

Poem about the Environment

by [Jeanne Murray Walker](#) in the [May 2024](#) issue

Published on April 19, 2024

I have written the awful poem to rescue nature,  
a poem that starts: *Alaska's melting.*

The poem walks like a toddler wielding an axe.

It exaggerates. *After which our houses will burn.*

The poem becomes a stunt woman, changing shapes  
and definitions. It wants to be all things to all  
people. It becomes an ancient seeing-eye dog,  
trembling and sniffing the methane we can't ever  
call back, methane that escapes the permafrost.

*Are you listening yet?*

the poem asks. *By the time we see  
it's personal, we'll be doomed.*

*Attention*, the poem calls. *Attention.*

The poem wants to be a book of safety matches.  
Drag your match across its gritty strip: a blaze of worry  
leaps in you, but not enough to stop a forest fire.

The poem is all faithfulness. It believes  
in miracles, the budding of a lily in the human heart,  
the mountain moved, one spoonful at a time.