

The butterfly doesn't know where she is in her thousand-mile migration

by [Jeanne Murray Walker](#) in the [October 31, 2012](#) issue

When the monarch can finally trust herself  
to look, she sees nothing but bright motion  
down there, a brilliant heave, spinning shelf  
on spinning shelf, the tons of pouring ocean.

And one island. She plummets down to calm  
on dune grass, her stomach filled with a bright mob  
of eggs, her wings a brilliant stab at finding them  
(please God) someplace to hatch, her brain a-throb

with greedy hope. But oh, the sky's a rile  
of wind against her, yowling and enraged.  
If she could pray, she'd say—clinging, clinging—

I'm tired, God. You watch the world awhile.  
She sleeps, while the sun, stuck in the ribcage  
of a bare tree, mutters, *Spring, spring.*