

Life and Death

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Why do pilots talk and joke of death?
It is because we experience it so often
Twice, or ten times over in a single flight
As real as hell, avoided only by climbing toward heaven

Or life and death each day in competition
Death in a barren lifeless valley, and . . .
life again, with the next launch

We see the death of a close friend
(a cloud, or the sun)
and know we will see them again, alive

We die ourselves, slowly
as we drive home from the airport
knowing we will live again in a few days
Our bright, winged thoroughbreds live and die
moving from coffin to cloud and back, at our hands

We joke but we know
that if the sky should see the death of us
it will smile... for it knows that we too will be reborn
somewhere in the clouds