

Nearing Lazarus' tomb

by [Laura Wang](#) in the [June 25, 2014](#) issue

He'd seen it all. Swathes of nothingness  
spun into stars, the slapping of the first fin onto land,  
and now these creatures, by far the cleverest  
and the saddest—though listing it that way  
felt faulty, as if all happenings unfurled inch by inch  
instead of blooming in one cacophony,  
the apple crumpling just outside the city walls.

And it wasn't even an apple, or fig,  
or pomegranate glinting with infernal seeds,  
though he'd accommodate their legends,  
accept provisional truths, the same way *they* worked  
with the earth un-sphered and stilled  
in leaf-thin sketch.

To overlook

imprecision in the premises, concede  
to the limits of both flesh and paper,  
was what it meant to translate, as to love.  
Which struck him as strange pottery:  
roll everything that's been into a coil  
and score it with each day; cram self into cage  
of clay and bone; daub their closed eyes in slip  
and wait for it to flake off to new sight. It seemed to take  
what they called a lifetime.

But they didn't have that, not right here,  
beside the village known as House-of-Misery  
whose people rent their clothes. Before he even spoke  
Mary's tears were falling warm onto his feet,  
carving clear trails through the coat of dust.

*If you had been here.* He stood  
enveloped in the sound of all their moans,  
entangled in her locks of dampening hair.

*If you had been here.* All grief's audacity  
pitched in her splintering voice, she raised her head  
to look at him, and in her water-darkened eyes  
he who'd seen all things felt this:  
pain's veil dividing *now* from everything  
that is not-now. And he began to weep.