

**The View from the Spare Room (Long-listed, Worcestershire Literary Festival Flash
Fiction Competition, 2014)**

My grandmother never told me what she kept in there and the door was always locked. After her funeral, when I returned to the cottage, with the heavy bunch of keys and an even heavier heart, I finally looked in the spare room.

The afternoon sun, so inappropriate that day, had just managed to squeeze a finger through the closed velvet curtains. A beam of light bounced against a surface in the corner and then off again at an angle, like the prism in the science lab I'd hated at school. It struck me in the centre of my chest, halting me until I forced myself along its path towards the origin.

The large wooden structure was covered by a grubby dustsheet, but the cloth had slipped, exposing an edge of glass, silvered and chipped, but still capable of bending a beam of light. I took a deep breath and swept the dustsheet to the floor. The looking glass — far too ornate to be merely a mirror — reached from the floor to above my head and I was momentarily shocked by my black-clothed reflection until I remembered... The frame was carved with demons, squat, ugly, grinning. I pulled back and bent to lift the dustsheet. This was one piece of furniture definitely going to the junk shop — or even in the skip.

As I straightened, I saw a movement from the corner of my eye, in the mirror, behind my reflection. I glanced behind me, but all was still in the room. I leaned forward again towards the mirror and, too late, I understood. As I walked forwards towards the glass, the velvet curtains behind me flew open and fiery sunlight flooded the room and my reflection — but only for a second and then it was gone.