**A Translation**

Sheleen McElhinney

In the evenings, dad wrapped his palm around

the neck of his guitar and pulled it in close

to his body, cradled it in his lap, caressed its rosewood

hip, batted his eyes closed, plucked the strings

one by one, the vibration buzzing inside the chambers

of his heart. A low singing so mom didn't hear,

*Happiness is a warm gun, mama.* But she did hear–her head

swiveling, eyes shining like bullets, her words

like shots fired. *When are you going to realize you’re no good?*

*When will you ever give it up, stop embarrassing yourself?*

What she meant: I want you to touch me like that.