

JOHN HODGEN

Poem To Be Read at 30,000 Feet

The plane went into the bay, like a rock, simple as that.
It dipped, plopped, chunked, like a sheep somehow dropped from the sky.
Or like the Golden Fleece lifted out from the dock, high over the Argo,
then the winch giving way, ergo, the way a star goes out, a faulty indicator light.
The pilots must have gone blind in the swarming fog, the camisoled night,
each one just before impact, smithereens, like the two boys they used to be,
each having gone into his parents' closet in the dark, into the mystery,
each trying on the long coat of the father, wide-eyed. Each passenger
on the hook as well, bloody ignorant (of so much, the bright arc of their lives,
the ocean's blinding swell), before they went in, sluicing like a cormorant,
before they were poleaxed, bollixed, Pollocked to the underside.
Look at them. One in the midst of wiping the mote from his eye, fully engaged.
One popping her ears. One finding her shoe. One coughing, mid-sentence,
mid-litotes, his company, his high hopes sadly in arrears. One gazing, dully,
at a travel magazine. One blissfully asleep, mouth open as the sun's.
Another hung over, hammered, hands to his head. All of them, fore and aft,
like shepherds sore afraid amidst angels floating above them, regal and daft,
none of them knowing what their lives had come to, each breath a permanent
fatal error, a malfunction of surprise and demands. None of them knowing
they were made from the stars, none of them knowing how remarkable you are,
what you mean to me (Lover, Dear Reader), how you hold this poem like my face
in your hands, each of us drifting through the fog to the sea.