

Ananias of Damascus

by [Tania Runyan](#) in the [October 3, 2012](#) issue

Saul, you thug who once dragged
believers through the streets,

flinging them from their beds so hard
their arms popped from their sockets,

how like a dying child you look,
your stomach caved in from fasting,

lips blistered with fevered prayer.
You reach into the darkness, trembling

from the exhaustion of reliving
the scene: *The light shot out of the sky—*

*no, it flared from the stones—no,
Jesus, your hair was on fire—*

God spoke to me, too, which is why
I stand at your bedside now and beseech

the Spirit to enter. He loves to appear
in the lonely, dank rooms of the faithful:

Noah, Mary, Abraham, all sweating out
their dreams of God. You will learn

how hard belief can be. You will sing
while the guards whip you to the bone,

touch an enemy's shoulder with grace
while the avenging knife burns at your hip.

One day you will wish for your sickbed again,
this woolen blanket of blindness.

But I do as I am told. I lay my fingertips
on your lids, and your eyes rumble

like stones rolling from the grave. Your lids
creak open, and the light burns through.

This healing is not easy. Something silver
is falling from your eyes. Brother, something

like the scales of a struggling fish
is scattering at my feet.