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CONCORDE FLIGHT NEW YORK TO LONDON

The big jet rises and the hostess says:
"Champagne sir?" — past Nantucket,
the sound barrier, out into the Atlantic.

Two old men, silent in their seats,
think of home, Sydney, spring rain,
wallflowers beginning to flood
garden beds and how, fifty years back,
they took off to bomb Leipzig —
"save the world" — from Hitler.

They remember the primitive cold fuselage
of Lancasters, snow on the wingtips,
stars in the night sky, fear,
the run-in and fires — and under them
the crumpled drum beat of the bombs.

One of them wants to go back
to being nineteen years old, hands
smooth as gunbarrels, hands
to guard secrets, speak for him,
form words, say as a mouth does
"Please do not"

Wherever they are they know
a wolf's skeleton, near them,
clothed in a dry skin,
marked them, and will all others.

Through Mach 1, 60,000 feet.
There are gold hills, old stones as well,
carried in the mind —
the Concorde's fuselage cold,
the young hand touching a shoulder — voice
smooth, polite — "Canapés sir? Bollinger?"

PRISCILLA WHITE'S LUNCHEON PARTY

The guests in the drawing room began
talking. Caught in the silence of old
furniture, they had waited
for a signal from the other side of the door —
so still a maid might have whisked them
off a chair or a sofa
with an ostrich tail duster — not one
eyelash would have moved.

Suddenly the signal, caught by each,
ran wildfire sentences together.
Did you read that the Prime Minister died
in his dreamless sleep? Rosemary White
had three children at the same time —
someone else died, I've forgotten his name,
a niece born on the Horn of Africa — birds
migrating — lemons ripe in Seville.

Somehow all the pieces of their conversation
made sense to the tables and chairs.
There was an Art Deco water color, a Siren
playing a sitar, in a blue pastel gown flowing
around her like seawater — Everyone looked —
Silence — a feel of wavelets on the feet,
sandcastles subsiding as the tide
played its "touch and tell" game with the truth.

At 5PM the front door closed on the last guest.
A half-eaten biscuit was on a plate, a glass of Chardonnay
untouched, warned "Do not disturb the disorder" —
statements about children and husbands,
the latest BMW's ABS brakes. Fragments of speech
no one will ever decipher — and the seawater coming
and going — tides brushing away sandcastles, Rosemary
White, Seville — a feeling no one was here.

ENCOUNTER WITH A FOX WHEN I WAS 10

I remember the red fox
on a hill right at dawn —
I had come there to inspect
the rabbit traps I set