

# Of Cameramen and Death Squads in Tbilisi

*by* Alex M. Pruteanu

after four years  
the little teddy bear of a man  
(a hobbit i called him i think when i first met him in '06  
cigarette and diet coke, permanent fixtures in his hands)  
slowly opens up to me  
we share somewhat the same past  
he was bureau chief of ABC overseas  
first stationed in Budapest after the wall was brought down  
next moved around a bunch  
finally landing in Tbilisi, Georgia  
we juggle war room stories  
and after some time he tells me  
he's received electric shock therapy some years ago  
for an event for which he still feels responsible  
now eighteen years later and counting:  
he sent out a producer and a cameraman  
to cover the rebel Muslim uprising in rural Georgia  
after having shot enough footage the producer took the tape to the  
feeding point  
when he came back the cameraman was gone  
they found him six days later in an unmarked grave  
strangely wearing combat fatigues  
he had been tortured and shot in the neck and eyes  
i say they probably dressed him like that  
to claim him a spy  
    like me  
my friend the hobbit is now a state government functionary  
a much tamer career  
much quieter

much "less important"  
he asks if i ever miss any of it  
the madness  
and i say no  
i need quiet and stability in my life now  
and no one shooting at me or chopping me down with a machete  
he smokes and thinks and says  
i must admit i sometimes wish i had a more important position  
especially for someone my age  
i say important positions often carry the danger of being executed  
he laughs and says true  
drags on his Marlboro Lights drinks his Diet Coke  
and our time for lunch is up

