Aircraft

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Too frail for combat, he stood before an interrupted wing, playing with an idea, nothing serious. Afternoons, the hall gaped with aluminum glaring, flying toward the sun; now though, first thing in the morning, there was only gray sheen and chatter from the robust women around him and the bolt waiting for his rivetter's five second blast.

The night before in the dark of the peanut gallery, he listened to blouses shifting and sniffed magnolias, white tongues of remorse sinking into the earth. Then the newsreel leapt forward into war.

Why frail? Why not simply family man? Why wings, when women with fingers no smaller than his dabbled in the gnarled intelligence of an engine?

And if he gave just a four second blast, or three? Reflection was such a bloodless light. After lunch, they would bathe in fire.