



NORY RYAN'S SONG

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Two-time Newbery Honor-winning author

CHAPTER

1

Someone was calling.

“Nor-ry. Nor-ry Ry-an.”

I was halfway along the cliff road. With the mist coming up from the sea, everything on the path below had disappeared.

“Wait, Nory.”

I stopped. “Sean Red Mallon?” I called back, hearing his footsteps now.

“I have something for us,” he said as he reached me. He pulled a crumpled bit of purple seaweed out of his pocket to dangle in front of my nose.

“Dulse.” I took a breath. The smell of the sea was in it, salty and sweet. I was so hungry I could almost feel the taste of it on my tongue.

“Shall we eat it here?” he asked, grinning, his red hair a mop on his forehead.

“It’ll be over and gone in no time,” I said, and pointed up. “We’ll go to Patrick’s Well.”

We reached the top of the cliffs with the rain on our heads. “*I am Queen Maeve,*” I sang, twirling away from the edge. “*Queen of old Ireland.*”

I loved the sound of my voice in the fog, but then I loved anything that had to do with music: the Ballilee church bells tolling, the rain pattering on the stones, even the *carra-crack* of the gannets calling as they flew overhead.

I scrambled up to Mary’s Rock. As the wind tore the mist into shreds, I could see the sea, gray as a selkie’s coat, stretching itself from Ireland to Brooklyn, New York, America.

Sean came up in back of me. “We will be there one day in Brooklyn.”

I nodded, but I couldn’t imagine it. Free in Brooklyn. Sean’s sister, Mary Mallon, was there right now. Someone had written a letter for her, and Father Harte had read it to us. Horses clopped down the road, she said, bringing milk in huge cans. And no one was ever hungry. Even the sound of it was wonderful. Brook-lyn.

The rain ran along the ends of my hair and into my neck. I shook my head to make the drops fly and thought of my da on a ship, the rain running down his long dark hair too. Da, who was far away, fishing to pay

the rent. He had been gone for weeks, and it would be months before he came home again.

I swallowed, wishing for Da so hard I had to turn my head to hide my face from Sean. I blew a secret kiss across the waves; then we picked our way up the steep little path to Patrick's Well.

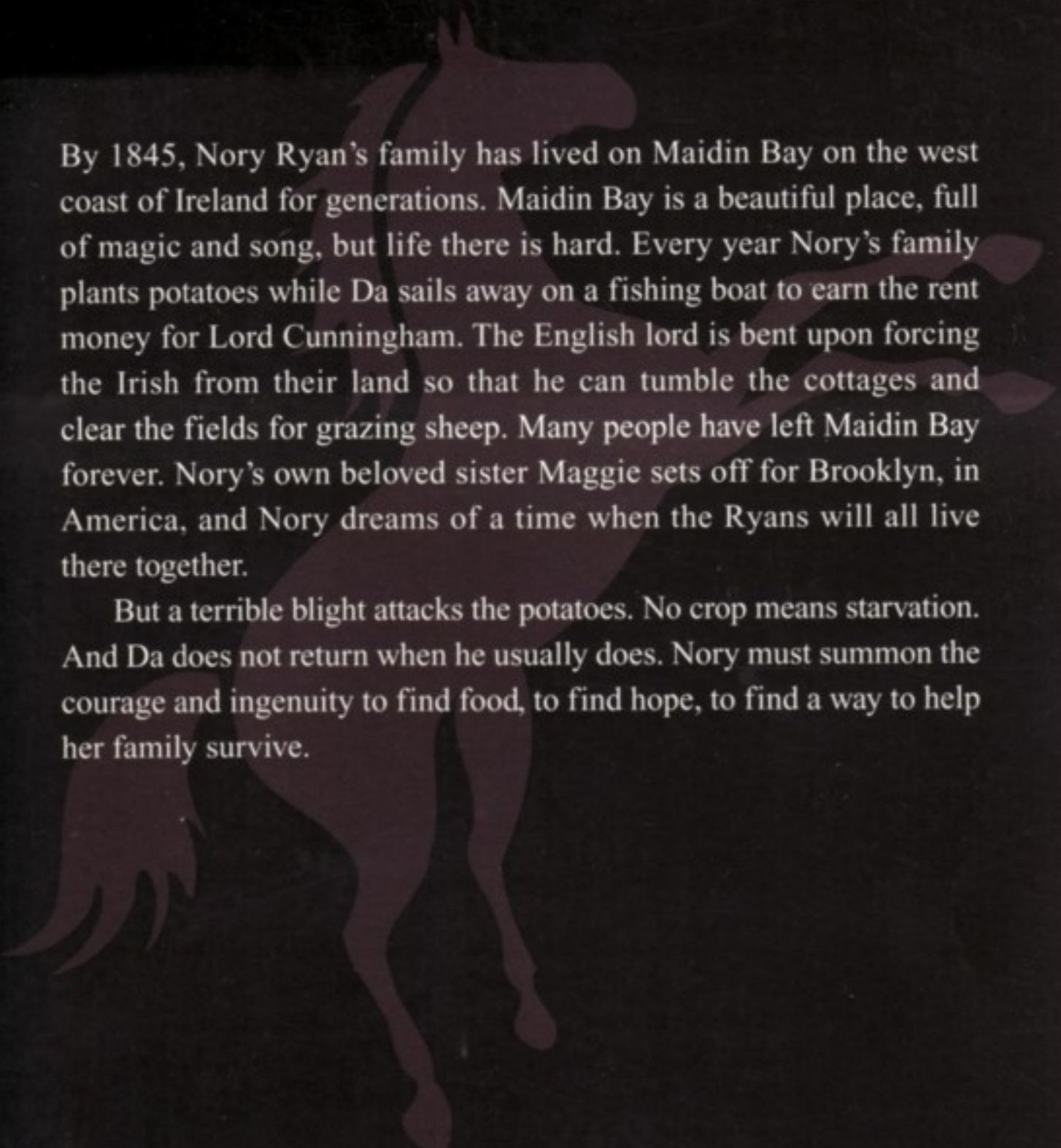
We sat ourselves down on one of the flat stones around the well and leaned over to look into the water. People with money threw in coins for prayers. But the well was endlessly deep, wending its way down through the cliffs toward the sea, and it took ages for coins to sink to the bottom. Granda said that might be why it took so long for those prayers to be answered.

But not many people had coins to drop into the well. Instead there was the tree overhead. People tied their prayers to the branches: a piece of tattered skirt, the edge of a collar.

"I see my mother's apron string." Sean pointed up as he tore a bit of dulse in two and handed me half.

I nodded, sucking on a curly edge. I looked up at the tree. A strip of my middle sister Celia's shift was hanging there. Now, what did that one want? She had no shame. There it was, a piece of her underwear left to wag in the wind until it rotted away. Every creature who walked by would be gaping at it.

I stood up quickly, moving around to the other side of the well to look down at our glen. The potato fields were



By 1845, Nory Ryan's family has lived on Maidin Bay on the west coast of Ireland for generations. Maidin Bay is a beautiful place, full of magic and song, but life there is hard. Every year Nory's family plants potatoes while Da sails away on a fishing boat to earn the rent money for Lord Cunningham. The English lord is bent upon forcing the Irish from their land so that he can tumble the cottages and clear the fields for grazing sheep. Many people have left Maidin Bay forever. Nory's own beloved sister Maggie sets off for Brooklyn, in America, and Nory dreams of a time when the Ryans will all live there together.

But a terrible blight attacks the potatoes. No crop means starvation. And Da does not return when he usually does. Nory must summon the courage and ingenuity to find food, to find hope, to find a way to help her family survive.

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