

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.