

DESMOND DOYLE CASE STUDY

Times are tough for Desmond Doyle in 1960 Ireland. He is out of work and struggling to provide for his wife and three young children. Desmond has a drinking problem. He and his wife often argue over his drinking. Desmond also has an anger problem. Still, Desmond shows love and affection towards his children. He loves them deeply and cares for them willingly.

One day, Desmond awakes and discovers his wife has run off with another man. He attempts to locate her by contacting his mother-in-law. She either does not know where she is or withholds the information.

Desmond struggles as a single father. There is still no work available. His father offers assistance but he cannot relieve his financial difficulties. Dealing with his loss and the pressure of single parenting causes Desmond to drink more frequently.

Desmond is reported to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children by his mother-in-law because of his inability to care adequately for his three children. He is compelled to accept charity and support services from the local nuns. Eventually the court rules that his children be placed in two Catholic homes for destitute children and are to remain there until his circumstances improve. Desmond's sons are placed in a home for boys, and his daughter Evelyn, a home for girls.

Both Desmond's anger and drinking increase during the time his children are in "placement." One night, while drinking at the local pub, Desmond attempts to hit a priest over his anger with the Catholic Institution. He misses and is struck by the priest. Later, after discovering his daughter was struck for talking back to a nun, he barges into the home unannounced demanding to see his daughter. He threatens to harm the nun ("tear her limb from limb") if she ever lays a hand on his daughter again. Desmond attempts to secure legal representation to get his children back. He is told to come back when his circumstances improve. On another occasion, in a final act of desperation, Desmond unsuccessfully attempts to kidnap his children. Again, he had been drinking.

Eventually, Desmond's luck begins to change for the better. He secures regular employment. He meets a young woman who is supportive of him and cares for him. Sadly, Desmond's only consistent support, his father dies of a heart attack. He does not allow this event to cause him to relapse. He gives up drinking beginning a life of sobriety and secures legal representation to seek the return of his children. Desmond loses in a lower court. Irish law requires that, for the children to be returned to a parent, the consent of both parents must be given. Desmond is unable to locate the mother who is immigrated to Australia.

Desmond Doyle does not give up. He continues his legal battle taking his case to the Irish Supreme Court.