

Grandpa and Elvis

He never plays guitar anymore,
and he never ever sings.

Every Christmas,
with pleading eyes and begging hands,
we—
my father's boisterous family—
beckon our Grandfather to
strum the strings of his aged acoustic
and to
sing the songs of his nostalgic memory,
but always
denial perturbed our hope.

*I can't remember how
I really don't know anymore*

Laurie, the bouncy-haired cousin, tells me
how it used to be:

*Mellifluous harmonies
Pacific vocals
Love songs
Elvis*

Oh, if only I could hear my Grandpa.

As he sits there,
the guitar slumped against his chest
clothed in red and white flannel
and rested upon his knee
dressed in the deep blue denim of Levis,
we all know what he's thinking.

Because it's what everyone is thinking.

Slouching beside him
is Grandma,
with her curly, snowy hair
that looks like cinnamon rolls
and smells like cake.

For her, we all thought,

for your wife.

The sad and desperate reflection
of impending fate
loomed over us,
as frequent hospital visits
and deteriorating memory
told us it was near.

Grandpa's hawk-like eyes
were squinting and tearing too little
for most to see.
Staring at the woman,
who 60 years ago,
was standing at the alter
looking just as sweet as she does now,
he glided his fingers over the taut strings.

His music emptied from the instrument
and into the crowded room.
Our ears greedily swallowed
the sounds,
as generations could see this man
play for the only person that mattered.

I can't help falling in love with you

Grandma cried.

And we all knew love—
not by a movie or book—
but by
Grandpa and Elvis.