

*Excerpted From A Transcendental Journey: Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition
by Stephen Evans*

“There are qualities that belong to a place, that inhabit its essence and mark it in the memory. The quality of this bluff was Blue.

Blue has many names: azure, sapphire, navy, even cornflower. I have never seen a cornflower, or any blue flower for that matter. But cornflower blue I can picture in my mind: draw a luster from the earth, blend in sunlight, sift in moonlight.

What I saw from the bluff was not any blue I could imagine: not azure nor sapphire nor navy nor cornflower. Even now, when I close my eyes, I can't picture it. But I can remember how it felt, dodging my eyes and seeping unfiltered through the pores of my skin: Blueness, essence of Blue, narcotic Blue. Manifest Blue. True Blue. Transcendental Blue.

But there were two blues, not one.

We see the sky as blue because the blue electromagnetic waves of sunlight are shorter and are scattered more easily by the dust in the atmosphere. But nothing about this blue seemed scattered nor did sunlight seem required. Standing there, I realized that I had never truly seen a blue sky before. A stain had been washed from the stratosphere. Blue shone through.

Bodies of water are blue when they reflect the sky. But the Missouri had a different recipe that day, independent of the firmament above. Take a sea, fold it over and over and over like a translucent sheet, then glaze it in a tawny bed of grass. That is Missouri Blue.

Go to the Missouri River crossing.

Stand on the bluff on a cloudless day.

Blue lives there.”