

## An Indulgence

by [Suzanne Underwood Rhodes](#) in the [February 2024](#) issue  
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*It is impossible that the son of these tears should perish.*  
—*St. Monica, mother of Augustine of Hippo*

I use the wide knife blade  
as he taught me to crush the garlic clove  
  
and toss it in with vegetables and olive oil  
letting my hands feel their skins and shapes  
  
and slickness, the same hands that bathed  
and oiled him when he was too small to stand,  
  
as I bathe him now with tears in his fall  
an ocean away and can't command them, running  
  
stupidly into my bowl of squash and onions,  
for tears are not of this world, nor do they heed  
  
a mother's will to set things right, like setting the table  
or making a grocery list, or saying, "Don't look back."  
  
The past cruelly presses on us all,  
but just now, at my granite counter,  
  
let me savor the pungence  
of one crushed clove.