

Senior Division, Poetry

Michelle Clemens, St. John's

Ready, Aim (an excerpt)

It is a leather strap about three feet long.

It is double layered and padded,

for comfort while carrying,

For holding position when firing.

He points out the impressions in leather.

A goose, a hawk, a caribou, a rabbit.

"You are supposed to snare those", he chuckles.

"But I had an opportunity, so I shot instead."

The stencil image in the leather, a testament to his kills.

He dropped this on the desk.

A visual message for

his son's teacher.

Sitting now the boy's mother and the boy

quiet in his anger – smarting from yesterday's injury.

The mother, here still.

eyes down while she listens, waiting for permission.

"I have killed every one of those." He smiles.

"Not sure what I will add next."

He looks at me and waits.

"Lots of room on the belt yet," he says.

Shall we begin?

He had lashed out in anger

Someone was hurt. A call for consequences.

"It should be the same. He asked for it. They always do."

This a classroom. A safe space. There is policy.

He needs to learn that is not what we do in a place we call school.

"No girl, you need to learn."/