

Dorn Septet, rhyme abacded, meter 5435345

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630/983-5499 "Air Traffic Personnel Resign in Protest, FAA
Insists System is Adequate"

--caption, Chicago Tribune

CONTROLLER

Today will be his final day. Today
the screen will not go home with him,
will not cast blips astray
throughout his troubled thoughts, awake, asleep.
Forget the box of wires
too old for constant overloads,
the fragments of blown whistles, little fires

he lit beneath their apathy, the static
of officialdom-- to hell with it,
he tells himself. His attic
clear of chaos, he will walk away,
forget the scope, the strain, the weather.
His mind replays a recent night--
how cursing close the blips had come together

when he went blind and silent, and his voice
acquired an edge as if to pierce
the pilots' phones. No choice
in his remembering the iced sweat bath
before his sound and sight
were backup-patched. Now, two airliners
near a wayward Piper in his light.

Three planes, a quick synapse away from trouble,
a rain squall filling up his glass,
they speed across his bubble
parenthesized by left and right brain, judgment
held between. These dots
are why he's giving up the job,
a part of his own viscera, these spots.

He vectors them through mazes drawn on time,
each factor hung on unseen threads,
on fallible junctures, rhyme.
He prays against a failure-- mechanical
or mortal-- calls the courses,
covers odds with everything
he's got, his skill, his cells, his inner forces.

Wet turbulence outside repeats on skin.
His data banks project four million
flights this year, a spin
of numbers winging past the warning signs.
Round brightness claims him now,
his eyes burn only for these three--
for whom he knows he must provide the how.