

Poems

The house is not the same since you left
The cooker is angry – it blames me
The TV tries desperately to stay busy
But occasionally I catch it staring out of the window
The washing-up's feeling sorry for itself again
It just sits there saying "What's the point, what's the point?"
The curtains count the days
Nothing in the house will talk to me
I think your armchair's dead
The kettle tried to comfort me at first
But you know what its attention span is like
I've not told the plants yet
They think you're still on holiday
The bathroom misses you
I hardly see it these days
It still can't believe you didn't take it with you
The bedroom won't even look at me
Since you left it, it keeps its eyes closed
All it wants to do is sleep
Remembering better times
Trying to lose itself in dreams
It seems like it's taken the easy way out
But at night
I hear the pillows weeping into the sheets.

The most important thing we've learned,
 So far as children are concerned,
 Is never, NEVER, NEVER let
 Them near your television set --
 Or better still, just don't install
 The idiotic thing at all.
 In almost every house we've been,
 We've watched them gaping at the screen.
 They loll and slop and lounge about,
 And stare until their eyes pop out.
 (Last week in someone's place we saw
 A dozen eyeballs on the floor.)
 They sit and stare and stare and sit
 Until they're hypnotised by it,
 Until they're absolutely drunk
 With all that shocking ghastly junk.
 Oh yes, we know it keeps them still,
 They don't climb out the window sill,
 They never fight or kick or punch,
 They leave you free to cook the lunch
 And wash the dishes in the sink --
 But did you ever stop to think,
 To wonder just exactly what
 This does to your beloved tot?
 IT ROTTS THE SENSE IN THE HEAD!
 IT KILLS IMAGINATION DEAD!
 IT CLOGS AND CLUTTERS UP THE MIND!
 IT MAKES A CHILD SO DULL AND BLIND
 HE CAN NO LONGER UNDERSTAND
 A FANTASY, A FAIRYLAND!
 HIS BRAIN BECOMES AS SOFT AS CHEESE!
 HIS POWERS OF THINKING RUST AND FREEZE!
 HE CANNOT THINK -- HE ONLY SEES!
 'All right!' you'll cry. 'All right!' you'll say,
 'But if we take the set away,
 What shall we do to entertain
 Our darling children? Please explain!
 We'll answer this by asking you,
 'What used the darling ones to do?
 'How used they keep themselves contented
 Before this monster was invented?'
 Have you forgotten? Don't you know?
 We'll say it very loud and slow:
 THEY ... USED ... TO ... READ! They'd READ and READ,
 AND READ and READ, and then proceed

To READ some more. Great Scott! Gadzooks!
 One half their lives was reading books!
 The nursery shelves held books galore!
 Books cluttered up the nursery floor!
 And in the bedroom, by the bed,
 More books were waiting to be read!
 Such wondrous, fine, fantastic tales
 Of dragons, gypsies, queens, and whales
 And treasure isles, and distant shores
 Where smugglers rowed with muffled oars,
 And pirates wearing purple pants,
 And sailing ships and elephants,
 And cannibals crouching 'round the pot,
 Stirring away at something hot.
 (It smells so good, what can it be?
 Good gracious, it's Penelope.)
 The younger ones had Beatrix Potter
 With Mr. Tod, the dirty rotter,
 And Squirrel Nutkin, Pigling Bland,
 And Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle and-
 Just How The Camel Got His Hump,
 And How the Monkey Lost His Rump,
 And Mr. Toad, and bless my soul,
 There's Mr. Rat and Mr. Mole-
 Oh, books, what books they used to know,
 Those children living long ago!
 So please, oh please, we beg, we pray,
 Go throw your TV set away,
 And in its place you can install
 A lovely bookshelf on the wall.
 Then fill the shelves with lots of books,
 Ignoring all the dirty looks,
 The screams and yells, the bites and kicks,
 And children hitting you with sticks-
 Fear not, because we promise you
 That, in about a week or two
 Of having nothing else to do,
 They'll now begin to feel the need
 Of having something to read.
 And once they start -- oh boy, oh boy!
 You watch the slowly growing joy
 That fills their hearts. They'll grow so keen
 They'll wonder what they'd ever seen
 In that ridiculous machine,
 That nauseating, foul, unclean,
 Repulsive television screen!
 And later, each and every kid
 Will love you more for what you did.