

Liam Hood
Red Stream

Memoir

It was a cold Monday night as I looked out the car window. My grandma was silent in the front seat, listening to her Peter, Paul and Mary CD. I was there in the backseat with my McDonalds Happy Meal, anticipating when we'd arrive at that quiet apartment complex. My mind was empty as I stared at the darkening sky, the lyrics of Leaving on a Jet Plane going in through one of my ears and out the other. I asked my grandma how long it would be until we got to the apartments. 10 more minutes. To my mind that was almost an hour. I felt as if I were to be bored to death in the back seat, listening to the same old CD I'd heard hundreds of times before while driving this exact route. We continued to drive through the dark neighborhood for what felt like hours, slinking between wooded areas with only the sounds of crickets around the road. My grandma took a hard right turn into a parking lot, jolting me awake and filling me with excitement. We had arrived at the apartment complex as the car clock hit 7:00. I always hated that clock, being almost 3 minutes off from the real time. The green LEDs of the clock faded as my grandma took the keys out of the ignition. I swung the door open and hopped out of the car and over to the side of the building. It was quiet and dark, just like usual when we arrived. My grandma slowly walked over to the patio to wait at the door with me. I always enjoyed being on that patio, it was small and secluded from the rest of the apartment complex off in a corner. The patio had some flowers in pots, mostly dead due to the cold November weather. I liked to pick at the dead flowers while me and my grandma waited, their brown and crumpled leaves being a joy to crush and grind up in my palms. My grandma stood at the screen door at the end of the patio. The door was the only way into the apartment. We never used the front door due to it being blocked by an old reclining chair. My grandma knocked at the door as I stood there with my happy meal, waiting for my aunt to open the door and let us in. We waited a few minutes, as my aunt wasn't the most mobile. She opened the door as she greeted me and my grandma. She welcomed us into her house, guiding us past the couch about a foot away from the opening of the screen door. She sat down in her big reclining chair as she asked me and my grandma if we wanted food. As always, my grandma declined. I was contempt with my Happy Meal, so I pulled a small tray from the foot of the couch into the middle of the floor. I don't know why I always would put that tray in the middle of the living room floor but it just felt natural. I could have used the table in the dining room, but that was adjacent to the kitchen so I wouldn't be able to eavesdrop on my grandma and my aunt talking. My aunt talked a lot that day, a lot about her personal issues, religion, and her health. I drowned out a lot of what she would say, as it just never seemed important to me, but now I wish I had listened a little more. My grandma talked for what seemed like a millennium as I just sat there with my chicken nuggets. My gaze was fixated on my food as I sat there. My aunt looked at me and asked me a question. "Liam, do you ever go to church with your Grammy?" I looked up and nodded my head, barely giving thought to the question at all. My grandma scolded me for not giving a verbal response before going back to her conversation about her faith and Sunday Mass. I didn't understand why she'd care so much about her faith and why it was such a large factor in her life. As a kid I never saw the reason as to why my grandma would care so much about faith so late in her life, but I later

learned why. My aunt and grandma talked for a long while as the sky outside got darker and darker. It was getting late and I had school the next day, so my grandma and I decided to leave around half past 8. On the car ride home my grandma played some choir music on an old CD. The busted up CD always skipped and froze in the middle of songs, but my grandma still found ways to enjoy the music.

Around a year and a half later I went with my grandma, my mom, and my sister to visit my aunt again. This time we didn't go to her apartment, we went to a hospital. I remember walking into her room and greeting her as she lay in her bed, a large bump on her neck drew my attention. Before we arrived my mom had explained to me what was wrong with my aunt. Apparently she was sick with something called lymphoma. My aunt had not been in the best condition lately so she was very glad to see us, especially my grandma. My grandma talked with my aunt for a long time, praying and discussing plans. I didn't know what they were talking about but they talked a lot about faith, which I had started to notice was a large thing to both of them. My grandma finished talking to my aunt as my mom told me we were going to leave soon. We all said our goodbyes and left. My grandma looked as if she might cry but she held it back. I left with the rest of my family and thought nothing much of the visit. A week later I realized why my grandma and aunt cared so much about faith. I realized that when I heard that my aunt had passed away. Since then I've known why my family cares so much about faith and why I should care about it.