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## Safety: Past and Present

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## SAFETY: PAST AND PRESENT

*Mark Brittain*

### I. B-52s

I was five when God thundered  
From California skies and out of Pratt & Whitney engines  
To carry dads across the ocean to protect us.

Monkey bars were the best place to watch the take-offs  
That spawned vibrations from the hot summer metal  
Through jeans into guts to dance through our lungs  
And rise in echoing exultant shrieks.

A sister, fourteen, good as grown-up,  
Told us where they went, our fathers and God,  
And what happened to mothers and children over there.  
What if the others had planes, too? She left us, sad.

The chaplain explained, and moms and teachers,  
Only soldiers died, and that was good enough.  
So we went to sister's room and tore her

Doors poster from the wall in our own thundering shouts.

### II. Street Scene

It shouted in marquee language,  
"SNOWING SOON"  
Sign of the sale-crazy auto dealer.

Twenty-first century seer  
Prophesying white blanket profits  
From his SUV inventory, for safety's sake.

The rear-view exposed swaying crescents,  
The kid's heads, barely cresting the seat back,  
And I wondered if I was letting them down.

We're bad parents, I told my wife,  
They deserve more from us and I pointed  
To the oracle as we passed.

First, try driving the speed limit  
She commanded and laughed  
Into the night.