

Lesson 4

READ THIS STORY #1, Basic

Risky Business

Why did I think that I needed to experience jumping out of an airplane? I suppose it's because I like to do challenging and adventurous stuff. The brochure said that anyone could learn the proper technique in a few hours.

The instructor was quite brusque. It was obvious that this was serious business. The trick, he said, is to learn how to land properly. I practiced jumping from a platform and rolling as I hit the ground.

I tried to appear nonchalant as I was strapped into my parachute. I even danced a little arabesque, but the instructor was not amused. Suddenly I recalled every article I had ever read about someone plunging to the ground when their parachute failed to open. I even remembered hearing about one poor soul who became tangled in the lines of his chute.

But I dutifully boarded the aircraft. It looked like an antique, and it reeked with the smell of oil and gasoline.

When it was my turn, I jumped out the door. When I pulled the cord, I felt a major jolt. Then the air transformed my parachute into a huge balloon. My landing was a bit rough, but I'll do better next time.