

Perspective

by [Jeanne Murray Walker](#) in the [July 11, 2006](#) issue

In medieval paintings, the cobbler stood just inches high
beside the saints, who rose like water towers,
until Brunelleschi thought up single point perspective,

and proved it, lines receding to a speck on the horizon.

Once people saw it, they couldn't forget:
the statues and churches kneeling to just one lover.

How thrilling! To stand at the commanding point.

Each of us at the center! It's the great
myth of the personal. Dutiful art teachers swung

the myth in buckets to the next teachers
until generations later, it bears
the heft of Truth. That is, it did, until the night

I drove the death car, when the sky slit open
to admit two headlights, double moons
drilling larger and larger holes through darkness

as they bore their terrible gift, two thousand pounds
of metal toward me, and suddenly I saw the flaw
in Brunelleschi's myth of the personal. Which of us

can bear to hold the whole world on his lap?

I swerved then, or something swerved me,
spinning the steel off center so the car did not kill me.

Instead, I floated briefly, picking the lock of the improbable,
feeling like a patron suspended
in a medieval painting—that one wearing

his everyday red hat and blue cloak,
keeping his face businesslike,
trying not to say *AhHa* as he strides up the golden sky.