

## Walter Cronkite was My Father: A Post Modern Memoir

by Tori Kensington

Walter isn't my father's  
real name.  
Walter was there though,  
speaking to me in round pearl shaped tones:  
forgiving,  
loving,  
taking an interest:  
telling me  
what was what  
and how it was  
each day,  
each night.

My other father,  
that is,  
the husband of my mother;  
who worked so bloody hard,  
putting food in our mouths,  
whether we liked it  
or not,  
spoke  
at the dinner-table tribunal;  
to the stranger who was his wife.

And he,  
    The Chemical Engineer,  
    Wizard of Wonder drugs  
And she,  
    The Pharmacist with the mission  
    of Better life through Christ  
(or Valium),  
they talked of chemistry,  
of drugs;  
a medical life  
medicated  
with the  
dreams  
of Col. Eli Lilly,  
talking  
not to me.

I, being  
too much in marvel  
to meddle with  
such brilliant banter,  
would search for someone  
to tell me  
about life.....

My other father,  
nodding  
from martini mirth,  
sought sleep from the boar  
on the Gordon's label,  
and coloured his life  
with the rich hues of  
gin.

And so my father came home from the plant,  
ate dinner,  
and went to sleep.

Oh father,  
not even a good night kiss  
to smell your  
warm male smell  
and feel bristle  
on my cheek  
without the boar's bristle on  
on your breath.

This, at least, was the family dinner.  
And we would watch the CBS Evening News,  
at least

I would watch amidst the cacophony of hyperprofessionalism.  
I would watch teevee news  
since no one would talk to me.

And there was Walter.

O Father of Illuminated Phosphoresence,  
O Holy High-voltage Induced Hero,  
you spoke to me;  
you looked me in the eye  
and told me of the world;  
you observed all and criticized none.  
My other father would not  
share his knowledge with me.  
You never failed  
to appear  
with the rest  
of the family,  
and your  
    talking  
    head  
became the head of the family.  
My eye met yours;  
I knew you wanted  
me to hear you.  
I heard your words directly,  
not serendipodously,  
not fearfully that  
I might not  
understand,  
or invade  
into the world  
that would ever be closed

closed

closed

to  
me.....  
No engineer I  
(that was lamentable),  
no mathematician,  
no chemist,  
no use—  
fulness.....  
the Cathode Ray tube of our 24-inch Zenith,  
became my retina,  
connected with  
antenna leads  
to my great aluminium  
    synaptic array  
on the roof  
of our homeless house  
waiting,  
and swaying  
in the evening breeze,  
reaching,  
for your signal,  
to enter  
and stimulate my latent self.  
Your voice,  
your deep eyes,  
so wise  
in seeing  
the greatest history of our century,  
gives you more credibility than any real  
    life father;  
making him  
less real;  
making you  
my real father.

At first I cried  
when you left the teevee.  
Then I admonished  
my selfishness.  
You worked hard  
at being a  
father for me:  
always being there  
when I needed you;  
always talking to me,  
while I was being radiated  
by my nuclear family.

I will always remember your voice  
that spoke to me  
of astronauts,  
far away wars,  
of presidents, kings,  
and killed Kennedys,  
with your perfectly sounded syllables.  
You gave me  
your words:  
pearls  
falling  
over the airways;  
and made language mine.  
And now your  
pearl-tone gifts  
enrich me,  
and I clothe and wrap them around me.  
And I too,  
can shine  
in my inheritance,  
and love you.  
Walter,  
father,  
Walter,  
on thee, 'ere;  
eye follow.