

The Angels Walk the Floors of my House

by Stuart Carruthers

- I. When I got home that night I could hear laughter.
- II. At the top of the street a crowd had gathered outside the Hare and Hound. It was thrift pay-out night, the last Friday before Christmas and as their cries of excitement slowly drifted down the empty moonlit street, I stood for a few minutes enjoying other people's enjoyment before entering my home.
- III. The sight of my brothers' half naked bodies standing in line waiting their turn to use the bath was something mother had told me to get used to.
- IV. Half-filled pans of water hung precariously above the fire. It took a lot of water to clean five foul smelling quarry men. Pools of black soapy water flowed steadily towards the kitchen back door. The air filled with words that mother despised and God frowned upon. It wouldn't take me long to clean up after them.
- V. Entering the room my father gathered his things, checked himself one last time in the mirror, kissed me on both cheeks and was gone before I could say a word. He never went straight to the pub after leaving the house. Only I knew the route he took.

- VI. Just as father turned the corner into Church Square, his sons marched in the opposite direction up the centre of Vincent Street and straight into the smoke filled sauna that was Philip O Rourke's Ale house. And there they would stay until the early hours or their money ran dry.
- VII. Of an evening when my mother was alone, I remember her asking me to read from her favourite book. I would sit at her feet by the fire. She carefully platted my hair as I slowly followed my finger across the page. I always wondered how she knew the words I didn't when only I could see the page. When the men worked late or away from home, she would send me to Mr O Rourke's for a glass of Ale and when I returned everything would be in place for our evening class.
- VIII. I've lost count of the number of times I've read the notes hidden deep within father's book. Every time I read them I see another picture of her. Someone I didn't know, someone I would have loved to know. I admire how she managed to hold everything together when all around her was turmoil.
- IX. The few remaining embers in the fire just about removed the emerging night chill.
- X. "It's time for bed Kieron," I found myself repeating over the back yard gate as I desperately tried to get him in off the streets.
- XI. As we climbed under the heavy weighted coats that covered our bed, I recounted to my brother the stories that I had captured within my mind.
- XII. The Angels walk the floors of my house.