

Balaam in the stable

by [Laura Wang](#) in the [May 8, 2019](#) issue

These days, though I stuff her manger  
with the softest thistles, fill her trough  
with dawn-clear water, it's not enough  
to coax her from her quiet. Tears, anger—  
both bring forth the same mild stare.

Side-eyes from the women at the well  
accompany their whispers as they tell  
*of that mad prophet standing there,  
crazier since the time he heard  
his donkey also speak.*

Unkind,

but not untruthful; once behind  
the stable doors, I start the absurd  
ritual of begging: *Say what you saw  
before I saw it, all those years ago.*  
*Look! See my foot with one skewed toe,  
my shin scarred where you scraped it raw  
against the wall. Speak of God who bound  
and unbound both our tongues; sweet, prove  
I'm not alone.* She shifts her hooves  
but otherwise makes no sound.

*Is she mute? Or choosing not to talk?*