

In my extremity

by [Mary Moore Easter](#) in the [February 26, 2020](#) issue

—addressing *Eliza Winston*, Mississippi slave escaped to freedom in Minnesota, 1860

There you were, Eliza,
gold from God in plain sight

No one had picked you up
wiped the muck from the landscape of your face.

Gold, I tell you, left for me to find,
to polish. I won't say *to own*—

we've had enough of that.

I'm no colonizer of your shores,
no conqueror to whom you must submit,

rather, a mirror that reflects what it sees—
the you that was me, the background that was your time

the spaces surrounding you where I'd rummage
and find my own things.

Only grace could have offered
this circumstance to me:

the overlooked coin of the realm, a prize
for the one who picks it up,

recognizes a value previously unimagined.
I feel anointed by the discovery of you

a realm at the beck and call of all that is fertile in me,
my feet untethered to walk your fields

climb the mountains

embossed under the black of your golden face.

The old folks would shout: *Do! Jesus!*