

Sober through the Soap Opera

by Tess McLaughlin

The familiar glares of dimmed apartment lamps set the mood for just “one more episode”. Beneath the unflattering combination of wet hair, wet eyes, and a fuzzy sky-blue bathrobe, he yearned to know where the plot would take him.

A jade green pillowcase was either gently wrapped within his arms or perhaps wrapping him through each hot tear that gently rolled down his freckled face. He once again thought to himself, “*One more episode, one more episode, and then I will be satisfied.*” In the opinions of those who had visited the apartment earlier in the month, unsatisfied was how he would remain. The faces on the static screen of his small box TV seemed to only mock him as he leaned forward on the faded leather couch. A noticeable crease remained behind from where the weight of his problems filled the gap between two cushions. The pillow doubled over on his chest as the women on the screen began to hiss and spit. The levels of emotion overpowered the intense volume, and outraging cries that could easily travel by anybody else in the apartment. Though the man, he heard nothing. Not deaf, but perhaps selective of hearing. The newly installed blackout curtains masked the surety of the hours that passed. From the outside, they brought an uneasy presence to his reputation. How long had it been since the man had gone outside? Days, maybe even weeks.

Countless messages and voicemails from friends remained stuck behind the screen of an uncharged phone, but nobody was sent to check on the whereabouts of their loved one. If questioned, the facts would be denied, and despite the obsession, the TV screen turned off. “*One more episode, one more episode, and then I will be satisfied.*” Season 7 of the soap opera, which he loved, carried on. The pillow now sat to his left as thoughts such as “*Maybe someday it will be a beautiful girl with jade green eyes that sits by my side to hold.*” The sense of lost reality is what consumed him. What blared off of his TV remained an excuse for this all. Days, maybe even weeks, had been since the man finally cracked, and as ironic as it may seem, the angry and almost mental men and women on his screen were the family he chose. Perhaps one day, he might finally hang up his robe, answer the phone, and remember who he was before the day he cracked. Perhaps, “One more episode” might open his eyes to the life he made for himself. His tender palm began to sweat as his pointer finger found the pause button on the remote. He looked around the room, and the lamps dimmed even further. His tears now flowed heavier, and through his silent sobbing, the button pressed again, and the soap opera continued.