong with you?"

"I saw Emily today. The red head. She was nice to me. Let me borrow her lighter. We can't do this anymore, Dave."

Dave's eyes flashed. He smiled. "You gettin' a conscience on me? We didn't do anything wrong.

They let us take their picture."

"They were drugged."

"It's not like we raped them. We just took some pictures. That's what photographers do. We take pictures. We didn't do anything wrong." Dave was getting condescending in his tone. "Beautiful women are made to be photographed. We didn't really have a choice. Someone else would have done it sooner or later and not done so well as we did." Now Dave was getting defensive. "Look at these photographs! Damn it! These women are beautiful!"

"I don't want to argue about this, Dave. I just want you to know I can't do it anymore. I think I understand now why some civilizations believe the camera steals your soul." He took the photos from Dave's hand and moved towards the door. "You can go without me tonight."

He left Dave looking after him dumbstruck and drove home, knowing Dave would never have the guts to go without him. Determined to find all the evidence of nights like last night, he dug through the drawers of his bedroom dresser. He found photographs of some forty different girls. There was a juried art show coming up in the department, and he wanted this habit broken. *These girls go to school with us. Someone will see the pictures who knows one of them. It will end.* They were all beautiful pictures, after all. He was suddenly willing to sacrifice himself for the protection of other girls' privacy. *Maybe a conscience is a good thing. It's not healthy to scratch the itch, no matter how good it feels.*

Famous Last Words

by Jesse Kelley

He lay there voluntarily.

He had rather enjoyed the last day of his life.

They could have made this more comfortable, he thought, the straps cutting into his legs on the table and his arms on the extensions, which held them perpendicular to his body. His left arm palm up.

His mind, exploring itself, remembered his mother cleaning off his badly scraped and bleeding knee after he wrecked his bicycle in the driveway; she was so careful and comforting; just her smell made his knee quit throbbing.

His dad laughed when he pulled his first channel cat out of the small pond adjacent to the dirt road by his grandparents'; he nearly fell in. *Dad*. He wanted to call out to his father but didn't know if the glass on the opposite side of the room was sound proof. *It probably is*.

Around him stood the man in the white coat, the officers by the door, the priest he had spent the day with. He liked the priest best, probably because he knew him the least. The guards mocked him daily; a life sentence here would have been as bad as hell. He was glad he was only going to have to endure one.

The man in the white coat stood over him.

His heart pounding, just like it did the day of the murder, he closed his eyes and saw his mother on top of Bill. He jumped when the needle touched his skin. *How could you do this to Dad?* He plunged the knife into Bill and into his mother, *how could you do this to us?* He looked to the left and saw that half the contents to the needle were inside him, he saw blood on his hands. He smiled.

Son of a bitch, Bill. His heart began beating irregularly. He smelled his mother. *I had to do it...*

"I love you, Dad."

At the Well

by Cody Muzio

The boy was hungry, but he didn't have time to stop and eat breakfast. He glanced at the clock and saw that he had overslept already and was worried about being late to church, so he hurried to get dressed and decided he could live with his hunger until lunch. It was better than being one of those people who were always late, after all. He didn't want to walk in to have everyone stare at him. As far back as he could remember, he had never been late to church, and he had no intention of starting today. He threw on a green shirt and khaki pants and rushed out the door to wait at his car for the rest of his family.

The woman had taken her time to dress as beautifully as she could. She had gotten up early that morning so she could eat her breakfast and shower, pick out her nicest clothes for the morning, iron out the wrinkles, get dressed, and put on her makeup. When she was ready, she made sure all the dogs were in their crates, locked up the doors, and headed out to her son's black Toyota sedan ready for worship. The drive to church was pleasant enough. Her daughter was in an unusually amiable mood, and her son didn't say much, so there was little drama. She was still nervous about her son's driving; she wished she could drive to church on Sunday mornings, but her vision prevented that. She was legally blind. She saw well enough to pick out your face from a few feet away, and to tell whether your clothes matched, but her sight kept her from driving or reading books or being able to watch a movie from the couch with her family. It was something she had lived with for long enough, though, that she was used to the disadvantages and hardly noticed anymore. It was still early morning and the sun was rising. She loved the bright morning sun, as it reminded her of God, but she was distracted from her thoughts as her son spoke up. "Ah, I can't see!" he cried, the sun filling his eyes. She responded gently as always, "I believe if you cover your eyes you'll be able to see better," as she made a gesture to show her right hand shading her eyes from the sun's rays. His lack of sense worried her sometimes, but it wasn't a long drive, so she didn't concern herself much.

He pulled into the church parking lot and slipped into his favorite spot before anyone else grabbed it. It was a regular parking spot strangely placed in the middle of a series of handicapped spaces, so, obviously, he felt it was designed just for him. He claimed the spot any chance he had and liked to tease a few of the adults about getting it before they could. He shut off the engine and climbed out of the car, leaving his Bible in the back seat, and walking towards the youth's classroom for Sunday school. He was a freshman in college, but he still attended the high school classes at church, as he fancied himself a sort of "assistant teacher." He sat in his chair by the teacher and looked at the kids during the lesson, interjecting his thoughts wherever he saw the opportunity. He didn't much enjoy talking, but he loved having things to say, so he spoke out anyway. He halfway listened to the teacher as he talked about faith; he had heard all about Abraham's faith, and how Jesus spoke about it when performing his miracles, but it still all seemed vague. When the lesson was finally over, the teacher asked him to pray, and as he always did, he looked around the room restlessly for a moment, before beginning. "Lord, God, I pray that you be with us and help us to see you in a new way from what we've been taught today and show us more about yourself in the service, as well. Amen." It was the same prayer he always prayed, but it sufficed.

She left her Sunday school class feeling encouraged. The class had been led by a very wise man and had discussed all manner of doctrine, from God's grace to Christian hedonism. She milled around the church hallways, chatting with everybody she met, laughing, joking, and discussing the events of her daily life with people she loved to see. Sunday mornings were always one of the highlights of her week. She spoke with people she hadn't seen in months, and she spoke with people she'd never seen, and she spoke with people she hadn't seen since Friday. It

was all the same. When it was time, she made her way to the sanctuary to enjoy the service. The new pianist the church had hired was lovely, and even though she didn't much care for the choir's singing, she did like the look of that big, blue wall of robes behind the pulpit. The music had started, and her husband, the pastor, was standing up to welcome everybody. She gave the room one final look over to survey the crowd before she sat back to soak in the sermon and noticed her son walking in late with the rest of the teenagers and sitting in the back of the sanctuary.

He sat down in the back row by his friends like he always did. He knew this was the perfect spot because he could hear the message just enough that he would never be forced to listen. He paid attention enough to know to stand when the songs were sung, and to clap when the choir finished, but whenever he could, he would pass notes or text his friends or doodle on the bulletins. From time to time he would look up to make sure his dad wasn't watching him from the pulpit and then would resume his attempts at killing the time. His faith had always meant a lot to him, but it was something he usually avoided unless he had no other choice. He had always known, though, that somehow it was the thing that tied his life together; if that chord was ever severed, he would lose everything. So he always made sure to catch at least a few points of every sermon, even if it probably wasn't worth his full attention. He picked up pieces of the message, but nothing struck him until his dad began reading out of chapter nine in the Gospel of John. The boy listened as his father spoke of Jesus healing a man who was born blind. Jesus spit in the mud, rubbed it over the man's eyes, and sent him to bathe; when he did, the man could see. This captivated the boy. The pastor went on to talk about the Pharisees, but the boy didn't care. He sat and thought about what Jesus had done, and what that man must have felt. He thought all about it. He wondered if Jesus had smeared the mud all over his eyes, or just his eyelids. He wondered why the man just sat there and let some guy rub mud on his face. He wondered how the man knew that he was seeing, and how one would describe sight to someone born without it. Soon enough, the service was over, though, and the boy stood and stretched and did what he could to be seen by as few people as possible.

His mother, also, hurried along, and after cheerfully greeting a few more elderly church members, she trotted off to meet her son in the parking lot so she could get home to fix lunch. The drive was short and quiet; her daughter was still at the church and was going home with friends. She could see her son was distracted, but his driving wasn't affected, so she didn't feel the need to say anything. She needed to focus on what she would make for lunch, anyway. Her son parked at the curb, and she struggled to find the unlock button for her door, and after a few seconds of feeling around the panel found it and got out of the car. She climbed the steep driveway, tripping slightly a few times, and waited at the front porch for her son to come unlock the door. He did and went straight up to his room. She went to the kitchen, instead, to begin putting together her signature shrimp Creole dish. She put on a CD and sang along to the hymns and praise songs about the beauty of Christ and her own redemption. She was singing loudly and couldn't hear much else but was enjoying herself and made stirring the sauce an enjoyable experience. When she had all the ingredients in, and it was well stirred, she let the pot boil on the stove and sat at her computer. She pulled up her Facebook and posted a short update about how much she loved her husband's sermon that morning, ending it with, "Praise the Lord!" as she was known to do. She clicked "Post," spun around in her chair, and closed her eyes just in time to feel a thick, cold, gritty ooze smeared across her eyelids.

"Keep your eyes closed and go wash it off!" He yelled and she obeyed, assuming something had spilled by accident and would burn her eyes if she opened them. She ran into the bath connected to her bedroom and felt around to turn the faucet on. She cupped her hands beneath the faucet and splashed her eyes repeatedly with the cool water to get as much of the harmful slime off before she wiped it with her hand towel. When she had, she opened her eyes about halfway and blinked rapidly, as she tried to rid herself of any specks that may have been left. By memory, she walked back to her computer desk in the kitchen and sat down with her hands still clearing off her eyes. She began to ask what had happened, but as she groped for her glasses,

found them, put them on, squinted, and moved close to the screen so she could read her own status update, she cut herself short at the realization that she couldn't see it. It wasn't too small, but rather too blurry. She couldn't read a thing on the page. She quickly spun around in a panic wondering if what had gotten in her eyes had made her vision worse. With tears welling up, she asked what was spilled, but there was no answer. She took off her glasses to wipe her eyes, and looked up, seeing her son. She saw him as if he were just born. She could suddenly see every teenage zit on his face, the fact that the haircut his dad had given him was uneven, the freckle on his lip, and the button that was missing from his collared shirt. Her tears of panic stopped momentarily before bursting from her eyes, and she felt him embrace her. The hug was warm and tight and as she bawled, he sniffed up tears of his own, as well. They had not hugged this way since he was small and had been lost for several hours in the woods outside their house.

The boy watched as the news traveled quickly. He saw the story capture readers on the internet, and he heard the phone ringing at all hours from people wanting to congratulate his mother or ask how her life had changed. He saw television crews in and out of his house and heard radio broadcasts detailing the story on all stations. He went to every interview and answered every question with pride and a beaming face. He was satisfied. The story of the legally blind mother miraculously healed by her son and a handful of mud was a worldwide sensation. As the weeks went by, the story stayed popular and phenomenal; he even saw T-shirts about the event on sale at the local Wal-Mart. When the boy saw these, he knew; to be on a T-shirt, this was fame. His life had changed. He was the most popular student at his university. He could get anything for free, and there were always people around him now to hang out with. His family got along better, his girlfriend seemed to love him more; all about him, things were looking up, far more than ever they had done before. His family would gather around the TV every night and flip through news channels just to see how many mentions were made of the story, and what the opinions were. It was almost a month after the fateful Sunday, when the most important broadcast was made, though. Watching with his family, the boy saw an international team of acclaimed medical scientists and biologists explain how the saliva of people with certain physical characteristics could instantly cure many forms of clinical vision loss when mixed with common soil. There had been studies made and experiments conducted and facts proven. Devastated as he was, the boy could not argue. He was not special; he had simply been lucky. Medical science was forever improved, but he saw he had gained nothing from it all now. His eyes fogged up and he couldn't see clearly. He left the couch disheartened, stumbled up the stairs to his bedroom, and closed the door.

His mother, too, understood the biological and chemical explanations given on the news station for the miracle. She didn't care, though. She had been healed, and her Lord was the maker of miracles. She gave thanks and rejoiced with song and dancing and praised the name of God.

He turned on his computer and pulled up an online radio station. He set it to Joan Osborne and lay down on his bed. He didn't think. He couldn't think any more. He couldn't see anymore. His mind was gone and so were his eyes, and he was glad of both. He didn't want anything to do with either. His thoughts were blank, and so was his face. He turned up his music to drown out the sound of "Amazing Grace" blasting from his mother's stereo speakers, shut off his brain and slept. He had nothing left but the sounds; and these were not worth keeping.

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