

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?