

# Hospital Near Dublin

Category: Not Knowing

written by Anonymous | July 27, 2020

I tiptoed into the slippery hallway of the hospital near Dublin where I'd stayed for three weeks as a baby, trying to find some answers as to why I had been there. I still expected to be reprimanded by sisters—what nurses are still called in Ireland—with raw faces and pursed lips.

The walls were awash in institutional sea-foam green. My boyfriend at the time took a picture of my frightened face, the flash bleaching me out to only dark eyes.

There had been a row of cribs in the children's ward. Sisters dressed in navy nylon, their wimples scraping their plain faces, had bustled in with their rough, efficient hands to wipe me raw. Their metal implements had been like blades. I still can't sleep, wondering who will hulk in like a vulture and jab and press.

A young, pretty nurse might have found me cute. The other sisters would have jeered at any kindness: "You can't get attached to them. It will slow you down."

Maybe the young nurse was the one who tried to present me to my mother, who finally came three weeks later, the one whose shoulder I turned my head into. Maybe she was secretly pleased she'd won my affection.

The doctors, as exalted as priests, had wandered in occasionally, breathing whiskey from bulbous noses, their blunt, calloused fingers reeking of nicotine. On Sundays, they never came at all. I had studied the pattern of a red plaid blanket and rubbed it against my chin for comfort, forming a scar that lasted through childhood. That's why now, each Sunday lasts a month—or three weeks, at least.

"Where John? Where Mary?" My mother couldn't remember my age when I went in, but I was old enough to form rudimentary phrases. My mother's face grew tight with displeasure, her lips an eerie, upsidedown smile at the memory. She resented that I called for strangers' children whom I must have watched come and go through the slats of my crib. I still feel trapped.

My mother didn't remember what illness had required a three-week stay. "Your bladder? Your ear?" she'd muse.

She had screamed her pain into the overcast sky when she was banished from the hospital after leaving me. "We can't have the parents visiting at all. The children wouldn't stop crying, now would they?" the sisters had said in their clipped brogues.

During visiting hours, my mother could only watch through a window, like the giant statue of Jesus outside the front entrance, the bronze deepening to a

clay-colored red from the constant downpour.

*Anonymous*