

AIR FORCE CONTRACTOR

The new man actually tried to work hard.

The veterans stared at him as if he were insane.
"Don't KILL the job!" they screamed.
They turned off his machine
and rolled his toolbox to the other end of the building.

The veterans were masters
at acting as if they were working.
They tapped parts
and studied indicators
and tightened and loosened and retightened bolts
hour after hour after hour,
accomplishing nothing.

Such consummate acting
was a skill that would take the new man years
to learn.

MAKING THE WORLD'S MOST ADVANCED BOMBER

The operators tried to make the machines
guide the half-ton bomber parts
into the razor-sharp cutters.

The old, worn-out machines rocked
as if they were about to tip over
under the weight of the bomber parts.
Gears ground and engines smoked
as the machines knocked and rattled inside,
starting and stopping without warning.

The foreman paced the aisles with terror in his eyes.

The operators avoided the machines.
They read newspapers in the bathroom,
shuffled back and forth from the vending machines,
and ran their fingers through piles
of old, stripped T-bolts

as they wondered what Goodstone Aircraft Company was doing
with the money
from its billion-dollar Air Force contract.