

2005-2006
CBC Writing Competition
Grand Prize Winner

Senior Level Entry
Category: Poetry (set of three poems)
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Predator/prey

Undiscovered he waits, in anxious anticipation
He watches
Enveloped in the curves of ferns and branches
The greenery-foliage thick and raw in his nose
Dark-hot scents of exotic flowers, velvet-skinned fruits and wild chartreuse plants
Intoxicating his senses but not
So much that he forgets.

There is a reason he is here
Once, too far behind him to be of consequence
It was to see things, to be away
From work and cash and voices and worry.
To forget a past of chaos and calamity
He came here tainted but clean, now tainted and tainted
He is Machiavellian:
Feared, talked about, rarely seen, as he is now,

Waiting undiscovered in the dark-hot foliage. As he is now,
Watching the ravenous tiger devour its prey
Oblivious to its own fate
But if only he knew, mutters the voice of the man
Rough and hardened by time
And a self-satisfied chuckle, gravelly and murky still
From last night's liquid poison.
His calloused palms perspire holding the gun so close
To his body and he's grazing the trigger and
His forearm's shaking slightly and
The bullet's in the barrel and
That bastard doesn't know
What's coming now.

**Riding To My Brother's State Basketball Game In a Van With Six Middle-Aged Women,
Five of Them Teachers**

I am in the back seat, far right—
Reading Kurt Vonnegut.
Next to me is my mother.

To her left is a single thirty something woman
Who will not shut up For The Love Of God
About eating strawberry shortcake as a child
And spending Thanksgiving alone
And the difference
Between the peanut butters
In mini peanut butter cups and regular.
And she's eating vanilla wafers
And saying how if a gunman came
To her (small, private, Christian) school
She would be putting herself in harm's way
By locking the classroom door from the outside.

In the middle row
Is a woman with jowls
And tiny kind eyes
And a woman with a funny name
And a funny voice
Who likes Kurt Vonnegut.

In the passenger seat sits a woman
I don't know,
But she gets carsick
And is taking my legroom.

The driver is a woman I have known for several years
But not really,
And in her reflected eyes in the rearview mirror
There are memories and regrets
Of a twenty something son who loves Star Trek

And has never had a girlfriend,
An ex-husband who left
For a younger thinner woman he knocked up
Who isn't pretty,
An adopted daughter who lost her life to meth
And her baby son to the State,

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A father who passed away last month
And one younger son who just might be the one to make it.

As I look at these women—
And Hope to God I never become like them—
I wonder if they think about how they got here,
If this is how they planned for their lives to become:

Single, wrinkled, carsick, and broken
Riding in a van with each other
And me in the back seat, far right—

His Coat Jacket

The low grumble of a museum intercom echoes
As he watches the smooth-flecked marble of the ancient
Statue, hard to the touch but soft
To the eye, a nonchalant expression of contentment strewn
On its face, hinting to miles of travel and miles
Of time; the days of a calendar many
And fleeting, yet the stone still stands
The same.

He feels the dull ache of hunger
Beckon, and softly dismisses it. Memories of her
Flicker back like filtered light—some pieces
Trapped. Gripping the half-broken miniature in his coat jacket
Pocket, he stops and checks the hands of his worn leather watch. It is painful
To stay but he is afraid not to. He sees
A janitor, and leaves for the dark
Anonymity of the parking lot.

