



## Childhood Interrupted

*Kathleen O'Malley*

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## **Childhood Interrupted** Kathleen O'Malley

In 1950, Kathleen O'Malley and her two sisters were legally abducted from their mother and placed in an industrial school ran by the Sisters of Mercy order of nuns, who also ran the notorious Magdalene Homes. The rape of eight-year-old Kathleen by a neighbour had triggered their removal - the Irish authorities ruling that her mother must have been negligent. They were only allowed a strictly supervised visit once a year, until they were permitted to leave the harsh and cruel regime of the institution at the age of sixteen. But Kate survived her traumatic childhood and escaped her past by leaving for England and then Australia when the British government offered a scheme to encourage settlement there. Fleeing her past again, Kate worked as a governess in Paris and then returned to England where she trained as a beautician at Elizabeth Arden. She married and had a son.

A turning point in Kate's life came when she applied to become a magistrate and realised that she had to confront her hidden personal history and make it public. This is her inspiring story.

## **Childhood Interrupted Details**

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Author : Kathleen O'Malley

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### **Maggie says**

For me a certain amount of Deja Vu in this narrative. The true story of a young Irish girl and her siblings who were taking away from their mother and put into a convent orphanage where they were thoroughly mistered and institutionalised. Chilling reading!

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### **Jules says**

Heartbreaking in parts.  
Well worth the read!

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### **James says**

This book was a disappointment because I went into it with a huge interest. I had heard about Irish industrial schools and was told that this book gave a great first hand account. It certainly does, but the execution of the prose and the development is extremely weak. Kathleen O'Malley is without a doubt an astounding woman with a measure of bravery I couldn't even fathom coming close to, but her horrifying account of being snatched from her mother and institutionalized in the corrupt Catholic run industrial school fails at gripping the reader and holding them through the short memoir. I found myself getting disinterested in the events as they repeated, and though a theme was the repetitive mundanity of her imprisonment, it was hard to stay focus or want to continue reading. Her language and use of slang is almost directly taken from McCourt, and its upsetting that such a powerful story is lost in the pages.

Needless to say, the book is essential for anyone studying Ireland, and is eye opening in knowing about this cruel and horrific institution that existed not to long ago. It is moving and heartbreaking, but you'll have to apply your own empathy and belief because the connection just isn't there for much of it despite its powerful reflection on human indecency.

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### **Sarah says**

Kathleen O'Malley is a remarkable woman. She overcame so much – being taken away from her mother, being raped as only a young child, and suffering years of abuse at the hands of sadistic nuns. I'm not a violent person, but I wanted to go back in time and beat some of these nuns to a bloody pulp for the horrible way they treated the children. The only silver lining is knowing that eventually the truth came out. The suffering that these children went through can never be erased. However, this was really a story of survival because O'Malley managed overcome so much. It's great that she became a successful as she did. This was really a 3 1/2 star read rather than three-star.

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### ♥Xeni♥ says

I got this book early this morning and I picked it up on the way to work. I couldn't focus all day for reading, and just now finished it!

It was such a moving story about Kathleen O'Malley and her life in the "justice" system of Ireland in the 50's and 60's. She was taken from her loving, caring mother and put into a sort of "religious workhouse" for orphans all because she was born out of wedlock. She was raped and then put back into another prison-like confinement until she was 16. She spent almost her whole adult life still in this prison due to the brainwashing she received at such a young age.

I was really really glad to read this book. It's nothing something easy to digest (sort of like *A Child Called It*) but it did make me rethink my own childhood and how good I've had things.

I love Kathleen's candid take on her whole life. She has accepted what happened to her, and now wants to share with the rest of the world. Raising awareness for these things is just so important, I find. Plus, it makes me feel justified to be anti-institutions, especially religious ones.

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### Sabrina Rutter says

I give this book five stars although it had several grammatical errors, because I simply couldn't put it down! A nun once told Kathleen that her mother was more sinned against than sinning, and I couldn't agree more. This book had me in tears as I thought about how Kathleen's mother must have felt. She was a single mother who was doing a fine job raising her daughters. Although they were poor she gave her girls everything they needed. Her only crime had been to have children outside of marriage.

Many people who grew up in these industrial schools were robbed of their life's potential. Like Kathleen they were brainwashed into believing that they were the lowest of the low. It's sad that so many children were abused in the name of God, and so many families were torn apart for nothing more than being poor. They said Kathleen's mother was destitute, yet her mother provided more for her daughters than the industrial schools ever had. This book will make you angry, and then it will make you cry, and when you're finished reading it you will have an ache in your heart for the people who went through these institutions.

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### Patricia Kaniasty says

I loved the deep emotional feelings this story gave me. Reminded me a lot of "Angela's Ashes" by Frank McCourt. It's very difficult for me to believe that places like this really existed.

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### Alice says

This is a moving story of one person's experience of being sent to two of the Industrial Schools in Ireland, run by the Sisters of Mercy. It is terrible, heart wrenching and angry, just as it should be. Not for the faint hearted. It is worth bearing in mind that it is a memoir, not a novel, when it comes to the writing itself. But if

you're interested in Ireland, its harsh history and the Catholic church, it is essential reading.

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### **Kirsty Noah-whitlock says**

Started reading this today when realised I have already read it!! Thank goodness I now use the Goodreads and I don't do this that often anymore lol. From what I remember this was a really good book but a very sad story.

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### **Kay Wells says**

True Story set in the 1950's the care system for children in Ireland. Growing up under the cruel regime of the sisters of mercy is definitely an eyeopener to those of us who are not aware of the Irish system from that era. Well worth a read.

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### **Nichola O'hara says**

An honest account of one woman's story but also touches on the ingrained abuse by not only the church but also the government in Ireland. This woman is not a writer, it seems most of her life was spent trying to undo the psychological damage the state put her family through. Her coping method for much of her life was staying silent and it took many years to accept what her experience had done to her. She is lucky to have been able to move on in life. She admits to being in the institutional mindset and how it still creeps into her life each day. I think it is courageous she was appointed a magistrate and was so open about her family's painful history. She never claims to be a writer, this is a story that needed to be told. She did so with her best effort and for that reason I gave it 5\*\*s. Thank you Caitlin Ni Malley for your strength in writing this.

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### **Colleen Blogg says**

I couldn't put this book down. It was terrible how these children were treated. Very good read but so sad.

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### **chucklesthescot says**

Kathleen is one of the daughters of a single mother in Ireland at a time when unmarried women are targeted by the social services. When Kathleen's new father dies in a fight, the authorities try to take the girls into care. After winning their freedom, the mother faces losing her children again when 8 year old Kathleen is raped by a neighbour. The girls are sentenced to live in an industrial school run by brutal nuns until they are 16.

This wasn't my cup of tea at all. It was too descriptive about everything-every detail about the house, the street, the neighbours and neighbourhood and took an eternity to get into the story. By the time the real story began, I was already getting bored with the book. The story inside the school is brutal and cruel and I will never understand how Christians can treat children like this and truly believe that they are doing the children

good. It disgusts me. This is not the best example of this type of book but it will interest anyone who wants to read about the industrial schools.

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### **Dorothyd says**

I started this book yesterday, and I couldn't keep it down until I'd finished. It's a quick read, but also a difficult one, as the story is very very sad... I can't understand how children can have been treated that way for years! The writing was not the best I have come across, but I understand that this story needed to be written and read. I don't regret reading it and I recommend it to everyone liking true story and not minding a sad one.

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### **Karen says**

Not the best writing, but a compelling story. An amazingly well balanced first hand account of life inside an Irish Industrial School and the lasting effects on individuals and families.

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