

Unlike Antoine Lavoisier

Here is where it all goes wrong:
You've got twenty teams in perimeter

at the site of the bombing, boy,
quartered on the cloverleaf overpass

unable to see each other, some
local men start a scrap fire for tea

as if the world billowing from dust
is nothing new, squatting, while police

hover at the government building
unsure if they should blame themselves.

The blast, northwest of the bypass,
blooded ventricle, you've shut down

traffic, make them go around, pump them,
compress, suck, the flares sputter for

flat, safe landing, and slowly for the dead
a flight medic drapes and zips the bags.

Anticipation, rather than reaction, one team
must sacrifice its Igloo, ice and all; off

to find when the wrecker rolls it,
an experiment unlike blinking in the sand.



—Capt. Benjamin Buchholz, U.S. Army
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Antoine Lavoisier (1743–1794), the “Father of Modern Chemistry,” figured out combinations of chemical reactions involving oxygen that greatly improved the production of gunpowder. In 1794, Lavoisier was sent to the guillotine by Robespierre. Legend has it that Lavoisier arranged one last experiment before his execution; after the blade fell, he would blink his eyes as long as he could, so that his assistant might determine how long a man could retain consciousness after beheading. Lavoisier supposedly blinked between fifteen and twenty times.