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# The Age of Reason

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he'd croon to the barmaids  
along our long route home

forgetting, even as he said it  
that all that lovely meat

was spoiling in the car.  
But I remembered. I knew

the trouble we were in.  
I could already see us

opening the bloody packages—  
our poor brains, our testicles

smelling up the whole kitchen  
again, and in the sorry face

of all my father's promises  
to come home early, sober

a fine example for his son  
a good husband for a change

one of those smart guys  
who knew all about meat.

## The Age of Reason

Once, my father got invited  
by an almost perfect stranger

a four hundred pound alcoholic  
who bought the drinks all day

to go really flying sometime  
sightseeing in his Piper Cub

and my father said *perfect!*  
Tomorrow was my birthday

I'd be seven years old, a chip  
off the old daredevil himself

and we'd love to go flying.  
We'd even bring a case of beer.

My father weighed two-fifty  
two-seventy-five in those days

the beer weighed something  
the ice, the cooler. I weighed

practically nothing: forty-five  
maybe fifty pounds at the most—

just enough to make me nervous.  
Where were the parachutes? Who

was this guy? Then suddenly  
there we were, lumbering

down a bumpy, too short runway  
and headed for a fence . . .

*Holy Shit!* my father shouts  
and that's it, all we need

by way of the miraculous  
to lift us in a twinkling

over everything—fence, trees  
and powerline. What a birthday!

We were really flying now . . .  
We were probably high enough

to have another beer in fact,  
high enough to see Belle Isle

the Waterworks, Packard's  
and the Chrysler plant.

We could even see our own  
bug-sized house down there

our own backyard, smaller  
than a chewed down thumbnail.

We wondered if my mother  
was taking down the laundry

and if she'd wave . . . Lightning  
trembled in the thunderheads

above Belle Isle. Altitude:  
2500, air speed: one-twenty

but the fuel gauge I noticed  
quivered right on empty . . .

I'd reached the age of reason.  
Our pilot lit a big cigar.