

A Tiger Lurks in the Night Forest

This Christmas, even icicles,
Like lampreys riding a tiger shark's belly,
Fastened to the base of his frozen heart,
Don't drip; their glistening, irregular shapes
Are truth's saber-toothed tiger teeth
Jutting from his imagination's gaping jaws, snarling face,
Threatening to consume the entire universe
Within reach of his reflexes' awesome claws.

Those of us nearest to him, old friends,
Divorced wife, grown children,
Former business associates, know better,
Won't risk rousing the drowsing beast in him,
Especially during this hysterical season.
Whether it's high noon or edging toward twilight,
We avoid all shortcuts through the forest,
Choose the perimeter road home.

Even when we're safely abed, we know he's roaming, stalking,
Gnawing his next new unsuspecting victim
With deathless precision—it's those icicle teeth
That descend and penetrate prey
Like the Penal Colony's needle-bed contraption.
Thank God some few of us have survived
To issue this admonition: beware this Christmas
Of anyone fitting this description; his kiss is fatal.

LOUIS DANIEL BRODSKY