

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 balloonner 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.