My Grandmother's Houses

1
She is on the second floor of a tenement.
From her front room window you see the cemetery.

Her bedroom is my favourite: newspapers dating back to the War covering every present she's ever got since the War. What's the point in buying her anything my mother moans. Does she use it? Does she even look at it.
I spend hours unwrapping and wrapping endless tablecloths, napkins, perfume, bath salts, stories of things I can't understand, words like conscientious objector. At night I climb over all the newspaper parcels to get to bed, harder than the school's obstacle course. High up in her bed all the print merges together.

When she gets the letter she is hopping mad. What does she want with anything modern, a shiny new pin? Here is home. The sideboard solid as a coffin. The newsagents next door which sells hazelnut toffees and her Daily Record. Chewing for ages over the front page, her toffees sticking to her false teeth.

2
The new house is called a high rise. I play in the lift all the way up to 24. Once I get stuck for a whole hour.
From her window you see noisy kids playing hopscotch or home. She makes endless pots of vegetable soup, a bit of hoch floating inside like a fish.

Till finally she gets to like the hot running water in her own bathroom, the wall-to-wall foam-backed carpet, the parcels locked in her air-raid shelter. But she still doesn't settle down; even at 70 she cleans people's houses for ten bob and goes to church on Sundays, dragging me along to the strange place where the air is trapped and ghosts sit at the altar.

Connotations of things past/lost but still lingering - her way of life?
My parents do not believe. It is down to her.
A couple of prayers. A hymn or two.
Threepenny bit in the collection hat.
A flock of women in coats and fussy hats flapping over me like missionaries, and that is that, until the next time God grabs me in Glasgow with Gran.

3
By the time I am seven we are almost the same height.
She still walks faster, rushing me down the High Street till we get to her cleaning house. The hall is huge. Rooms lead off like an octopus’s arms.
I sit in a room with a grand piano, top open – a one-winged creature, whilst my gran polishes for hours. Finally bored I start to pick some notes, oh can you wash a sailor’s shirt oh can you wash and clean till my gran comes running, duster in hand.
I told you don’t touch anything. The woman comes too; the posh one all smiles that make goosepimples run up my arms. Would you like to sing me a song? Someone’s crying my Lord Kumbaya. Lovely, she says, beautiful child, skin the colour of café au lait.
‘Café oh what? Hope she’s not being any bother.’ Not at all. Not at all. You just get back to your work. On the way to her high rise I see her like the hunchback of Notre Dame. Everytime I crouch over a comic she slaps me. Sit up straight.
She is on the ground floor of a high rise. From her living-room you see ambulances, screaming their way to the Royal Infirmary.

Written in colloquial style to allow Kay to swap between voices - child, mother, grandmother.

Themes
* Old age
* Childhood
* Class
* Family relationships

Poem divided into 3 sections - each one describes a different house connected to the grandmother.