

Flying With Father

RAWDON TOMLINSON

He'd brake rudder, handling
the throttle and mixture, our ears
thrumming, tail lifting
like a wasp's, wheat blowing flush—

the shadow of the fuselage
raced green like a big fish
running shallows; then he pulled it up
into the sun, a magician;
my fear, his power:

The little town disappeared
with mice-teeth headstones,
playground bully, work, Jesus,
its streets running into fields
to the horizon.

He'd shout over the droning
for me to take control: I kept
the needle on the mark
that showed the wings balanced—
it wasn't his fault; he knew
there were no instruments—
"Look. You're flying."

Once, we got trapped
in clouds above highwires,
lucky enough to follow a road,
working hard together
to find an opening
that wouldn't close.