**Something Miraculous**

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“What will you do now that all your glass is gone?” My daughter was six months old when she said that, causing me to almost drop the glass Virgin Mary figurine I’d been polishing. It was Saturday and she and I were alone together, my wife working at the bank.

“Did you say something, Honey?” I said. She stared at me with milky-blue eyes, an oddly serious look on her face, as if she was trying to decide how comfortable she felt around me. Her voice had sounded stoic and mature. It reminded me a bit of my wife’s.

I decided I must be hearing things. My wife had told me recently I needed to have more “confidence” around our baby.

My daughter said her second words the next Saturday. I was pushing her stroller down a jogging path around the artificial lake when that same voice said, “I love you very much, Daddy.”

I spun the stroller around, faster than I probably should have, but I was so excited to look at her. I had the distinct sensation I was looking at a miracle.

“What was that, Sweetie?” I said. “Would you please say it again?”

She just grinned a toothless grin, but, somehow, her inability (or refusal) to say it again made me love her even more.

Picking her up and kissing her, I said, “I love you, too, Sweetheart.” A heron performed a perfect loop-de-loop over the artificial lake.

The next Saturday I sat on the couch, my little girl in her baby swing again. My wife wouldn’t take the day off work because she didn’t believe me when I told her about our daughter’s gift. So I patiently waited for the big moment with my smartphone’s video camera ready.

Then, a little after noon, my daughter spoke her third set of words.

She said, “I’m sorry Mommy divorced you.”

A cold breeze graced the back of my neck through an open window. I have no memory of opening it.

“That will never happen,” I said. But her eyes seemed as uncomprehending as a parakeet’s. I knew I shouldn’t have, but I played back the video one time. Ten minutes of nothing before her little lips started to move, forming perfectly around each word, like she’d been practicing for years. Then, my shrill, panicked voice off-camera, and her face not moving at all in response to my own words. I deleted it from my phone.

My daughter’s episodes went on for a few more weeks.

“They should have fixed that traffic light before there was an accident.”

“I don’t want to go to the father-daughter dance this year.”

“I can’t believe the Cubs won the World Series.”

“Everyone is laughing at you behind your back.”

“Shannon is such a *bitch*.”

I began covering my ears whenever her mouth started to move, even when it wasn’t Saturday. I must have made scary faces around her because she started to cry more often. My wife didn’t like that, and she started sleeping on the couch because she didn’t like the way I thrashed in my sleep.

But then my daughter stopped. I waited for her next utterance, but her “first” word came when she was fifteen months old. It was “Mama.”