Home

Sheryl Noethe
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 withempties, 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.

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