

Sparkle of Seventeen

August 19, 2010

There's a picture on the mantle of a girl dressed in white
Looking like she's stepped out of the dawn
The world all before her, she's ready to take flight
Like a blue bird above an endless lawn
 And you can already see in those young eyes
 The mother's gaze vigilant and keen
 In spite of all the cares that life would bring
 Shining with the sparkle of seventeen

/ C / F /
/ G / F-C /
/ C / F /
/ G / C /
/ G / F-C /
/ Dm-C / G /
/ Dm-G / C-F /
/ F-G / C /

The war came on soon after, and marriage and farewell
As your sailor cast his fate to the ocean foam
You rocked the cradle—they also serve who wait—
While you prayed that the winds would bring him home
 And when the chimes of peace finally rang out
 You built for us a haven from the storm
 Four loving hands made a garden of a home
 And a kitchen where the welcomes were always warm

There were maple trees for climbing and mint outside the door
And roses fit for the garden of a queen
And even when the blizzard cut us to the core
The color of our childhood was green
 So thanks for the memories of Robin Hood and Daniel Boone
 And every stitch you sewed on Halloween
 And thanks for always laughing when anyone shot the moon
 And smiling with the sparkle of seventeen

And thanks for the tea and toast when we were home from school
And lemon pie on every holiday
And thanks for all those spelling drills and even the grammar rules
And making it all seem almost like play
 I remember how you talked about believing in ourselves
 About working hard and fighting clean
 But of all my memories, there's none I treasure more
 Than you smiling with the sparkle of seventeen

*Written five years before the death of my mother, Elizabeth Stokes Tuleja, as an homage
to a life fiercely devoted to her children. I used to read the lyrics to her sometime
in her last years, hoping that they gave her some small hint of my gratitude.*