

## Mr. Mulcahy

Wherein Mickey decides fostering is not for him and the whole train is set in motion.

They didn't let me go home straight after, the government. They said I had to stay out a while, see what's the matter and if I was a junkie. I wasn't like, but I took a few different things at different times. Mostly for a buzz. The main thing they were all asking me is did my mother give me stuff and I told them all the same thing I told everyone else – 'course not. And she didn't neither. Not really anyway. The way it started, I think, is we both were taking things when we'd find them off the table, me and Cillian. And my mam would be, Did ye see tablets on the table? And we'd be like, No. She might of half-believed us for a while but after that she knew it was us and she said if we were going to be taking them things we should stick to the hash only and she got us do jobs for her so she'd give us hash-only so we'd stay away from the tablets. She never gave us no tabs, like. Not around then anyway. It was the opposite. We earned hash with jobs so we'd stay off the tabs, like, see? But the jobs was mostly getting tabs or bags of hash off one fella, Moxie. Or else we'd be dropping them off someplace else, like, for our mother other times.

Moxie'd give us extra tabs too if we agreed to bring them to a kind of posh fella who lived in Carrigaline, so we got hash and tabs easy enough after a while. And we got our own gang too working with us, like, off and on, more or less. Just delivering mostly, is all. Make a few bob. I was the youngest in the gang. I'd say I was probably five at the time, starting off, Ahahahahaah! Around that.

But at this time I'm talking about now, I was probably around ten or thirteen (something like that, like) and after taking tabs I found in an old house me and Cillian were in, see. Then I collapsed and he brung me to the hospital. I never seen the tabs I got in that house before so that's why I tried them ones.

At this time, social workers and all them was looking to place me in a home for a bit if they knew I wasn't a junkie, so I had to give urine samples every couple of days and do interviews and chats with different people. Beors mostly, like. They were alright too. And I had to go to school all the time and I stayed with Foxy Bill a few days first and then they found a home for me near there with a woman called Bizzy. She hadn't a clue, Bizzy. She'd be like, Oh don't do that now! God bless us! and I wouldn't be after doing nothing bad, like. She had a stairs an' all in her house, Bizzy, so I'd just be sliding down it and she be screaming. Or I'd be climbing out the window just to see the view up above, cos there was a grand view in the gaff, and she'd be screaming at me again, Oh don't do that now! God bless us!

She had a garage with all tools and stuff and I told her I'd make her a house for her dog, Bootsy, cos he was a lovely fella and I love dogs, me, and I done woodwork one time, I was telling her. But she was like, Oh don't do that now! God bless us!

Her husband was dead she told me one time and she showed me a photo of him that was on top of the telly. I thought it was like a funny fillum when she got all sad so I gave her a push and laughed and she started crying for no reason. I didn't push her hard I swear it, like. It was to give her a laugh, like, but she was all bothered or something all the time.

Another time, one time I accidentally ripped the wallpaper – just a tiny bit, like and she was the same, Oh don't do that!

I never even made a hole in the wall or nothing! And one time or two times I had dirty clothes that was full of mud and she was screaming again when she came in and I was lying on the settee. My mother even told me do it when we were on a telephone call cos Bizzy was paid a load extra off the government if she had to clean the settee, but Bizzy didn't even care, she just wanted a clean settee. Every time she'd just be screaming to God. I said it to my mam later that Bizzy didn't like when I dirtied the couch and my mam goes, The gratitude of some people!

I always remember that cos it was funny the way she said it like, all posh: The gratitude of some people!

That woman done my head-in in the end, Bizzy, and I stayed in Foxy Bill's place after for a few days or weeks til they found someone else.

And I went to school a lot of days and I had the odd visit home every now and again to see my brother Cillian and we'd do stuff a few hours, but we never broke into a house together no more or anything like that. Just talked and stuff mostly. He told me he was doing a load with Con (our Uncle, like) and our mother mainly. And it was his birthday one time too so we had a party at home and my urine failed a few times after that cos you need a few weeks to come down, like.

Next, I got a place with a fella called Mr. Mulcahy who was alright, like. That's when I met him, I think, Mr. Mulcahy around then. He was kind of old and kind of foxy too like Bill, or blondie brown hair at least, like. And skinny. He was skinny-out. He had a small beard on him, I think kinda, and probably a moustache too and he smoked a load. His first name was Desmond but I always called him Mr. Mulcahy. I don't remember why, cos mostly I call people by their first name if they're friendly enough, 'specially if they're not an officer or a Judge, like, and he was probably the nicest to me growing up, Mr. Mulcahy, like. I'd say he preferred that name to Desmond. With me anyway. He was a social worker before, but not anymore. Retired, like, but still he'd look after the odd kid now and again for a bit if they was stuck, he said, and if they couldn't find no one else to take them. Like me, like.

He never went out I don't think, 'cept to take me places if I needed to. Nobody really took me places where I wanted before, mostly cos I'd go anywhere, me. He was like, Where would you like to go, Mickey?

And I'd be after getting a shock and say Fota Wildlife Park, so. And he'd bring me there, like! And I chased a giraffe and the guards came and chased me and I was running around the giraffes and they were in their truck chasing me. They took us back to a room, after, and Mr. Mulcahy was mad-out at me, giving out in a whisper. And the main fella in charge goes it was a very serious offence, but Mr. Mulcahy, fair dues to him, got him to chill after a while and said I loved animals and I didn't know at the time I wasn't allowed run around with the giraffes, but I knew it now. And yer man goes it's very dangerous cos they could've kicked me and killed me and Mr. Mulcahy goes we all agree it's best to keep the young lad safe and away from danger.

So we got a spin off a fella called George after that, whose job it was to drive us around for the day down there. He took us everywhere in his jeep and he learned us all about the monkeys and things an' we going. That was the best day of my life I'd say, down there. They gave us food an' all for free in the restaurant. I could be a zookeeper in charge of elephants. I'd be good with elephants I'd say. There was no elephants in Fota though.

Another time when he asked, I said I'd go to Sligo, cos I was nearly there one time. But Mr. Mulcahy goes, That's a bit far – let's go to the Mallow Races instead. Cos that's still in Cork, see? He said he liked putting money on the horses, but he wasn't allowed bring me, so if he brung me and if I told on him, he might get into trouble. I said I wouldn't say nothing and until right now I never said it neither. I don't know why I never really, but I just thought of it now. Might've worked better if I did and get away from all the other stuff, now I think of it.

He'd be there with his racing book and choosing his horses and then he goes to me, Here, take this and put a fiver on Number One Son at 2:15 and bring me back the change.

And he gives me a tenner and I'm holding onto it and he's not even looking at me, but he's already studying his racing book and I'm still holding out the tenner, in shock like. I goes, I could just run away with the money! and he goes, You could.

Nothing else like, just, You could. And I goes, What'll ya give me, so, if I put on the bet for you? He looks at me and has a think and goes, If you give me the change, I'll pay you two euro for your work or else you can have ten percent of any possible winnings.

I had a think about that, cos I'm no daw either like, and I asked him what are the odds on the horse he's putting on and he told me 3/1 and I thinks about it again and goes I'll take the bet. And when I'm going off he calls me back and goes if I knew how much I'd get for ten percent at 3/1 on a fiver and I told him One fifty.

I could tell he had a shock when I knew it. And when I got back and gave him his change, he goes, Why didn't you take the two euro if you knew the most you'd win would be One-fifty? And I goes, You'd get a better craic off the One-fifty.

The horse didn't win, but it was good craic. Worth a euro and fifty cents anyway. I'm thinking now though, now I think of it, I could've taken the two euro he was giving me and put that on the horse in the first place and I'd of gotten two euros' worth out of it 'stead of one-fifty! I'd say he even knew that an' all though, cos he was the cleverest man ever from all them books he'd be reading.

I was in Mr. Mulcahy's for a good while. A year around I'd say. Mostly he'd be taking me to school in the morning and he'd be mostly outside and pick me up after that and take me back home, to where he lived, like. We'd be walking back. I was doing that ages and they were always saying I was doing good, most days. And Mr. Mulcahy'd be always saying well done all the time. That school was mostly OK, but I don't want to talk about that place. Mostly talking stuff and sometimes writing. Boring enough.

And my mother'd be calling and telling me get a new coat and I'd have to get a new one or look out for expensive big books, she'd say, like a big Bible in Mr. Mulcahy's, but mostly I only saw old ones nobody'd be bothered with so I left him off like that. And she was inside a few weeks one time, up in Limerick and she phonecalled Mr. Mulcahy and told him she wanted

me for a visit so he brung me up there even when I told him forty times I wasn't going. What would I want being in no woman's jail? I goes. I burnt a hole in the seat of his car by accident an' all on the way up cos I was rubbing his lighter off the cushion cos I was mad and giving out to him but he wasn't listening so I was rubbing the chair with the lighter and he didn't even care and then it felt hot and I saw there was a big burn-mark and a hole. He looked and spotted it and didn't even say nothing and I was mad at him more after that and flung his lighter out the window. He was mad at that alright cos he couldn't have no more fags on the way up til we stopped.

Inside then I had to wait on my own til my mother got in the meeting room cos not Cillian or Mr. Mulcahy was with me and all the wans in there was sad-out, just having a fag mostly and talking with their visitors, not bothering no one.

And when my mother came she was delighted to see me and was showing all the guards and the other women me and going, That's my second now! Cos Cillian was up last week she told me and Tara was coming next week and Melanie the week after. Jordan-SueAnne wasn't born yet that time, I'd say. And her friends was cheered up in fairness and even my mam was all happy-out to see me cos she's not usually like, but up there she was all thrilled.

Then we were sitting down and she goes Con was getting a house. Con was her brother, like. A big house and we'd all be living in it. And I was like, Yeah? And she was like, Yeah! He was up in court before me, she goes, And his solicitor tells him he should keep his money in property cos that's how they wouldn't be able to come after you no more, like.

And I goes I bet he made a load off the travellers (cos he was doing big business with them at the time). And my mam was going, He did! but there was a battle going on again now cos the travellers tried to double-cross Con and he had to teach them a lesson.

I asked her what happened and she tells me they tried dealing with her separate to Con and Con found out they was dealing with someone else and he got mad at them and started a fight and they wouldn't work with him no more, only with her from now on, but she managed to calm everyone down eventually mostly like, so as long as Con buys the house off them and doesn't give them more grief while she's stuck inside we'd all be well-set up when she gets out and we'll get into the new place then.

I was asking her then about the house and she tells me it's a mansion an' all and we'll be all moving in soon enough and she'll have all her children under the one roof like she only ever wanted. And everyone'd have their own room. And Stacey could stay there too. And Con too maybe.

And I goes would Con be mad at her for dealing with the travellers and she goes no cos he was glad someone in the family was able to keep up the deal so Con'd be working for my mam now soon an' all.

She tells me don't tell anyone about all that now, but I could tell Mr. Mulcahy she'd be taking me back soon enough.

I was thrilled then when I got back to Mr. Mulcahy and told him we'd all be living in a big mansion, all the family, but he only smiled and said we'll see how she works that one through.

It still was ages after that before the house come up. Later, like months later, or years probably. There was all hassle cos the council wouldn't pay Con nothing to my mother for us to live there, see? First they goes Con got no papers for it off the travellers, but then he got papers, and they were going, The family isn't big enough.

Cos there was too many rooms for our family for them to be paying for, so they moved another family into it an' all instead and paid them for it, robbing bastards! But Con was giving out to the council cos he said that other family would make shit of the place an' he wanted his poor sister's family in there, but the council were on and on about all the book of rules an' everything all the time. They said my mother only had four children and the children wasn't even living with her mostly and it was a six bedroom mansion Con brought so it was too big for us.



Mostly when Mr. Mulcahy'd be home, he'd be sitting around his house reading all the time. Didn't even own a television 'til I got him to get one after a long time. He gave me a book every now and again, still though, but mostly they'd be filled with words only and I wouldn't be bothered and then one time he gave me a children's book with children's pictures and he goes here try that one and I got mad at him cos I thought he was mocking me, but then I knew he wasn't and he was straight about it and I took it and read it to prove him I could. It was called *Tiger-Tiger Is It True?* by Byron Katie and Hans Wilhelm. I always remember that one cos I read it like a hundred times at least. It was a children's book alright, but like it was a good story about a little tiger who had no friends and stuff.

And after he saw me reading it loads, he asked me one morning if I'd try other ones like that, but I wouldn't be bothered. I goes, Naw, I'm alright with this one, like. Then he asked me why that one was special and I told him I just liked it and he goes, Does Tiger-Tiger remind you of anybody? And I goes no he's just a tiger who was sad cos nobody was good to him and now he's happy by the end. And Mr. Mulcahy goes, Do you feel a bit like Tiger-Tiger feels sometimes? And I got so mad at him I flung the book at the wall an' all and shouted and said of course not, Cillian is my best friend and my brother and I wanted to go for a visit with him and prove it.

So we rang my mother, who was after getting home by now. And I told her we were coming on a visit and she told me I wasn't allowed and wouldn't tell me why 'cept after a while she goes Mr. Mulcahy was probably queer and he was turning me queer too and she couldn't allow me see Cillian no more in case I'd turn him a queer too. I was crying with her for ages cos she wouldn't believe me that I wasn't a queer and then she goes prove it and hung up.

And when I got off the phone I called Mr. Mulcahy all the names and wrecked a load of his stupid books and ran out of the house and then I made it back home to prove it to her I wasn't no queer, which is the same as a bender.



That was Mr. Mulcahy anyway. He was sound-out.

But I'd better say first about the dagger and what's all that about. Or probably about all the rest too, I suppose. And why I'm locked-up now too, while I'm on it.