FRANCIS BLESSINGTON
HOT AIR BALLOON

The mountainous surges suggest the idea of innumerable dumb gigantic fiends struggling in impotent agony. In a night such as is this to me, a man lives—lives a whole century of ordinary life—nor would I forego this rapturous delight for that of a whole century of ordinary existence.

—Edgar Allan Poe

Only elevation is real.
A fan blows cold life into the languid nylon “envelope” coated with sealer blue with white stars breathing lying on the level grass like a ragbag for children to race through. The black load tapes tighten. The top vent swings like a tethered bird upright. Spring-loaded valves sizzle, propane liquid gasifies to jet lifting us, a carnival of air, beyond
well-wishers, family below in diminuendo.

We buoy with convections
like
a soap bubble streaming, no possible steerage.
Unfixed
by wings and puffed by windage, we
heat
upward to twenty five hundred.
Twelve
thousand, we would use oxygen. Continued, our gas bag
dies.
My daughter watches the pilot’s fireproof
gloves
relent and cooling lower us.

Matt and Krista just
married
stand with us breathless hovering atop a
tree.
Never have we been
here,
supreme silence, a basket car cresting a green unmovable
sea.

We scud a cloud
river
and deploy with the smoke of
cloud.
We feel no moving but invade new air
control-less
along our horizon, aeronauts
with
a solo pilot, who must
not
go into cardiac
arrest,
pumping the fire
dragons:
“A pilot ends up in a tree or
will.”
An early ballooner carried
champagne
to appease random
landings
upon the startled peasants’
pitchforks:
six miles per hour to
hell.

No, shrouds won’t steer
away
that mountain’s wet sheen.

Propane
propane, propane the burners
hiss.
Seven seconds and we
lift
and wave to strangers below our
blessings,
our shadow on the greenery like a great
earring,
motionless--unless you fix a
tree.
We rise to sparrow hawk and
gull.

--Doldrums.
We nose up for air.
Nada.
We feel for ground
cat’s-paws.
“Hardly ever breathless days.” Something always
expires.
Almost below a blue gleam, a
pool.
Time: we must drop.
We alarm the condos who wander to help.
Down in seconds we five are but ballast
bounce gentle twice on our car’s skids.
Out we press out the cooled wind.
My daughter winds up the gas skin
like a sleeping bag. We truck
basket and bag and vanish. Our only legacy:
champagne in a condo mailbox,
like a little corpse.