

i. | *vii - Tony Cobra.*

The Cobras as a family were high above reproach.
They had no time for snakes who sought to pester or encroach
and they only spat at others who were able to spit back
(unless they had clear evidence of venomous attack),
but they thought that the most reputable policy by far
was to hold themselves aloof behind the window of the car.

The father of the Cobras was a formidable kind;
his wife, with an elegant turn of mind,
was noted for intelligence and charm.
Tony, they had hoped, would be their pride and joy
but for some hidden reason, some unexplained harm,
he became a difficult and tiresome boy.

One day when the Cobras were eating together,
exchanging remarks on the wine and the weather,
the thoughtful and playful and nonchalant tone
was disturbed by the tiresome sound of the phone.
When they answered an old and reliable friend -
unmistakeably clear at the line's furthest end -
was telling them heatedly just what to do:

Turn on the tv! Right now! Channel two!

Tony was appearing
with a large enamelled earring
and a skewer through his nose
on one of the more disreputable shows:

*I really have no time
for those who moan and whine
at every unsuspecting chat show host
about their childhood misery.
I've yet to meet the family
which manages to coast
along in constant celebration.*

*The candid telling of a tale
of youthful desperation
brings relief, but why not write it down?
A book of tragedy will never fail
to help your bank account.*

*Mine is on sale for a modest amount.
It details a regretful lack of caring
sensibility and gives an honest airing
to the phobias and fears
which have troubled me since childhood years.*

Tony's parents were alarmed.
They asked their eldest son,
who practised law with great success,
to proffer his opinion:

*I find clear evidence
of reputations badly harmed
by filial abuse, though common sense
would say that greater haste brings less
reward. The issues will unfold
more clearly when the film rights are sold.*