

Spaceship.

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Simply cut along the dotted lines, glue to flash cards, and reshuffle:

The spaceship will never grow old and die.
When it reaches the end, it will grow younger,

until finally its algorithms metastasize
into smoke rings around the ball bearings,

until finally it is what comes before the baby -
cluster bombs and hand grenades.

The spaceship is not a submarine
out to inseminate some whale.
Its solar panels need burning planets
like the one it left behind.

When the spaceship is finally empty,
even of the space inside,

it will join the other bits of junk,
the satellites whose signals

stack to a point of origin
that no longer registers dreams.

The spaceship solves the problem of space
by putting a grid over its facelessness

and mapping everything for the binary
computer printouts of white noise

and the occasional erratic conflict
like marriage or blood sacrifice.

The spaceship longs to become a star
flayed of its skin, transformed by fire.

but there is a madness in loving space,
fold upon fold of emptiness.

But there are no hummingbirds
to slice the tangelo.

Spill a drink and you'll swim
like a fish to ogle each pearl.

If you cut yourself with a knife,
you can waltz a circle of blood
around your throat.

And your body will yearn
for the good old days
when gravity held everything together.

The spaceship is the voice of the future
after travelling through electromagnetic fields
that fried its database.

After all the libraries had been burned,
the spaceship is a golden sarcophagus
without any responsibility toward the past.

Only the physically fit
will be allowed on board,
only the winners of beauty pageants
cunning enough to murder everything in sight.

Does a spaceship have eyes?
Too many to name.

Does a spaceship glow in the dark?
There is no safety in numbers.

The spaceship is a ship
of infinite space.

If space came before light,
then what the spaceship contains
must resemble what contains the spaceship.

If light came before space,
then the beauty of the spaceship would be all.

Inside the spaceship, you can hear
flies in the petrie dishes.

Inside the spaceship, you can see
a blizzard of goosefeather down.

The food is decompressed paste,
the taste of apple without the apple.

The weapons on board are useless.
They work only against animate matter.

No one thought to include perfumed mists,
a bottle of wine, and love,

the deadliest companion to beg
for a little mercy.

The spaceship is nearly there,
wherever there may be,

having shed its cocoon of booster rockets
while riding the edge of each planet's gravity

like a slingshot light years off galaxies
avoiding the pockmarked black holes.

In this way, the spaceship will always be
nearly there, wherever there may be.

If the spaceship sneezes,
rust will germinate beside the hangdog

oxygen masks that can still remember
human sweat in the absence of air.

But if space sneezes,
then all the zeros will abruptly roll over.

Here is a replica of the spaceship

made by the intersection of laser beams.

It almost looks real.

Fueled by nuclear waste, it steams
at what remains of human beings -

their holograms pressed between leaves
of a golden notebook.

Flip the right switch, home movies
and golden oldies will warm the spaceship

until the loss of all those people
becomes too overwhelming a cruelty.

No longer a silver cigar case
attached by a wire to the ceiling,

no longer a discus for the newly
elected father figures,

but particles of light
desperate to dance

wherever they land -
call it soul.

Before a spaceship could take off,
there had to be a reason to leave this one.
Try drinking the air, they sing,
try breathing the water.

Does the spaceship replace
the human beings who built it?

Of course it does, just as the telephone
replaces the touch of lips,

or the television replaces reading,
or the radio replaces seeing.

The spaceship replaces everything,
each out of place in its own place.

The spaceship in space
is a bullet aching to be a pearl,

moving so fast, it slows down
and hangs suspended in the mouth of space,

directionless, hoping to be saved
by something more than we are.

Does there have to be a monster on board,
creaking on its wheels over the track
with the pulleys visible? Or are we
monsters enough toward each other?

Before a spaceship could land,
something would have to break its fall:

zombies, perhaps, or what the conquerors
will classify as subhuman.

The spaceship tries on different sizes of space
until one fits and we bolt forward

beyond the weight of memory and the guilt
of being born without wings.

To repair a spaceship, you will need
rubber bands, paper clips,
bobby pins, chewing gum,
and lots of ingenuity.
