



0. A SPLIT-UP FAMILY - Story Preface

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When Evelyn Doyle's mother abandoned her children, Desmond (the children's father) sought help for their care. Although the six youngsters would be sent to Ireland's "Industrial Schools," Evelyn—then nine—worried that she would end-up in a "[Magdalene Laundry](#)." One such Irish place, from the early 20th century, is pictured above. Online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. PD

Desmond Doyle knew he had few options. He couldn't pay for a babysitter. The only relative who could possibly help was his aunt, but it was her son who had left town with Des' wife. The weary father told Mr. Wogan:

So it will have to be the schools. But just until I can get myself together. (Tea and Green Ribbons, page 55.)

Evelyn, sensing her plight, asked her father:

Are you sending me to the [Magdalens](#), Daddy?

The government wasn't sending the little girl to the [infamous Magdalene laundries](#), but the children would be split up. It was a heartbreaking scene:

One of the men managed to tear the boys away from Daddy's side. Daddy put me down and took my hand and we followed the court officer and my brothers outside. An enormous black car was waiting at the bottom of the courthouse steps. Mr. Wogan led my brothers to the car. Daddy let go of my hand and ran over to them. He knelt down on the path and hugged all my brothers together. He was crying again and the boys were too. (Tea and Green Ribbons, page 61.)

Evelyn was sent to the "convent at High Park" in Dublin. The boys (Maurice, Noel, John, Kevin and Dermot) were sent to the Boys Industrial School in Kilkenny, a medieval town which was once the capital of Ireland. (The City of Kilkenny is the site of a famous [castle](#), built in the 13th century, behind the [River Nore](#) at the southeastern end of town.)

Despite its reputation as a tourist destination, Kilkenny was no place for the Doyle boys. Life in the [picturesque town](#) was difficult for everyone who lived inside the walls of the industrial school.

Desmond Doyle had turned to the government for help, but he didn't know the law. He had no clue that even if he got himself "together," he would not decide when (or if) the children came home.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/A-SPLIT-UP-FAMILY-Evelyn-Changing-The-Law-In-Ireland>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/A-SPLIT-UP-FAMILY-Evelyn-Changing-The-Law-In-Ireland>

Inside a Magdalene Laundry - Early 20th Century

This image depicts the scene inside an unidentified Magdalene Laundry, in Ireland, during the early 20th century.

The photo of young girls working hard cleaning piles of dirty clothes—long before the days of washing machines—appears, among other places, in *Do Penance or Perish. A Study of Magdalen Asylums in Ireland*, edited by Frances Finnegan.

Evelyn Doyle—whose mother had left her family, making the young child a candidate to be removed from her father's care and sent to work in such a laundry—had every reason to worry about going to "the Magdalenes." Years later, official investigations concluded that they were very difficult places, especially for children.

As noted in *Do Penance Or Perish* (at pages 125-26):

The wisdom of consigning "Industrial" children to the sole care of untrained, rarely supervised and virtually unaccountable nuns is questionable, particularly if such women belonged to Orders that were enclosed [in other words, closed to the outside world] ... It is to be feared that, obsessed as they were with "sin," they [the nuns] extended this dark side of their vocation to the children; but such was not the purpose of "Industrial" Schools, nor should it have been assumed that abandoned, orphaned, or even illegitimate juveniles, were necessarily of the "evil" class.

If this entrusting of "Industrial" youngsters to [individuals] whose powers over their charges were virtually unchecked - if such a policy can be seen in retrospect, and in the light of recent exposures of brutality and neglect in Irish Industrial Schools, to have been a grotesque abrogation of official responsibility, with disastrous, far-reaching consequences - how much more undesirable was the submission of such children (the most vulnerable in the State) to enclosures containing Magdalene Asylums, and to an Order preoccupied with penance and sin? (Do Penance or Perish, pages 125-26.)

Today, people in Ireland are still dealing with the aftermath of living in such places.

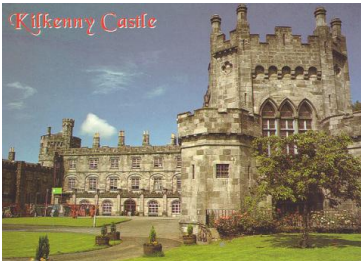
Click on the image for a better view.

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. *Do Penance or Perish*, the book described above, was published in 2001 by Congrave Press, Ireland, Piltown, Co. Kilkenny (2001).

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Kilkenny Castle

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View of Area Near Kilkenny

Photo taken October 31, 2007, by "Sarah 777." Online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons. PD

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Town of Kilkenny

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