

# 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.