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## To a Mountain Lion

Robert Cooperman

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**Robert Cooperman**

**To a Mountain Lion**

To a mountain lion, if it moves  
and breathes and it's not a bear,  
it's food: like me that turquoise  
Colorado day I barely noticed  
the trailhead warning sign  
before digging my legs  
into the uphill slope, blissfully  
snapping photos along the way  
for my out-of-town wife:  
scenes of the alchemical aspens,  
wind-driven gold.

I'd stashed my second empty  
water bottle when my bladder  
drummed like a thumping hare,  
but I knew, just knew,  
something big was panting  
behind me, the direction  
cougars prefer to attack from.

I wheeled: to shout, wave my arms  
above my head, fling anything  
hard and heavy, to hit and kick and bite.  
Nothing was there. But that sign  
had finally worked its splinter into my brain.

All the way back I heard something  
stalking me, its breaths a steel rasp;  
it stopped when I stopped,  
kept pace when I walked faster  
its low growl assuring me,

"You were lucky this time,  
but I'll be waiting."