

Life on TV

by Sean Pravica

The yelling began as a hopeful rancor, unoriginal and fixed. For you, it's a nighttime blanket, an old mobile still dangling from your days in the crib, a beady-eyed birdie that calls from its branch to sing you to sleep.

But some inventive taboos dipped their toes into the stream of everyday, a dropped spoon shattering silence on kitchen floors, stalled feet barking like dogs, questions that don't sound like questions steaming from this burning kettle whistling in panic. The television volume softens in the shadows, the sitcom sad and the laugh track an alien radio signal.

Brushing teeth like always, you drop your paper cup. Startling symphony of words sopping in finality, the first memory of feeling more than hoping, of intuiting more than thinking, of seeing through walls to catch the anchor rising.

The yelling is over but the talk is not, the tube's heroes and clowns rise louder again, while the others become static, their tongues crackling and hissing like a fireplace soundtrack to fit the homey comfort (and humor) of life on TV.

Into your stomach, eyes turn narrow, vision blurry, and navel unresponsive. Sad water sits spilled still on tiles. A slam sounds and you know this time's different.

A thumb suck like your mom's cigarette, the carefree life of a child.

