

# No One Wants You

A Memoir of a Child  
Forced into Prostitution

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## TWO

### *A Commodity*

In the months after my foster-father's death, local men began to call on my foster-mother. My foster-brother was working for the local farmers as a labourer by then, so I didn't see much of him. In February farmers would pick out labourers for a six-month contract and the boys and men picked would go off and live on the farm. They were treated like slaves really. The following year he went off to another part of the country and was living there, sleeping in the lofts of the outhouse. I only met him once after that.

The men's visits were few and fairly sporadic at first, but it soon seemed that there were always men in the house in the evenings. There were usually other women present, whom I did not know. They used to come to the house to 'ceílídh', the Gaelic word for party, pronounced as 'kayley'.

The numbers were always low, as few as two and seldom more than four. If too many people turned up, she would arrange for them to return on some other night. She used to tell them that she did not want to "attract attention". Playing cards, singing and drinking stout, porter, whiskey or poteen were the main ingredients of this 'ceílídh'. But there was an extra element to this ceílídh that I did not understand until later.

My foster-mother and some of the other women used to provide some form of sexual servicing for these men, in return for financial payment. This could happen at any time during the night's *ceilidh*. A man and woman would disappear outside. After a bit of time had passed, they would return, usually in good humour, laughing and joking. The money would always be paid to my foster-mother.

Some nights, after the men had left, my foster-mother would tell me to get into bed with her. She told me to touch her 'thrush'. I just remember doing what I was told. There was no cuddling or kissing. There was nothing like that. I just followed what she said. I was afraid not to do it. I always did what I was told otherwise I'd be put out.

As time went on, the number of men increased and their visits became more regular. Late evening to early in the morning became the favourite calling time of this growing retinue of men of all ages.

I was now seven years of age.

I became the object of their amusement and entertainment. I had always been used to local men touching my body. They always touched me in places that made me feel uncomfortable but they never did it blatantly while my foster-father was alive. Now that he was dead, my life was being made a misery.

When my foster-mother began to entertain these local farmers, she used to send me to Meade's pub for whiskey, porter and bread. She used to tell these men, that she took me in, because nobody wanted me. On these visits when they used to play cards, I would have to bring them drinks.

When I brought their drinks, they would put an arm around me, and touch me on my chest and between my legs. I always seemed to be trying to escape from being held by some part of my body, by somebody that I feared and who got too close for comfort. These men would fondle me and touch me. Sometimes they would lift me up in the air and

hold my legs apart so they could all see under my legs. I was constantly trying to avoid their grabbing hands.

They teased me. I had to justify my existence as they pestered me with questions that they knew I would have to answer. It was a kind of test.

“What is your name?”

“Celine.”

“What sorta name is dat?”

“We never heard dat sorta name ’round here before.”

“You must be from England?”

“I’m not.”

“You must be an American then?”

“I am not an American.”

“You must be from Russia so?”

“I’m not from Russia.”

“You must be a boy!”

“I am not a boy!”

“What are you so?”

“I’m a girl!”

“Girls don’t wear trousers.”

“I’m not wearing trousers.”

”You are so!”

“I am not, they are knickers.”

These kinds of verbal preambles always led to me being caught and fondled. If that wasn’t happening they were taking place as I struggled to escape the imprisoning grasp of a pair of large, strong, cow-dung stained, agricultural hands.

During their thinly disguised attentions, these men were not rebuked by my foster-mother, so they took it as acceptable to continue with their behaviour, despite my protests. If I objected, or ran away, they would make fun of me. The next time that they got the opportunity, they would touch me, more aggressively, or invade my body internally with their fingers. If I objected again, my foster-mother would condone their behaviour by saying to me, often while

I was in the grip of a large rough farmer, "Sure, he's only having a bit of fun with you."

With all the late night visits, I was not able to go to sleep at night. I was afraid to go to sleep, but I was also encouraged by my foster-mother to stay awake, to pander to the drunken antics of these nocturnal visitors. Consequently, I was not always able to get up in the morning for school.

I found that my reputation was not confined to the house. One afternoon, as I was returning home from school, I realised that a car was travelling slowly, close behind me. As cars were a rare sight on this part of the road, I turned to look at it. It passed me on the road and stopped about ten yards farther up.

A local man that I knew, got out of the car, and came up to me. He asked, "Will you come into that field with me?"

"Why?" I asked.

He grabbed my body in the area between my legs and said to me, "That's why."

I swung around in his grasp, in an attempt to escape, but he grabbed me tighter, and tried to lift me. At that moment, a man with a horse and cart appeared a short distance away. The man who was holding me was distracted, and dropped me on the ground. He ran to his car, opened the door, jumped in, started the engine and sped away.

As soon as I was free of his grasp, I stood up and ran to a house nearby. Three sisters, the Misses O'Mahony lived there together. They often greeted me as I passed to and from school. I knocked and knocked on the door. I thought that they would understand my dilemma, and rescue me.

The three of them came out to the door together, to see what the commotion was about. They did not invite me in, but I told them the full story of what had just happened to me. Almost in unison, they laughed heartily. One of them said, "Ahhh Shure Mr Murphy is our friend."

The other two ladies agreed with their sister's opinion.

As far as they were concerned, that was the end of the matter. They said “goodbye”, turned and with short little steps, went inside together, one after the other. I was left standing on their doorstep, alone. I walked home dejected, but on guard. I was now aware of dangers that I previously did not expect or know existed.

At school, some of the children began to call me “whore”. When they said it they pronounced it, as “you’re a hoor”. I got used to hearing this regular chant of abuse.

During the day young men in their early twenties used to spend a lot of time around the house. They used to engage my foster-mother in friendly banter, mostly tinged with a sexual flavour. She did not discourage their visits.

While relatively young, these fully grown adults were always touching me and doing horrible things to me that made me so scared of them. They used to catch me and hold me down on the ground and poke my private parts with their hands, bottles, sticks and anything that they could find. I used to complain to my foster-mother about their behaviour but she just used to say, “I’m not getting any money for looking after you, so you will just have to look out for yourself.”

I was not going to school very often at this stage. I had certain chores to do around the house every day. One of these chores was to clean the ashes out of the grate, where the fire had been the previous evening. I had to leave it clean for my foster-mother to set the fire again. I put the ashes in a metal bucket and I then had to dispose of them, by a wall at the bottom of the garden. This area of the garden was where all the household rubbish was dumped. It was considered unsightly and was therefore not visible from the house.

On September 4, 1956, I was out in the garden, putting out the ashes. As I bent over to empty the bucket of ashes, I felt somebody rushing towards me.

It was a man.

It was one of the group of younger men that used to hang around our house.

He pushed me against the wall.

He raped me.

He so brutally raped me.

It was the speed with which it happened. It was so unexpected. One minute I was turning a bucket upside down, the next minute I was completely overpowered by him.

I did not have time to react.

I did not have time to think.

He pinned my right hand on the ground with his heavy hob-nailed boot. He ripped my knickers away from my body. He pushed my face into the ground. Then he tried to push his erect penis into my body. I was seven years old.

Blood spurted everywhere.

He grunted and groaned, and finally withdrew himself.

My nose and two fingers on my right hand were broken. I felt it when they snapped. It was extremely painful. I endured the pain and did not complain, as I was afraid of the consequences.

My nose causes me untold trouble to this very day. Today, it is still very obvious, as the unset bone protrudes at an odd angle.

As I grew older, and under the toll of negative comments regarding my entire existence, I began to consider myself entirely ugly in every way. The broken bones in my fingers have never been set or repaired by a doctor. They were never examined by anyone and the breaks were allowed to set as they were left.

In fact they have caused me much embarrassment, as I now work within the medical profession. My colleagues are often dismayed by my injuries and the obvious absence of any proper treatment. My excuses, which are always lies, do

not entirely satisfy them. They are very sympathetic but they usually don't ask me any more questions. I think they know that I am not telling the truth.

As he left me lying on the ground, I heard him say, "You can't tell anybody about this, because they won't believe you and because nobody wants you anyway."

I was completely in shock.

I was unable to move.

I may have been unconscious for a while.

When I realised what had happened to me, and where I was, I rose shakily to my feet. I stumbled my way down the garden, towards the house. Covered in ashes and blood, I collapsed in a heap on the ground outside the back door.

I was shaken to my feet by my foster-mother, who yelled at me, "What happened to you? What the fuck happened to you?"

I told her the story, as best I could. Incredulously, she berated me for telling lies about the man. She must have realised that I was in poor condition, as she did not beat me physically on this occasion, as she would normally have done. I was undressed and put in my bed.

My bed was by now two railroad sleepers resting on top of each other, as the tea chest had long since disintegrated. I whimpered in pain, all through that day and the night. Although I was haemorrhaging badly from my vaginal area and my broken bones were extremely painful, my foster-mother did not take me to a doctor.

After that rape of my young body, at the age of seven, I came to believe that I was there, because nobody ever wanted me, and whatever happened, it didn't matter, because no one cared. So, I believed it was entirely normal that whatever bones were broken, or tissue torn, they would remain that way. I believed that medical help was not an option for me. I was not good enough to receive it.

As I healed up after this rape, my foster-mother felt that

I had been initiated into the world of sex. But because of my injuries, infection set in. This was extremely painful and it was often itchy.

The same man, who still came to the house most nights, would watch me. If he caught me scratching my vaginal area he would say to me, "You are scratching there because you want it again, don't ya?"

I hated him saying things like that to me.

I hated him.

\* \* \* \*

Men continued to visit the house on most nights. But now, instead of serving drinks, I became the attraction. Word got around the area that anybody who wanted to have sex with a very young girl, who had not yet reached puberty, could come and pay money to my foster-mother. She ensured they would all be accommodated. They would pay her money and then she would tell me to go out into the field with these men.

They had their pleasure with a young girl and then left me there in a heap on the ground.

It was all done in silence. I was told, "If you tell anyone the purple prick will hurt you more." They had the power. I thought they could actually kill me.

I cannot count the number of times that it happened to me. It happened in fields, in cow barns, in hay sheds, anywhere that presented an opportunity. An unknown number of faceless men, with forgettable names, in hidden places, for what seemed like an eternal number of years. There was no one to rescue me. I was born in the wrong place at the wrong time, to the wrong parents. It could have happened to anyone but I was the unlucky one.

As I write this, I am distraught just thinking where and how often it happened to me, at such a young age.

You cannot breathe.

You cannot think.

You cannot scream.

You cannot see.

You cannot struggle.

You cannot escape.

I cannot escape the memories.

My life continued. I was ten when I made my confirmation. I went to the church alone that time and there was no breakfast or fuss. I was wearing a white dress, with black shoes and white socks. When I went up to the Bishop I said my name was Celine O'Brien but the nun corrected me and said Celine Clifford. I didn't think anything more about it at the time. I just went home after the ceremony and it was just like any other day.

I spent most days looking after my foster-mother and doing everything in the house. I was the skivvy but it was better than the night-time. At one stage I was taken to hospital. I'm not sure when. I think I was 9 or 10 and I was terrified. When the nurse came around with the doctor they leaned over my cot-style bed, which had bars on either side. I must have got myself into bed because I had left my knickers on. She told me to take them off and I remember looking at the light-shade, with the rays of light dancing off it, and I was so frightened. I took them off and felt embarrassed. I didn't know why I was there and there was nobody to tell me. I had no one to help me. On the night I was taken away in the ambulance I'd been wearing a royal blue coat and I was bleeding. When I was taken back to the house a week later I had different clothes on. They had to stop the ambulance on the way home because I got sick. I still don't know why I was there. I never will know why I was there.

Years later when I went back to try to find out I did see a copy of my chart. All it listed was my date of birth, my pulse

rate, my temperature and the words 'it is small for its age'. There was nothing else. I was sure that it would all be written down. It wasn't. There was no reason to explain why I was bleeding. They may have spoken to the police but nothing happened and there are no other records.

The district nurse did visit every year and she had to write a report. I remember I was cooking dinner one time she came and was ill another time. I found out later that all she ever said on the reports was that I was 'underweight'. It was always the same vague note.

I get flashbacks of these gruesome events. They bring me to a place that nobody else can come with me. They bring me down within myself. They bring me so low that I can be there for days on end. I find myself reliving those awful thoughts alone.

My presence at school fell to almost zero. Nobody from the school seemed to notice. I don't think the nuns ever said anything to the Cruelty Man as he didn't try to catch me out. The parish priest did call in but all he said was that I should go to mass more often. I missed school terribly. But, by then, I lived in my own little world, isolated, from other people, all emotions, all pain and all feelings. I accepted the sexual abuse as normal behaviour. I thought that I was being punished. I actually came to believe that I deserved it.