

Story

I know this story:

it's one of nuns and Christian brothers;
of drawing water from a well; of winters
without shoes; of delivering your sister

when the midwife couldn't come; of finding
a man in the barn, hanging; of sailing
on the open deck of the night boat

to Holyhead with one suitcase, bearing
two of everything; of working in a hospital; of sending
money home; of cinemas and dancehalls and clinging

to your own; of meeting my father
at a dance above the Gas Showrooms;
of the pale blue wedding dress (four months gone);

of leaving the reception while he stayed on,
drinking; of living with his mother
who complained about a mark on the wall

made by the touch of the baby's fingers;
of moving to a hostel whilst waiting to be housed
(no men allowed); of travelling to Ireland

with my brother; of the farmer
who would've taken you on, mother and son;
of the older man in England, who courted

you before you met my father, who treated
you to a show, Chu Chin Chow on ice,
who walked his dog past our house

every day until he died, the house the council gave
you once you had five, where my father
led you a hell of a life with the drink

and the babies and the miscarriage;
of the doctor who treated you like
you'd brought it on yourself; of hiding

from the rent man; of us all turned out nice,
hair brushed, clean socks, so the neighbours
wouldn't know; of how did it for us,

stayed with a man
 who was only home
 when the pubs closed,

or the horses ran
 the wrong way.
 I know this story;

it's yours, not mine. I've stopped listening.

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