

Grandmother's Winter

Niall Oliver

As if searching for a key in the dark
she fumbles around in her mind
for my name, but like chimney smoke
it has slipped away again. Instead,
from a pocket of her winter coat
she pulls out two lumps of coal,

strays gathered on the stroll home
past the fuel yard. I say nothing
as she places them carefully among
the embers of the fire, and watch
as she blows black dust from her fingers
before hitching up her skirt hem,
just enough to warm the backs of her legs.

I see no point in reminding her again
that the old cast iron fireplace is now
an electric faux coal & flame effect,
but instead allow her the moment
to savour. And then like a door snib
that's just been released, she snaps,

“For Christ's sake Niall, don't just sit there,
go and fill the scuttle”.