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Visitant

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The Visitant

Mike Vanden Bosch

I step off the schoolbus and see him digging dirt
in our stubble. A badger, I think, remembering my
cousin's stuffed badger trophy. I run for Dad's
410 shotgun—this badger will be my bounty as I

tell jealous pals at school tomorrow: "I grabbed
dad's shotgun, popped in a shell, waited for him
to back out of his hole—then one shot and it
was all over—nailed him in the chest—one shot."

But as I cross the fence, the badger backs out, sees
me, and waddles off through oats stubble. I shoot,
winging him—a wound I can't let go. I chase, cursing
my useless single-shot 410, fearing I'll lose him, but

he is dragging his hind leg, me three steps behind
when he turns on me, baring his teeth as if to say,
"Come and get me, biped. With my fangs, I'll take
blood for blood." I step back, swap my gun for a

club to attack the bleeding beast. Her eyes cry for
reason: "Could you not share one square foot of
your farm with me and my pups?" Her question burns
and my bullet won't stop it. I bury my trophy in mud.

**This poem was published in the 2001 issue of Lyrical Iowa.*