

Our Silk-Curtained Window

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Child: (Sings along the radio song) Our silk-curtained window .. A breeze of longing makes it fly.

(Maternal) Aunt: (In a rush, looking for something, and continues wearing her outdoor clothes) We're running late. There isn't even one single watch that functions properly in this house.

Mother: The sun's come out a long time ago. You can see it behind the shutters.

Aunt: Behind the shutters!

Child: The sun's come out? Aha... Let me open the shutters and see it.

Grandmother: There's enough light coming in through the shutters.

Mother and Aunt: Through the shutters!

Child: (Singing) It's come out .. how sweet is its light .. the sun, the

little sun ... Let's go; hey .. let's go Mama.

Mother: I'm busy (cleaning the house).

Child: Hey .. let's go Auntie.

Aunt: I have to catch up with...

Child: Hey .. let's go Granny.

Grandmother: Enough of that noise.

Child: (Mounts the chair and comes close to the window) I'll open the window. (All of them stand still in their places, mesmerised.)

Grandmother: Get down .. get down you naughty little girl.

Child: Shall I help you?

Grandmother: Let the curtain go.

Child: It's old and ugly.

Grandmother: It's keeping us out of sight.

Child: Does it have to be hanging there?

Grandmother: Everything needs a curtain.

- Child:** Didn't you ever pull it down?
- Grandmother:** It was my mother's wedding gift to me.
- Child:** You mean your mother. What about you, Mama, how long ago did you get married?
- Mother:** Got married? I can't remember.
- Child:** It must be around my age. Right, Auntie?
- Aunt:** It's none of my business (harshly). (She hasn't stopped looking for the watch.)
- Child:** This curtain's older than you, and it's still around. Let's change it.
- Grandmother:** As long as I'm alive, everything has to stay the same.
- Mother and Aunt:** The same (looking at the mirror, and feeling their bodies)!

Child: So I'm not to open the window?
(Cries)

Grandmother: I'm protecting you. The wind is hitting against the window.

Child: The wind may force the window open.

Grandmother: We're not letting the wind in. Block the holes!

Child: But I want to smell the breeze
(holds the curtain in her hands).

Grandmother: Can't you hear what's been said?

Mother: Behave yourself, girl. Let go of the curtain.

Child: The curtain goes sooo hiiigh?

Grandmother: (To the Mother) Don't let her pull at it.

Child: The curtain goes sooo hiiigh
(playing with the curtain and moving it around).

Grandmother: Give me a break ... all of you.

Aunt: The curtain goes sooo hiiigh.

Grandmother: Stop shaking the curtain.

All of them: The curtain goes sooo hiiigh.

Grandmother: It has to remain so high, the way it was fixed by the man.

Mother and Aunt: We should've changed it.

Grandmother: It's made of silk of the good old days. We won't be able to find anything of the like nowadays.

Aunt: How did you let the man hang it this way. We can't bring it down **(trying to pull at it)**.

Grandmother: **(Angry)** Watch out and don't make it fall down.

Child: Let's try.

Grandmother: The curtain holder's made of iron, the curtain's made of silk, and the window is of glass with shutters.

All: **(Repeating)** The curtain hold-

er's made of iron, the curtain's made of silk, and the window is of glass with shutters.

Child: It lets the light in.

Mother: It lets the sound in.

Aunt: It lets the air in.

Grandmother: The light can be lightning; and the air can be wind.

Child: Just let us try.

Aunt: Yeah .. Can we try?

Mother: And if it bothers us? (**fearfully**).

Aunt: We'll shut it once more.

Child: So that we may go out.

Mother: Are we going out?

Grandmother: Where are you going out?

Aunt: Where's the key?

Mother: I don't have any keys.

Aunt: Let's look for it.

Grandmother: You're going to turn the place into a mess. Leave everything as it is.

Child: So tell us where the key is.

Grandmother: The man's got the key.

Child: It's that man again!

Grandmother: That's his job.

Aunt: And he hasn't brought the key.

Child: What a bad man.

Aunt: But we need him.

Child: Why do we need him?

Mother: Just don't say in front of the girl.

Aunt: Ask Granny.

Child: Why do we need him, Granny?

Grandmother: To... (thinking) to give us the key.

Child: And what about the curtain?

Mother and Aunt: (Singing) Our curtain is all made

of silk .. A breeze of longing
makes it fly.

Grandmother: Enough of that!

Mother and Aunt:(Singing) Our curtain is all made
of silk .. A breeze of longing
makes it fly.

Grandmother: I'm fed up with you.

Mother and Aunt: (Singing) Our curtain is all made
of silk .. A breeze of longing
makes it fly.

Grandmother: Enough .. Stay put! He must be
on his way.

All: The man?!

Grandmother: The key. The man will bring it.

Aunt: It doesn't matter whether he
comes or not.

Grandmother: You have to wait for him.

Child: Oh no, Granny. Are we going to
stay as we are just waiting for
him.

Mother: And even if he comes, what is he going to do!

Grandmother: You just...

Mother: I've spent all my life keeping silent; did I ever get the chance to say anything?

Grandmother: Don't say or repeat anything .. We needn't wait long, and he'll soon be here. Let's wait for him.

Child: Even you, Granny?

Aunt: He might not come (**fearfully**).

Child: Then we'll get moving, and jump out of the window.

Mother: May God protect you, my little girl.

Grandmother: Watch out, be careful so that you don't hurt yourselves.

Child: What is this .. neither door nor window?!

Grandmother: You may look from behind the curtain.

Aunt: But we'll still have to wait.

Child: **(Whispering)** There must be another key with Granny.

Aunt: So what next?

Child: Let's look for it.

Mother: No, it's impossible.

Child: Believe me, Mama. It's just that Granny has never used it to open the door.

Mother: We'd better not, so that she doesn't get cross with us.

Child: Help me, Auntie. There's another key that we must find.

Aunt: How can we?

Child: If we look for it, we'll find it. Why don't you, the two of you, want to try?

Mother: But she said that the man will

be here any moment.

Aunt: Right, she said he'll be here any moment.

Child: What does this man look like?!

Aunt: **(Dreamily)** Tall .. well-built .. muscular .. and...

Child: Like Granny?

Grandmother: What did you say?

Mother and Aunt: Hush... **(asking her to shut up).**

Mother: She's saying that it's windy outside and that we need another curtain to block the holes.

Grandmother: So hand me the cloth from the drawer.

Child: **(She runs off, opening the drawers and searching)** Here? No! Here? Where?

Grandmother: It's right there in front of you. Look properly!

Child: **(Whispering)** Help me, Mama!

- Mother:** How can I help you?
- Child:** You know its place.
- Mother:** I don't.
- Child:** So you know its place.
- Grandmother:** It's in the big drawer. **(The girl runs to search for the key, but does not find it.)** Did you find the cloth, or are you looking for something else?
- Child:** What's this **(she finds an album)?**
- Aunt:** It's an album. It's empty .. We have nothing to take pictures of.
- Child:** So what are you keeping it for?
- Aunt:** We thought that we might experience moments worth keeping in our memories. But unfortunately, such moments never came.
- Child:** Why didn't they come? **(To her mother)**

Mother: Leave the album in its place.

Child: I'll skim through it.

Mother: There's nothing there.

Child: I'll search through.

Aunt: Why do you search through everything that falls into your hands?!

Mother: Enough of that, girl. Enough.

Child: What are you scared of?

Mother and Aunt: Scared of what?

Child: I don't know.

Mother: Go and play with your doll and let's do what we have to do.

Child: My doll is silent. She doesn't talk.

Mother: So you be like your doll.

Child: Why? .. Why should I be like her.. I want to have a talking doll.

Aunt: She used to talk, but the batteries ran out of charge.

Child: I'll look for batteries.

Grandmother: Do you want to turn the place into a mess?! **(The grandmother chases the girl to prevent her from searching the place.)** You're useless, the two of you. If you could control her, she wouldn't have been behaving this way. **(The grandmother hits the girl.)**

Child: Ouch .. ouch!

Mother: Let go of her, Mother.

Aunt: Have mercy .. Aren't we enough for you!

Grandmother: We .. what do you mean!

All: **(Singing)** We are like the four walls .. Wooden frames .. And mirrors that do not reveal anyone.. We stand like cupboard

doors .. With the sun-light reflected on us .. It goes off like the night .. Without any stars .. And without the company of stillness .. Lying in the cold bedding .. We get up after the night's gone .. Like the four walls.

Grandmother: Shut up .. What are the neighbours going to say about us?

Aunt: They won't say, but do.

Grandmother: It's all in your dreams.

Mother and Aunt:(Singing) The dream is so beautiful.. A breeze of longing makes it fly.

Child: What did you dream of?

Aunt: I dreamt that there was knocking on the door (**the sound of knocking on the door is heard**), and I heard the voice of two men.

Mother: That's an illusion.

Aunt: The sound was real. When I sat down, the knocking was heard again, and the voice was there again. I opened the door, but there was nobody there. The sound kept chasing me, and I kept opening the door without finding anybody there.

Child: How could you open the door without having the key?!

Aunt: **(Walking towards the Mother)**
What did you dream of?

Mother: I dreamt of myself standing and holding a gun, and firing it at a person who kept falling to the ground and then getting up after each of my shots ... He kept getting up, till I finally shot the gun at myself.

Aunt: Let's run away!

Child: Are you scared?

Aunt: (Looking at the window) The sun is setting. I can't find the watch.

Child: Search the album for what you've lost.

(She runs to open the album)
(She imagines the photos that are not there).

Aunt: This is my picture from graduation day. I came top of my class. And this is my picture the day I got my first job .. and this is on my promotion day, as I became head of the department before all of my colleagues.

Child: Is that why you left the album empty?

Aunt: It's not just the album that's empty.

Child: And what about your success?

Aunt: It wasn't enough for them.

Grandmother: What pictures are you so proudly talking about? Look at the women your age...

Aunt: What about the women my age? They haven't achieved my success.

Grandmother: It's your success that's pushing them away from you.

Aunt: You mean the key-makers?

Mother: The men behind the window. They look differently in the street than the way they look at home.

Child: (She finds a man's photograph in that same drawer) This is Daddy's picture, I'll hang it on the wall.

Mother: (Looking at her sister. The girl hangs the photograph.) Where did you find it? (addressing the girl)

Child: Among Auntie's pictures.

Mother: He took all his pictures along when he left. Did you find .. the key? Let's look for it (**nervously**) (**She heads to her sister's drawer**) Perhaps it's here.

Aunt: No, it's not here.

Mother: Let's look for it.

Aunt: I said it wasn't here.

Mother: Let's look again.

Aunt: I know.

Mother: I don't understand you.

Aunt: What is it that you want to understand? I'll gather the photos.

Mother: Let me search.

Aunt: I said there was nothing there.

Mother: Let me check.

Aunt: You have to believe me.

Mother: I have the right to know for sure.

Aunt: These are personal things.

Mother: Things have changed now.

Aunt: It isn't here .. Believe me!

Mother: Then where is it?

Aunt: I don't know.

Mother: Then let us search. **(She opens the drawer and finds letters.)**

Aunt: Forgive me.

Mother: **(Reads the letters.)**

Grandmother: I told you not to keep digging into the past. Everything was kept neatly in its place. Do you have to make a mess?

Mother: What's this?

Aunt: It's as you've read.

Child: What's wrong, Mama?

Aunt: Ask Mama to forgive me.

Mother: How come I didn't know? How come I didn't notice?

Aunt: Because he's clever at making secrets.

Mother: Clever!

Aunt: At many things.

Mother: What are you saying?!

Aunt: It was because of terrible loneliness .. of fear and need .. of being a woman who has the right to ask...

Mother: Ask for my husband!

Aunt: He is the one who asked me... and gave me attention and affection.

Mother: He gave me fear and worries.

Aunt: You had to understand that he didn't love you.

Mother: And did he love you?

Aunt: He used to tell me that both of us are the same.

Mother: The same indeed!

Aunt: What do you mean?!

Mother: I never mean anything. I used to find things in my life by surprise, without realising what was going on .. I've been bound by my eyes and dragged from one step to the other. Throughout my life, I never tried to see for myself.

Grandmother: Don't delve deeper and mess with each other. Everything was in place, so why do you have to turn it all into such a mess!

Aunt: Forgive me.

Mother: I need to forgive myself.

Aunt: He left us .. both.

Mother: Because he didn't ever need us.

Aunt: He stopped calling me.

Mother: He stopped coming to see his daughter.

Aunt: We were supposed to meet after the finalisation of your divorce. I was afraid you might be pregnant.

Mother: Getting pregnant by him was a mistake.

Aunt: Every step you took during your pregnancy felt as though you were treading over me .. Every moan of yours filled me with envy.. the clothes that became too tight for you .. your body that went all wrong .. the smell of milk in your breasts.. the pregnancy spots .. the swollen legs .. the smell of the anaesthesia .. the hot water .. and the people visiting all the time .. should have all been mine. It's my right that they should have been mine not yours. I'm the elder .. and not you. I'm the first .. and not you.

Mother: He never sympathised with me.. never shared my suffering or my misery after giving birth. I asked him what name should we give her? He told me name her after yourself since you bore a baby like yourself. I wished she wasn't born a girl so that she wouldn't be like me.

Aunt: **(Looking into the mirror)** My face is turning darker.

Grandmother: Put the yeast and honey mixture on your face.

Child: Make a mask, Auntie.

Aunt: Do you think the stuff under my eyes is because of work or are they wrinkles?

GrandMother: Boil tea and rub it into the skin under your eyes.

Child: With a cotton-wipe, Auntie.

Aunt: Oh .. My skin is getting drier

than before.

Grandmother: Rub it with glycerine.

Aunt: Is it because of the cold .. or my withering body?! Is it because of my body .. or the passage of time .. without being missed by anyone? My only fault in life was that I had ambitions that I sought to realise.

Mother: And did you?

Aunt: How could I do so, having the curtain always hanging in front of my eyes?!

Child: Our silk-curtained window...

Aunt: With its curtains moving...

Child: ... A breeze of longing makes it fly.

Aunt: ... moving in its place .. stayed always in its place .. All the curtain's movements stayed in their

place.

Child: Why didn't we ever take it down?!

Mother: I used to see his shadow always on the big curtain. I used to think of it as a compensation for him.

Aunt: I waited so long; and when the time had come, the key got lost.

Child: And when was that?

Aunt: On New Year's Eve.

Child: On my birthday?

Aunt: I had turned thirty...

Child: Daddy brought me...

Aunt: ... a heart with...

Child: ... a doll ...

Aunt: ... dancing alone .. I closed my eyes.

Child: She sang...

Aunt: I embraced the air and kept dancing and dancing like her (solo violin music of the song "Our Silk-curtained Window..."). He was watching me, and he kept approaching me. My eyes were closed, while he was getting closer .. I was moving, while he was getting closer .. I was dancing with the air, and then suddenly...

Child: Watch out, Auntie!

Aunt: It wasn't just the air now.

Child: Open your eyes, dolly. Mama, her eyes won't open.

(The Mother throws the Child's doll violently on the floor.)

Mother: **(To the Aunt)** I used to envy you for what you had.

Aunt: And I was looking at what you had.

Mother: I was suffering.

- Aunt:** You weren't suffering alone.
- Mother:** Do you want to find an excuse for what you've done?
- Aunt:** Find an excuse for what? Neither of us ended up with anything worthwhile.
- Mother:** He wanted to possess us both.
- Grandmother:** (To the Child) Are you happy now, you naughty little girl?! (The Child runs away and continues searching through the things, while the Grandmother chases her around.)
- Mother:** You knew that he was going to leave me.
- Aunt:** Believe me, I didn't.
- Mother:** So why did you tell me to ask for divorce? So that you could take him yourself!
- Aunt:** I felt sorry for your suffering.

Mother: You're the cause of my suffering.

Aunt: We are the ones who've inflicted this suffering upon ourselves .. Believe me, I didn't betray you.

Mother: So what do you call all what you've done?

Aunt: I'm not responsible for the feelings I have.

Mother: There isn't anything we're being held responsible for .. Everything happens against our wills! Till now I can feel his pressure on top of me, hurting me .. his pressure while I hold my screams .. his pressure while I suffer. I never felt any desire for him .. I always hated my body .. cursing it in disgust. Then, I would look at myself in the bathroom mirror and throw up. I would touch each and every part of my body under the shower .. scrubbing

my body .. scrubbing my body, as if wanting to purify it from sin. I used to spend the whole day scared of the night.. scared of lying down in bed .. scared of this happening to me again.

Child: Are you scared, Mama, when you're sleeping alone in bed? And what about you, Auntie?

Aunt: I spent all my life sleeping alone. I keep turning and tossing around, in the empty space beside me. He comes to my pillow so I hold him tight .. desire takes hold of me, and it presses hard on me .. I shake and tremble .. and when I calm down I find myself holding tight to my own self.

Mother: Weak...

Aunt: Criminal...

Mother: Stupid...

Aunt: Loose...

(Each of them looks in her mirror and addresses herself.)

Aunt: He didn't love you.

Mother: Neither loved you.

Aunt: His wish was to live with me.

Mother: He was using you .. that's all.

Aunt: He'll come back to me.

Mother: That's when you know where he is in the first place.

Aunt: I'll know. I'm stronger than you. I can go out to work, and whatever I want I can do.

Mother: So why didn't you? You're weak, and all you've got is an illusion to live in .. All your life is an illusion .. your freedom is an illusion .. and your strength is an illusion.

Grandmother: Enough .. How long am I to live carrying your burden?

Child: What burden?!

Grandmother: I spent all my time waiting .. all my life waiting .. telling myself that the day will come when they'll relieve me. You father wanted me to bear him a man.. but he died and left me with this burden.

Child: Grandpa, too, was waiting for a man?!

Grandmother: Till today, I keep carrying you as if I hadn't given birth to you. I'm in the pain of labour, but I can't push you out of me.

Mother and Aunt:Why not?

Grandmother: I worry about you, and fear for you.

Mother and Aunt:Till when?!

Aunt: Your fear has killed us.

Grandmother: Fear is protection.

Mother: Fear is a curtain that you hide yourself behind.

Child: Are you afraid of yourself, Granny?

Mother: Answer her, Mother .. Why are you hiding?

Aunt: What are you hiding from?

Grandmother: From people...

Child: There are people everywhere.

Grandmother: From shame...

Aunt: Shame is within us.

GrandMother: Enough of that. **(She gets up and goes to the mirror.)** I had dreams just like you .. I had hopes, and I kept waiting and living inside my dream.

Child: From behind the curtain? **(Upset.)**

GrandMother: On my pillow .. in the kitchen .. among pictures and magazines,

and the black-and-white films.

Child: So where is it gone?

GrandMother: The dream (*confused*) .. the dream.

Child: Granny, look for what you've lost.

GrandMother: I hid my dream in you .. inside your eyes .. in your hearts.

Mother and Aunt: But we can't see it.

GrandMother: I raised you as best as possible: Don't talk to anyone who's unknown to you (*recollecting the years of her life*).

Mother and Aunt: We didn't get to know anyone at all.

(The Child is sitting as if watching a comedy.. she laughs at what she hears, till the tears come rolling in her eyes.)

GrandMother: If anyone approaches you, run away.

Mother and Aunt: Nobody approached us at all .. Nobody touched us at all.

GrandMother: None of you must open the window .. People will watch us.

Mother and Aunt: Nobody saw us at all.

GrandMother: Do you want the neighbours to say that I'm leaving my daughters standing at the window .. watched by the people.

Mother and Aunt: We didn't see anybody at all.

GrandMother: It doesn't matter .. What matters is that people look at us with respect.

Child: How is that, Granny? Look at me with respect, Granny!

GrandMother: Shut up, girl.

Child: No .. I want to see respect. Look at me with respect, Mama!

Mother: Hush...

Child: No .. Look at me with respect,

Auntie!

Aunt: (She gives her a terrifying look.)

Child: Mama!

GrandMother: I never neglected any of you from the day I was to carry the burden alone.

Aunt: The clutch of your hand has left its mark on our hands.

GrandMother: I was afraid to let go, lest you should slip out of my grip.

Mother and Aunt: And where would have we gone then?

GrandMother: How would I know? "Mother of girls carries the burden till the day of her death."

Child: What burden?

GrandMother: What brought you into my life? Why should I become a grandmother by having a girl?

Child: I don't love you.

Mother: Shame on you, girl. Why do you say so?

Child: Because she doesn't love me.

Aunt: No .. Don't say so.

GrandMother: How come I don't love you?

Mother: And who sings you songs?

Aunt: And who tells you stories?

(The Child sits down at the Grandmother's feet, while the Grandmother pats her on the head.)

Child: When the Princess was locked up in the palace...

GrandMother: Clever Hassan came and let her out...

Child: Is Hassan alone clever .. and what about her?

GrandMother: She's a princess.

Child: And why isn't she a man? Do you see, Mama, the man, Hassan,

doesn't have keys .. just like us.
What did he do, Granny?

GrandMother: He used his brain. So he climbed the big tree and got in through the window.

Child: But the window is closed and curtained.

GrandMother: When he knocked, the Princess opened up to him.

Child: (She ponders .. confused. She then makes a sound without being seen by anyone.) Someone's knocking on the window, shall I open, Granny?

GrandMother: Shut up, girl.

Child: (Standing nervous) You're lying at me. Your stories are all lies. I don't want to hear them!

Aunt: Stories are there to entertain us, and that's all.

Child: I want to open the window.

Mother: Your grandmother said No.

Child: Till when?

GrandMother: Come on .. shut up!

Child: I won't shut up .. I want to open the window.

GrandMother: No opening of any windows!

Child: But why .. Granny .. why?

GrandMother: Don't be stubborn, or else I'll be angry at all of you!

Aunt: You're always angry .. from the moment you brought us into the world.

GrandMother: Me .. me?

Aunt: You hate your self that's reflected in us.

GrandMother: I'm responsible for you.

Mother and Aunt: Till the present moment?

GrandMother: Till the moment I die. Do you

want the people to blame me?!

Aunt: What people?! Who is it who asks after us?!

Mother: Who is it who cares for us?!

GrandMother: (To the girl, giving her a look of evil and vengeance) It's all because of you .. I'm too patient with you. Who knows what it is that you're up to?!

Child: I'll open the window.

GrandMother: Come here (chasing the girl. The Grandmother hits herself against the curtain and falls on her head).

(A freezing of the scene and a moment of silence).

Aunt: What's happened?!

Mother: What've you done?!

Child: The curtain's fallen (happily)!

Mother: Your grandmother isn't moving!

Child: The curtain's fallen!

Aunt: Impossible!

Child: The curtain's fallen .. the window's open!

Mother and Aunt:No .. Every window must have its curtain!

(The Mother and Aunt go to raise the curtain that has fallen over the Grandmother. They fix it on the curtain holder, then walk back to their places, where they act exactly as they did at the beginning of the performance. The Child is shocked and amazed. She walks and then sits down where the Grandmother was sitting, and starts doing like the Grandmother at the beginning.)

THE END