

THE HISTORY OF FLIGHT

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I pull one hand free
and then manage the other,
grasp the nearest fragment
and crawl out of the wreckage
to be simply here again, on the ground.
It never fails to surprise me
that such huge contraptions
are so breakable, so fragile.
Like the *Hindenburg*,
that huge shape of disaster,
couldn't they tell it looked like a bomb?
My ship here, or what remains, wanted to fly,
so I thought.
Maybe not, maybe all designs like this
relish their own explosive ends,
each one grander than the next.

I don't mind the mopping up,
the post mortem with hundreds of men
in black overalls and caps
pawing the trash,
delighted and obscene.
I don't mind being at rest, on the ground,
even if it seems piecemeal,

fragmented,
that's just a delusion.
All my pleasant structure,
twisted to no pattern,
is unified by common gravity,
by the simple fact of hitting earth.
Force and counterforce decide
what shape should fly and what,
with some drastic revision,
becomes simplified matter.

I walk away, accustomed to
the slightly burnt odor of my clothes
and the charred look I've taken on.
Someone hands me a piece of paper,
and someone else grins and slips me a pencil,
no bromides, just the implication.
But I refuse, I will draw no more straight lines,
making three dimensions out of two.
Plate riveted to plate deceives itself—
physics don't matter—the thing takes on
a mind of its own, a life, a death wish.
I love flying, but the machinery
gets in the way—birds fly
because they grow wings and
fall into the air, and I, falling,
become part of the air,
no object.
No more design, I will balance on the edge,
close my eyes and take the fall
with a single motion, nothing else.