

## An Old Man and a Boy

An old man rouses from sweet sleep,  
Eggs over easy, buttered toast, marmalade,  
Orange juice and coffee black,  
Dons a ribbon-laden, double breasted jacket,  
Gives the little wife a peck on the cheek.  
A brisk walk to a chauffeured car,  
Sits back, briefcase at his side,  
Commutes a well-trodden path  
Past gray monuments guarded by wind-whipped flags,  
To an oddly-shaped building with a war room.

Colludes with other old men around a monitor,  
Moves men, ships, and munitions  
Like a croupier moves chips on a craps table,  
Orders black ops ten thousand miles away,  
In deserts, mountains, jungles, and cities.  
A light lunch, counting calories,  
Washing hands in the executive washroom,  
Dries on a soft white linen towel.  
Tips smiling Sam who brushes his shoulders.  
An obedient sun begins an orderly retreat  
Trailing yellow, orange, maroon, purple, and gray.  
Tidies up his desk, shuts down the computer.  
Some lights never blink; his lights snap off.  
The same straight-backed monuments  
On the opposite side this trip.  
Strolls in to spouse and fillet mignon,  
Feeds dogs and fantail goldfish,  
Catches up on the news and wanders to the bedroom.  
Sleeps the sleep of innocents.

On the opposite side of the circle,  
A well-trained machine boards transport.  
Charges mach speed to a nameless target.  
A grim lieutenant, baby-face blackened,  
Code name: Panda, His wife's idea,  
Flips through a mental album Of her and Annie  
Who started kindergarten today.  
A blood memory nauseates him,  
But he holds it down.  
Night vision goggles ready,  
Knife hilt above its scabbard.

Re-checking the full magazine,  
Fingers the trigger on his weapon.  
Hovering three feet above earth,  
In a sand storm raised by rotor blades,  
**Go! Go! Go!**

Charging through open courtyard,  
A horizontal hailstorm of lead,  
Bullets ripping human flesh,  
Acrid stench of gunpowder.  
Pockmarked walls, a woman covering herself,  
A wide-eyed, blood splattered child  
Holding a doll by its arm at her side.  
A slaughter house filling up with fresh meat,  
Grabbing papers, computers, notebooks.  
A door hurtles open.  
A sudden burst of automatic fire.  
Bullets spraying the room.  
Shooter's finger locked on firing mechanism.  
Weapon dancing like a wild marionette.  
Enemy shredded; Panda down.  
Men, panting like bears in heat,  
Hurry Panda to the Chinook.  
Blood gushes from his wound  
Like a mountain spring turned red.  
Sargent: **Getusouttahere!**