

Slime Me

by Tim Jones-Yelvington

Abner was a child who wanted to get slimed. He hungered for the spread of slime across his skin, his favorite the viscous kind that crept to cover, coat, encase. He oozed homemade do-it-yourself Mad Scientist slime though his fingers and hoped someone would cover him in goop.

He invited his best friend Elmer to play. A bit of booger always glistened beneath Elmer's nose, beckoned to Abner. How Abner longed for such an affliction! He watched Elmer lift his elbow and smother his booger with shirt. No! No! No! he thought, The waste! Wipe it on *me*. Drip it on *me*. Press your finger against your nostril and blow, blow hard in my direction.

He handed Elmer a cup of slime, lay on the floor and pulled up his shirt, exposed his taut tummy.

"Slime me," he said.

"Huh?"

"Slime me."

"I don't know how."

Abner looked up, hopeful, remembered the television show he watched where every time the actors said "I don't know," slime fell from the sky and slimed them.

He perched on his elbows, showed Elmer how to tip the cup.

"Now you try."

"I don't know..."

Abner thought about a different television show, where crime-fighting cartoon turtles got captured and chained to platforms beneath slowly descending slime. It was his favorite episode. He'd later wrapped shoelaces around his action figures and coated their heads and bodies in goey green. He'd often scanned the channels in search of a rerun.

He pulled a bandana from his pocket and handed it to Elmer.

"Tie my hands," he said. "That way I can't escape."

"Maybe I should ask my mom first," Elmer said. "What if it's a sin?"

Elmer's parents were evangelicals. He'd brought Abner to numerous vacation bible schools where clergy plied children with relay races then called them to the altar to accept Jesus into their hearts.

"It's not a sin," Abner said. "Even Jesus liked slime. I read it in Corinthians."

Elmer scrunched his nose. A fresh booger inched forward, and Abner's pulse quickened.

"No he didn't. You're lying."

"Please," Abner said. "Slime me."

"I can't," Elmer said. "I'm sorry, I can't."

"Please."

Elmer whipped his head around.

"I think I heard a horn honk," Elmer said, though Abner hadn't heard a thing. "I think it's my mom."

Elmer shuttled out the door, slammed it behind him. Abner got up, ran to the door and pressed his hands against the glass. He saw Elmer at the end of the block, disappearing behind a bush.

Abner pushed through the door.

"Wait!" Abner called. "Elmer!"

He chased Elmer around the block and down another, around a corner, through an alley, calling, "Elmer!"

Finally, he lost him at a four-way intersection.

Abner hunched, slapped his hands against his thighs, tried to breathe. He had an idea.

Abner ran, as quick as he could run, to Elmer's house, a good fifteen minutes from the intersection, even running. He stopped several times, out of breath, walked a block or two, continued to run. He sat down on Elmer's porch, certain he must have arrived before Elmer.

He waited. His chest still pounded. Where was Elmer? He waited some more. He tried to focus on the slime, how it would feel when Elmer at last poured it over him, how it would creep across his skin.

He waited, still no Elmer. He stood up and walked around the side of the house. Elmer's bedroom window was too high to see into. Abner grabbed a chair from the backyard patio and climbed up. Elmer's blinds were drawn, but Abner thought he saw a flicker of motion through a crack.

"Elmer!" he shouted. "Elmer!"

"Abner?"

Elmer's mother stood where the house curved toward the front porch. She was wearing an apron.

"Abner, what are you doing here?"

Abner climbed off the chair.

"I'm- I- I was waiting for Elmer," he said. He looked at his feet and wanted to run in the other direction. "He left something at my house."

"Elmer came home twenty minutes ago," Elmer's mother said. Her voice was cheerful, but edged with suspicion. Abner remembered the stories Elmer told about getting punished, cleaning out the gutters. "Would you like me to go inside and get him?"

Abner nodded. He followed Elmer's mother to the front porch, where he waited while she went inside.

"I'm sorry," Elmer's mother said, when she returned. "Elmer says he isn't feeling well. Why don't you give me whatever he left behind."

Abner felt inside his pockets, but all he felt was his cup of slime. His cheeks grew hot. Facing Elmer's mother, he felt suddenly shamed by the one thing he wanted to do.

"I guess I forgot it," he mumbled.

"I'm sorry?"

"I forgot it," he said again, a bit louder.

"If you do not speak up, child, the Lord won't hear you."

"I- FOR- GOT- IT!"

"Now Abner," said Elmer's mother, sternly. "You needn't raise your voice."

Abner turned and ran as far as he could run and then kept running, until he collapsed panting in somebody's yard, his back

against a boulder. He wheezed. He thought he might cry. He fingered the cup of slime inside his pocket, removed it. He pulled up his shirt and held the cup above his navel. He tipped the cup. He watched the slime glob on its edge, then slowly drip. He felt it touch, a little sticky. But it wasn't enough, would never be enough, if he knew when the slime was coming and where it would fall. "Elmer," Abner said. He looked at the sky. "Slime me," he said to the sky, then, "I don't know," because he didn't, he really didn't know.

