

Dolores O'Riordan : THE TRAGIC ANGEL

February 6, 2018

*"...You have my heart so don't hurt me
You're what I couldn't find*

*A totally amazing mind
So understanding and so kind
You're everything to me..."*

Dolores O'Riordan

An Aer Lingus plane had just landed at Shannon Airport in Shannon County, Clare, Ireland. Two police officers were called on board to settle a disturbance created by one of the plane's passengers. The passenger, a middle-aged woman of small stature, was seen by other passengers as clearly being combative. The behavior had become more aggravated from the point of the call for intervention, to the present point of the police actually arriving onto the plane. One of the officers, Inspector Tom Kennedy, said the woman was, "quite irrational, quite aggressive, quite difficult, shouting, 'I'm an icon, I'm the queen of Limerick! You don't know who you are dealing with. I pay my taxes so I pay your wages and I am going to sue!'" In short time, she was arrested. Before being taken by patrol car to Shannon Garda (Police) Station, the woman had allegedly assaulted one of the airline's flight attendants by trampling on top of her and stepping on her ankle.

Shane Dawson, the other officer, drove the woman to the police station. Inspector Tom Kennedy, who was also in the car with Inspector Dawson described the back-seat passenger as being quite uncooperative. "She was banging and kicking. It looked like she was trying to break the windows." At the police station, the woman escaped the police vehicle and ran. Inspector Dawson immediately gave chase. Inspector Kennedy, who witnessed the events unfolding, said when Dawson caught up with her, "She head-butted him and spat on him." The extent of injury from the assault became so serious, Inspector Shane Dawson had to take sick leave for the next five days. He described the incident of the head-butt as "one of the worst I have ever had to deal with." Later on, the woman claimed Inspector Dawson sexually assaulted her by grabbing her inappropriately, a charge he denied and has since been discounted. At the police station, securely inside a jail cell, the woman sang to herself for nearly three hours, obviously refusing to stop. This prompted the police to summon a doctor to the Garda station to assess her mental condition. The woman's mother was also called in to the police station.

The doctor, after arriving and examining the woman, determined she was not well. He recommended she be admitted to University Hospital Limerick immediately. Her mother, Eileen O'Riordan, accompanied her daughter to the hospital. At the hospital afterward, somewhat surprisingly, Eileen stated that Dolores O'Riordan, her father's favorite daughter, did not recognize her.

When she was much younger, Dolores O'Riordan recognized her father, but hardly knew him. Three years before Dolores' birth, her father had been involved in a motorbike accident, which left him paralyzed and irreversibly brain damaged. Dolores remembered growing up a child thinking her father was "retarded," not knowing the full extent of what happened to him had everything to do with his slower mental faculties. In many respects, therefore, she did not really know the man her mother had fallen madly in love with years before and eventually married. Throughout the years since, despite seeing her father in this chronic state, she talked glowingly of him, with a warmth that said she loved him dearly. "He kept a garden. That kept him alive," Dolores said. In 2005, her father, Terence O'Riordan, was

diagnosed with cancer. Six years later, he succumbed. "My father was a beautiful, kind, funny man," Dolores said. "He was a great patient during his long, weary battle. He never complained."

Dolores, the youngest of seven children in the O'Riordan family, was indeed her father's favorite. He called her "Lucky Number Seven." He always encouraged her, too. In recounting her early days with her father, she mentioned that he told her, "He was so proud of me. He was a lovely man."

Dolores quite often also spoke about how gratifying her childhood had been. The family was well-liked throughout their hometown of Friarstown in County Limerick, Ireland. When her older sister had accidentally set fire to their house, Dolores recalled her neighbors only eagerly wanting to help the family relocate. Her earlier days also were always filled with beautiful music. She played classical piano and the harmonium at her local church, the Church of Saint Ailbe in Ballybricken, Limerick. She remembered, too, how much she loved singing. She was still in the church choir, performing before local parishioners in her mezzo-soprano voice when she auditioned for a part in the band, Cranberries Saw Us. Her choir mates remembered her voice back then as being powerful, and clear as a bell. The confident tone, they recollected, too, was a treat for them to hear. It would cause them all to stop what they were doing so they could listen to Dolores' distinctive voice, described by the many who heard it, as haunting and angelical, a seemingly incongruous mix.

Another unusual thing about her during her earlier days was that, while singing, she would have her back turned toward the audience, which many attributed to her being bashful. When she joined the band, "Cranberries Saw Us" (which later changed its name to "The Cranberries") this behavior, of subconsciously turning away from her audience, continued, leading to criticisms from concertgoers that her live performances were less than satisfying. During one interview, she confronted those criticisms. Dolores said her failures were due to more than just shyness, but a sense of "self-loathing" about herself, where her feelings of self-worthiness were non-existent. That deep feeling of disgust were as if she did not want anyone else to see her worthlessness. "That's what happens," Dolores said. "You think it is your own fault. I buried it. It is what you do initially. You bury it because you are ashamed of it. You think: 'Oh my God. How horrible and disgusting I am.' You have this terrible self-loathing..." This turning away was an attempt to avoid confrontation with others about her own perceived wretchedness.

When Dolores' mother had come to the police station to see her daughter after her arrest at Shannon Airport, Dolores said she had created a "tortoise effect," from her mother. She said, "I tucked myself in, under the blanket. I was singing in the cell." Dolores had gone into the fetal position to protect herself. She said she knew who her mother was, but felt it necessary to cover over the present reality, of which her mother was a part, that had been persecuting her. Dolores' singing to herself was a way of doing that. Dolores said, "I was praying. I was meditating because I was freezing." On the flight from New York City to Shannon Airport, she recounted, too, how she heard many of the passengers whispering and talking among themselves just loud enough that she could understand what they were saying. They knew who she was. She had known that much from hearing her name mentioned. She was Dolores O'Riordan of the Cranberries, and they were going to barrage her with requests for pictures and autographs as soon as the plane landed. When the plane landed, the prescience of that plausibility turned into a reality. It frightened her. The couple in front of her, she recalled, were making all the ruckus, "roaring at her," as she phrased it. When the people who were talking about her actually came at her, as she knew they would, she suddenly became thrust into that psychological "fight or flee" mode. She felt vulnerable, "like a child in the playground," she said. Her emotions had overcome her. Afterward, she apologized to flight attendant, Carmel Coyne. "Carmel is lovely" Dolores said. "I know Carmel a long time from flying over and back transatlantic since I had the little wee babies in the buggies. I really like her. She knows for a fact that it was an accident." The incident was very stressful, Dolores said, and that "people were scaring" her. She responded to this situation by "going into the corner and saying 'please don't touch me'. They said to me 'do you think you are someone?' "I said: 'You know who I am. You know I am the singer in the Cranberries.'"

During the year 2013 she shared her feelings of self-loathing with other people. This was at a time when her story-book marriage was falling apart. Years before this there had also been allegations she and her then-husband Don Burton had imprisoned their housekeeper, and were abusing their three children. Dolores attempted killing herself. "I had tried overdosing," was how she described it as the only significant father figure in her life was now separating from

her. Before this separation, she had confessed to other long despairing depressions inflicting her, followed by out of control rages of mania; followed immediately afterward, by even more deep, debilitating depressions.

She had been medically diagnosed as having a bipolar disorder: manic-depression (which, despite many colloquial descriptions, is not extreme elation followed by extreme sadness; more closely it is cognitively experienced as feeling out-of-control, unable to contain one's energy. This occurs during the manic phase. During the depressive state, the feeling of a deep sense of loss with no reason for it, occurs: a sensation of extreme grief, accompanied by the other sensation, experientially known as similar to that of a person falling from a great height knowing in moments he/she will hit the earth. The significant portion of this experience is not the crashing to the earth, but those moments just before the crash: the panic, the anxiety, the feeling and sense of foreboding, which remain with the person seemingly forever, and never seems to go away. It is mental illness of a painful kind, considered by many the worst pain anyone can ever imagine). For Dolores, when the mania phase ended, usually one to two weeks later, the worst and most devastating depression followed.



(Dolores O'Riordan at age 8)

In 1979 something happened to Dolores O'Riordan. It was the starting point of what would mark the rest of her life. She was an eight-year old child. A person of authority, someone whom the family and neighbors trusted, an older man, did something to Dolores, the child. When asked how long such a thing had been going on, the adult Dolores cried like a sorrowful child. She responded with "for more than four years." When asked what he did to her, she said, "He used to masturbate me." This, she says, went on repeatedly. He also "made me do oral sex for him." The repeated individual acts of abuse, that went on for more than four years, would culminate most times with the man "ejaculating on my chest," she said. For so many years she did not tell anyone.

In the middle months of 2017 the Cranberries were to embark on a reunion tour with all members, including Dolores O'Riordan, participating. A back injury to Dolores O'Riordan forced a cancelation of the tour. This was disheartening to her. Still, outwardly, there was optimism in the day-to-day events that surrounded Dolores O'Riordan's life. Dan Waite, the managing director of the rock label Eleven Seven International, said, "She sounded full of life, was joking and excited to see me and my wife this week." Dave Davies of The Kinks tweeted, "I was talking to her a couple weeks before Christmas she seemed happy and well - we even spoke about maybe writing some songs together." Two or three months earlier, Dolores tweeted to her Cranberries' fans: "'Hi All, Dolores here. Feeling good! I did my first bit of gigging in months at the weekend, performed a few songs at the Billboard annual staff holiday party in New York with the house band. Really enjoyed it! Happy Christmas to all our fans!! Xo." Her tweet dated January 3, 2018 went on to say, "bye bye Gio (her cat). We're off to Ireland". On the 12th of January 2018, the Cranberries' guitarist Noel Hogan, added that they were talking about a March tour. "She was great. We spoke about getting back to work."

Her plans that week were to head out to Ireland after a brief stopover in London. The Hilton in Park Lane was where she would be staying before her final destination.

Three days later, in the early morning hours of January 15, 2018 at London Hilton at Park Lane in England, there seemed to be nothing particularly unusual occurring. Two members of the cleaning staff entered a room thinking it was empty. They heard nothing inside the hotel room and just started cleaning. When they entered the bathroom, they found a woman's body lying near the toilet on the floor. They called Scotland Yard at about 9:05 AM. The Metropolitan Police described what happened this way: "Police in Westminster are dealing with a sudden death. Officers were called at 09.05 hours on Monday, 15 January to a hotel in Park Lane, W1. A woman in her mid 40s was pronounced dead at the scene. At this early stage the death is being treated as unexplained. Inquiries continue."

The Santa Monica Observer came out with their January 19, 2018 online news with the following story, "Rock n' Roll Suicide: Lead Singer of the Cranberries Dolores O'Riordan died of Fentanyl poisoning on January 15, said a source in the London Police. Authorities found counterfeit fentanyl near the 46 years old rocker's bed. The source added that an

official cause of death will probably have to wait for a toxicology report. He said that suicide and a deliberate overdose are suspected."



It was back in 2014, four years prior, during an interview with the U.K. Daily Mail, Dolores O'Riordan made a mention of her passing away that would prove both prescient and somewhat disturbing. She said that once she passed away, *"I think I'll probably come back as an angel and I'd like to guide people or guard people going through similar experiences in life, whisper in their ear and kind of give them ideas on how to deal with things."*

Dolores O'Riordan passed away the morning of January 15, 2018.

She was laid to rest alongside her father on January 23, 2018.

"It is with great sadness that I have learned of the death of Dolores O'Riordan, musician, singer and songwriter. Dolores O'Riordan and The Cranberries had an immense influence on rock and pop music in Ireland and internationally. I recall with fondness the late Limerick TD Jim Kemmy's introduction of her and The Cranberries to me, and the pride he and so many others took in their successes. To all those who follow and support Irish music, Irish musicians and the performing arts, her death will be a big loss."

Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland, January 15, 2018

For Dolores, there will be no more pain. Still, we are all the sadder. She is gone.

God bless her always.



*"Understand what I've become
It wasn't my design
And people everywhere think
Something better than I am..."*

Dolores O'Riordan

Written by Theodore Houben

(All Dolores O'Riordan quotes cited are her own words.)