



An Old Man & a Young Man

An old man rises from sweet sleep.
Eggs over easy, buttered toast, marmalade,
Orange juice and black coffee.
Dons a ribbon-laden, double-breasted jacket,
Gives the little wife a peck on the cheek,
Walks briskly 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,
Drying on a soft white linen towel.
Tips smiling Sam, who brushes his shoulders,
Tidies up his desk, shuts down his computer.

The sun trails yellow, orange, maroon.
Past 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 unit 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.
An unexpected 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 sandstorm raised by rotor blades,
Go! Go! Go!
Charging through the open courtyard,
A horizontal hailstorm of lead,
Bullets ripping human flesh,
Acrid stench of gunpowder.

Grabbing papers, computers, notebooks.
Pockmarked walls, a woman covering herself,
A wide-eyed, blood-splattered child
Holding a doll by its arm at her side.
A slaughterhouse filling up with fresh meat.

A door hurtles open.
A sudden burst of automatic fire,
Bullets spraying the room.
Shooter's finger locked on firing mechanism,

The weapon dancing like a marionette.
Enemy shredded.



Panda down!
Men panting like bears in heat
Hurry Panda to the Chinook.
Blood like a mountain spring
Gushes from his wound.
Sargent: Getusoutthere!