

Noe Venable, Aren't Captives

The pilot of the 747 couldn't stop thinking about the young pilot whose voice he'd heard over the radio.
In his hotel room that evening he imagined the successful water landing.
The torn plane sank down into the light eating water, a rope came worming down from above,
The young pilot was choking on freezing salt, until he was scrambling into a harness,
Until he was airborne, lifted for the first time since childhood without the womb of walls around him.
In childhood there were hands to lift him, now there are ropes, and machines that plow water and spray
Dangling, salvaged. Limp. Live weight. Whale bait. Living meat. He's waving! Alive.
Now upward to dry deck and cheering strangers.

The next day when he got to the airport for his next flight, the pilot of the 747 heard about the young pilot.
Crashing into the ocean after his cessna lost oil pressure.
This was the man whose voice had kept him flipping back through the channels to listen.
The voice had kept its balance as the slow descent began.
The strange limbo of a man who has time to think about it.
A man who has twenty minutes until question mark.
Until life or question mark? And the pilot of the 747 remembered the young pilots words.
The sky against the roofs. The warm rain in summer. His girl. Her favorite dress. Blue.
Air conditioned. She is translucent in the light. She is soft and white.

The children they would have someday together.
She told him, they're always there, towing along behind us, like balloons tied to our ankles.
They aren't captives, just clouds. Only clouds.

He was thinking of you. Of you.
And blue. And aren't captives, tied to our ankles