

# CutBank

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## Home

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*Home*

Do not let them come as sheep.  
Let the wolves come as wolves.  
It is not so hard to die  
but it kills you trying to stay alive here.  
Every morning my grampa and his dog  
get up at dawn and wait for me. If I don't  
come down he pulls his old self up the stairs  
and the old poodle drags up behind him  
They stand outside my door. Then they open it.  
The next time I come home he tells me how I kept  
them wondering, the two of them, about if I  
was home, or if I was lost  
and one of these days I'd come home and they  
wouldn't know me anymore. The dog would bite me.  
And grampa would go on watching Gunsmoke on T.V.  
as if I wasn't there  
But it didn't go like that. He did actually die  
first and a long time had gone between us.  
In the end he wouldn't have known me, they said.  
The end was hard and went on and on. I wouldn't  
have changed anything. It wouldn't have been any  
easier. He is the one who would not stay home.  
I'm here, I'm the same as ever. The girl who lived in  
that room lives in it on and on, and the old man waits  
in front of a t.v. set with a dog. The furniture is dark  
with secrets.  
There is a false wall in the basement stairway  
filled with empties, locked doors to rooms of children  
disowned, abandoned, decades earlier,  
a dead wife, exhausted by childbirth, taken with her seventh.  
Children, scrambling out a back window and a man  
roaring home from town. A man my mother called a demon.  
Now an old man, whose old bad house I live in. And am afraid  
of the basement. And dream of lizards. And he sits, nights,  
watching Gunsmoke and patting his stinking dog.

*Sheryl Noethe*