

Thirst

Emily Scott Robinson

If Daddy went to college he'd be a different man.
He was working in the mill and got called up for Vietnam.
Whatever that war did to him used to keep him up at night,
Smoking in the kitchen 'til the first gray morning light.

Mama left him years ago. Didn't understand,
Just got tired of being married to a shadow of a man.
Banging on the bedroom door, railing at the world
How could I have known? I was just a little girl.

And I used to wish his love for us was bigger than his thirst.
But you can't fix what's broken. That's not how love works.

Well Daddy lives alone now. I go over once a week.
If I didn't bring him dinners, I don't think that he would eat.
Sissy hasn't seen 'em in six or seven years.
Some days he asks about her when he's thinking clear.

I take him to the doctor, down at the VA.
It's a miracle he hasn't burned his liver clean away.
He used to have his drink of choice, a glass of ice with gin.
These days it don't matter. He gets numb on anything.

And I used to wish his love for us was bigger than his thirst.
But you can't fix what's broken. That's not how love works.

And I spent years hanging on to the bones of everything that he did wrong.

I don't like to get my hopes up if Daddy comes around.
About once a year he sobers up, but he always lets me down.
This time it was Christmas, said it wouldn't miss it.
He showered and he shaved. He showed up two days late.

And I used to wish his love for us was bigger than his thirst.
But you can't fix what's broken. That's not how love works.

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