

Philomena Mono – 1

PHILOMENA

I disappeared from the world. My family didn't visit me, and out of shame my father told everyone that I was dead. After you'd had your baby you had to stay in the Abbey for four years, totally cut off from the outside world. In order to repay the sisters for taking you in, you had to work. The worst jobs were in the laundry, and that's where they put me. I worked there seven days a week, the whole time I was there. They took in washing from miles around and charged for the service. We weren't paid a penny. I worked there with my best friend Kathleen. Anthony was best friends with Kathleen's daughter Mary - he'd even let her fly his little toy aeroplane. True love! The two of them were inseparable. We lived with it every day. Who's child would be taken next? (looking at a picture of Anthony as a child) Whenever I look at that, I think

about Anthony but I say a little prayer for Anunciata, who saved his life when I gave birth to him. She died a long time ago... if she hadn't taken that, I'd have nothing. The only way you could leave was if you paid them a hundred pounds. But where would I get that kind of money? And where would I go? It happened about a week later. I remember that day so clearly. We all knew what it meant when a big car arrived. Kathleen was inconsolable. She knew this time they'd come for Mary. As soon as I saw their lovely clothes, and Mother Barbara so happy and smiling, I knew all hope was gone. Kathleen cried so hard they took her to the sick bay and gave her brandy. But her fate was sealed. They'd only come for Mary. But Anthony wouldn't let her out of his sight. They were inseparable, you see... Normally, I loved to sing - it was one of the only things I enjoyed at that place. But all I could think about was poor Kathleen. He was wearing a beautiful blue duffel coat, that's what I remember most of all...

