

The sign

by [Jeanne Murray Walker](#) in the [May 31, 2011](#) issue

Give me a sign, I pray, and then I see
For Sale (Price Reduced) and smile
at the Almighty's roguish sense of humor,

thinking how he must adore us skeptics,
stretching out his carpenter's hands
to let St. Thomas probe the nail holes,

stick his finger deep in the bleeding gash,
feel the spiky bones and fly through
that little space to faith. Two thousand years

bereft of Jesus' body, I need a sign,
although I wonder, could any sign nail down for good
how a God-man walked this curving earth?

And anyway, concerning signs, how childlike
my belief in narrative, as if the question's
always first, and then the answer leaps

in perfect sequence. Sequence, which is nothing
but time's lackey! So I give up narrative,
however lovely to look around—but I worry.

Where? Suppose the sign arrived last week,
for instance, that spider threading sunlight by our garage,
that writhing knot of fire? Or last spring

in Carol's row of jewel-like tulips. Suppose
it was that rag of human song blown by
as we wandered Bleeker Street with Charlie,

just back from war. Or the muffled cracking
as my body breaks beneath the press of time.
Not this, not that—I admit,

I'm down to rummaging the world
for nail holes. Maybe to list what's missing
is to begin to understand what's here.