

## The Improbability of Flight

**flight** *n.* **1** the action or process of flying. **2** an uninhibited mental journey. **3** the action of fleeing - ORIGIN OE *flyht.* of Gmc origin; rel. to **FLY**.

(From: *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*)

Daedalus threads fine string through barbs of spiny feathers.  
From large to small, the countless downy pieces interlock  
as he pulls tight the cord, closes gaps: surgically precise.

He is making a hybrid wing with Nature's guidance and  
(he hopes) the gods' blessing  
for his impossible task:

*To balance in the ether's furthest reach,  
craft shelter from the sun's relentless glare,  
the cruel shafts of glinting glass that prick  
the subtly softening gaps, reveal the stink of melting wax.*

And as he secretly toils he wonders: Who is in his workshop now?  
Caught like a fly behind his prison window,  
Daedalus looks down on Cretan cobbled streets.  
Who has seen the sign upon his empty workshop door  
and palmed his favourite tools, perhaps balancing  
a sleek-handled plane in his hand, watching how  
the light strikes the scrubbed deal bench of a late afternoon,  
breathing in the sparkling dust  
that belongs, by rights, to *him*?

But more pressing thoughts than these are rife:  
How to make his son feel the gravity  
of their situation? To heed the danger, rampant-rumoured  
in the taverns, and the drip drip drip of small truths  
that the gods let fly? To sense the growing fears of Minos  
settling in the eaves above their heads like shadow-roosting crows,  
and to agree to leave this earth, casting all  
upon his father's 'flight of fancy'?

As a temple bell tolls on a distant hilltop, Daedalus hesitates:  
Could the physics all be wrong? Surely not.  
He is the master craftsman,  
the one they've always trusted and  
the King's former right-hand man.

Has he not tested the wings again and again,  
fighting leaden-armed fatigue with thoughts of freedom, and flight, and -  
let us not be coy here - some little fame, perhaps?  
Yes, in one fell swoop, he could win back his boy  
and save them both from ignominious Crete.  
This is not hollow hubris  
but destiny, he's sure.

So the craftsman makes ready,  
melts wax 'til the air is heavy with its musk-laden scent.  
But with every turn of the wrist, he struggles  
to cast off doubts, to see Icarus soar  
above the roofs, while the city beneath them  
disappears.