

Felix Schlesinger
(1833–1910), 'Besuch
bei der Großmutter' /
'Visiting Grandma'.



My Grandmother's House

Sylvie Jane Lewis

is full of haunted mirrors / my grandmother's house
is a coulsdon two-storey / my grandmother's house
has beds too this or that / my grandmother's house
has a bed just right / my grandmother's house
is a bambi cassette / my grandmother's house
is worth its weight in disposable cameras

my grandmother's house is a relic and a history
london her refuge
post-war, post-katyn, her father's murder
post-camps, post-subhuman-labour
here she housed the revival of herself
filled her home with creatures. cat. mouse. bird.
her daughters. a half-human sanctuary.

my grandmother's house / is a polish nursery rhyme
my grandmother's house / is three kittens in the forest
my grandmother's house / is an oven-baked pie
my grandmother's house / is a fox slinking through the garden
leaving gem-green shit behind / these drove my grandfather mad
when little, i found these emeralds / oddly beautiful
my grandmother's house / reluctant home to the wild

my grandmother's house / is a wolf in drag
my grandmother's house / has a bellyful of stones
my grandmother's house / is how i'd picture houses in books
my grandmother's house / is in so many brontë novels
though not grand / it became thornfield and manderley
my grandmother's house / is every house i've ever read
my grandmother lived in an imaginary house
my grandmother's house / is a crow's nest / is a boat mast
is baba yaga guarding the waters / is a nest of baby crows

my grandmother's house / is finding ways to pass the time
my grandmother's house / eternally untouched by wifi
my sister rummages for board games in a wooden trunk
i put a pen to the page in my grandmother's house

in my grandmother's house / she narrates her wartime survival
the dragon of kraków / could never subsume her
we sit in a circle around her / as if round a fire
my grandmother's house / is a passed-down tale
one we won't stop telling / home to spells and songs
generational metamorphosis / we were once children here

before we eat for the last time / in my grandmother's house
we look out to the garden / all tall grass and weeds now.
in the centre of the garden is a fox / not cunning but resting
somewhere grandad's spirit / longs to chase her away
fiery creature. sniffs the air / we stand silent, let her stay.
burnt orange patch, curled up / on the green blanket of earth.
my grandmother's house / has beds too this or that
my grandmother's house / has a bed just right
the fox sees us through the glass / nestles
down. the world shelters her.
we bid her goodnight in my grandmother's house.

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