It is dawn along the Hudson, more reflecting Pool than tidal estuary here, some 300 miles From its shy beginning, set within a gasp Of Adirondack cliffs, working its way South from Lake Tear of the Clouds. Would that all our mornings were given This way: hushed, a slight breeze sent Wafting along the shore, its tumbled rocks Awash from the ambivalent pulse of the sea, Its ebb and flow felt in Manhattan’s Battery. The mourning doves’ keening wail Is buried by the lilt of a single song sparrow. A solitary man sculls his way to the Tappan Zee, his gunmetal hair a halo of broken Light, seeming to give birth to the peregrine Falcon bursting skyward, only to return To hover a flailing oar’s length away, To cast a shadowy wingspan onto the rower Cowered in his shell, watching it climb In wide circles, riding thermals, fresh Kill in mind, just for the sport of it: one, Two, three miles high, setting a holding Pattern, eyeing his prey below. A white-throated swift, drifting, unaware Of her last strokes on Earth. As the slate-gray falcon, sleek as an F-16, Cups its wings, pierces the air at 240. And plucks her out of flight, talons Snapping her spine, as he shakes her loose, sending what remains to splash Close to the sculler heading for shore, Wondering whether the sky is serene Once again, as he takes his daily commute To Vesey Street, finding himself at Calder’s Bent Propeller, touching it for luck as he Does every work day, sending him back to Nam where the habit began, patting The unbent propellers just to make sure, Before climbing into the cockpit of his Skyraider to fly off into combat, a snapshot Of his wife taped above the G-2 compass, But today as usual, he is walking The courtyard toward his office, often kept In clouds, the tower he has come to call Tuning Fork Two, its cladding shimmering In the blazing sunlight. The elevator gives Off a deathly glow, always has. Settled now Behind his desk, that same picture smiling Back at his touch, he flips open the first file Of the day to see what client 223ER wants From him this Tuesday, and instead runs His early morning backwards, to the falcon And the way it dive-bombed him before Soaring off to its eyrie, safe atop the west Tower of the bridge, searching the open sky, all the way to Haverstraw where a 767 is roaring in, its crazed hijacker flat-hatting it, wobbling 500 feet above water, jinking every which way, the falcon long gone as the bent one revs the engines to 465 10,000 gallons of fuel sloshing in its tanks, just 4 minutes from target. the sculler will feel the jolt in his corner office and raise his head, see a fireball blasting from the other tower, windows shattering, sheets of paper filling the air people choosing free fall, a flame, some holding hands as they step out into the grave, as the last 12 minutes of 18 spend themselves away, the p.a. announcement clearing the air: “an accident, a plane, next door, this building secure.” his wife calls, begs him to come home, he’ll leave early; he puts her picture in his shirt pocket, and freezes as he sees an airliner rounding the Statue of Liberty heading for his window.

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