

Neighbor

by [Jeanne Murray Walker](#) in the [February 21, 2006](#) issue

You've gone AWOL and only
Jesus can bring you back, not this
poem that I began with the lie
that we can overhear your laughter,
not hubris or tears and rain.
You are an ocean who's left
the nest of earth I thought you'd promised
not to. The sky who folded up
your blue tent and took off.

What remained, they packed off
to flame. Before the day we sat
to make your legend in the church,
I could almost feel your curious, dare-
devil spirit peel itself from the wall
of death like a cartoon character
and bop out to explore. So tell me
what you learned. Is it possible
to breathe astral, heavenly air?

And tell me. Was it worth it?—
all that sturm und drang you pitched
against our brother Death who'd rather
work in secret—swelling, hemorrhage,
collision of blood cells, collusion
over charts, snarled traffic of the body,
roads under construction, accident,
the rampage of doctors to prevent
the clever kleptomaniac from winning
as long as possible. He could only
steal your body. Which I miss, it's true,

oh god, true. The screen door you
banged every afternoon, now silent.