

If you had been here, Lord

by [Mark Goad](#) in the [May 28, 2014](#) issue

Back a week from the grave. He pecks at the food his sisters set before him. He is afraid to sleep. He imagines the eyes of everyone upon him but they are careful not to stare, a meaningless courtesy: the midday sun consumes both sight and soul. His funeral shroud is unburnt—he won't allow it—but his sisters refuse to permit its being brought into the house. Sometimes they catch him holding it to his face and weeping into it. It smells so foully that not even the crows will approach it. He rarely speaks but sometimes talks of going away. It is almost, to their shame, to be wished for.