

Leaving Gdańsk Główny

The wheels on the suitcase break
Before we've even left Gdańsk Główny.

Mama knocks them on some steps and
Bang, crack, rattle –
No more use.
There are
plastic bits
Everywhere.

It's hard for Mama carrying a suitcase
And a bulging laundry bag.

It's hard for Mama
With everyone watching.

She's shy about the laundry bag,
An old nylon one
Borrowed from Babcia.

Tata took all the good luggage
When he left us,
When he walked out

On Mama and me.

‘There are clean clothes in it,’
Mama reminds me,
Like this were something
To be proud of.

And she won’t let me carry a thing
Except
my own
small bag.

‘You guard our passports, Kasienska.
Good girl, Kasienska.
And the money.
We’ll need those pounds.
Mind the money and the passports.
Good girl, Kasienska.’

Mama prattles as I scuttle along
behind her
Dodging business suits and
backpacks.

There is no one to recognise Mama

In the crowded station.

But all the same, she is shy
About that laundry bag.

‘Now keep close, Kasienska.
Keep close,’
Mama mutters as we leave Gdańsk Główny
And step aboard a bus for the airport

While I cling to the belt of her coat,
Too old for holding hands,
Even if she had one free.