

Ultralight Backpackers

They brag like six-year-olds.

My base weight is lighter than yours!

It's no longer just sawn-off toothbrush handles
and margins cut off the topo maps.

Now it's a single titanium pot
to boil water for a freeze-dried meal
eaten from the bag with titanium spork.
Still hungry? Drink some olive oil.

Goodbye, white gas and Optimus cookstove
with your brassy good looks and fiery roar.
Denatured alcohol in a soda-can bottom now
quietly heats the water to hydrate the food.

Five squares of toilet paper a day. Who needs more?
Flashlights stay home—
hands-free headlamps the size of horse chestnuts
grow from foreheads to create all the necessary glow.

Ditch the tent. A tarp's all you need.
And the mosquitoes? Sleep with a headnet on.
Wear earplugs so you don't hear them.
Camp on ridges' windward sides.

The ultralights breeze past on the trail,
swift as trail runners, as we plod onward weighted
with what's *needed* for the wind, rain, impalings,
burns, and fractures my daughter and I might suffer.

Instead of water bottles they carry plastic bladders
which curl into the size of a cigar with the weight
of a butterfly. They flutter past into a carefree dream
of eternal sunshine, warm breezes, and soft starlit nights.