

R A N D A L L M A R T O C C I A

War Cam

Standing in the den, Dad promises
“You’re gonna love this,” circles us
around the TV. I question Mom
with a bowed eyebrow. She answers
with shrugging shoulders. Dad poses
like an Olympian—legs apart, left hand on hip,
right raised in the air,
though no torch there,
only a cassette. His golf buddies snicker
into their gin-and-tonics.

Dad bends over the tape machine.
His pants strain but hold—a miracle
in plaid. The tape ticks, the screen flickers
to life. Dad rolls over and gropes for his drink.
Mom wrinkles her forehead into three distinct
parallel lines.

A tiny square—patch of white on grey background—
appears in the screen’s cross-hairs.
“Got the tape from an Air Force pal,” Dad says.

We fly toward the shape, looking like somebody's house.
The building rushes into the darkness of our den.
I glimpse something scattering on the screen,
before the camera shatters the house
into a thousand points of static.

A look rattles between the trio of golfers—
he dragged us off the seventeenth for this? it says.
I'd seen the missile cam before (in CNN's highlights
of the war) and am wondering why Dad
would show this tape to us on the day
after the war ended. He rewinds the tape,
plays it back frame by frame, warns us
to watch closely. Mom squints hard.
The golfers lean in closer. Dad's eyes glitter.
The man in the missile's sights opens the door,
opens his mouth to scream. The last thing I see
are his teeth.

RANDALL MARTOCCIA teaches composition and literature at East Carolina University and screens fiction entries for the *North Carolina Literary Review*. Several of his short movies can be found on YouTube. Previous publications include a parody of Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts," published in *Dreams of Decadence*. One of his poems was a finalist in a Prairie Home Companion sonnet contest.