

Excluding the Coldness of My Room and the Strange Ways of Old Men

When I write this,

I will say that the house

was narrow and that it overflowed

with books whose backs were

well-broken by the hands of

the old man.

I will say that he

spoke to me

in so many languages that

my teachers feared

for the sanity of my tongue.

In my story,

you bickered with him using

the immigrant mouths of my grandparents,

because the things of which you spoke

were only the business of adults.

I will write that you took me into the

cauldron of our kitchen along

with my sister and the aunties of your coven.

Garlic would cleanse,

I will say you said,

and red wine forgive

if you forget to find it the coolest

recesses of the house.

And I will write that you were working with

the crank of an ancient grinder,

or even a mortar and pestle,

when you explained to me that paprika could be

almost tasteless
if done the wrong way.
If you did not crush the right pepper
in the right way,
it would give you its color,
maybe a trail of its smell,
but when you went to meet it,
its flavor would only be
a ghost haunting whatever
was meant to bring you sustenance.