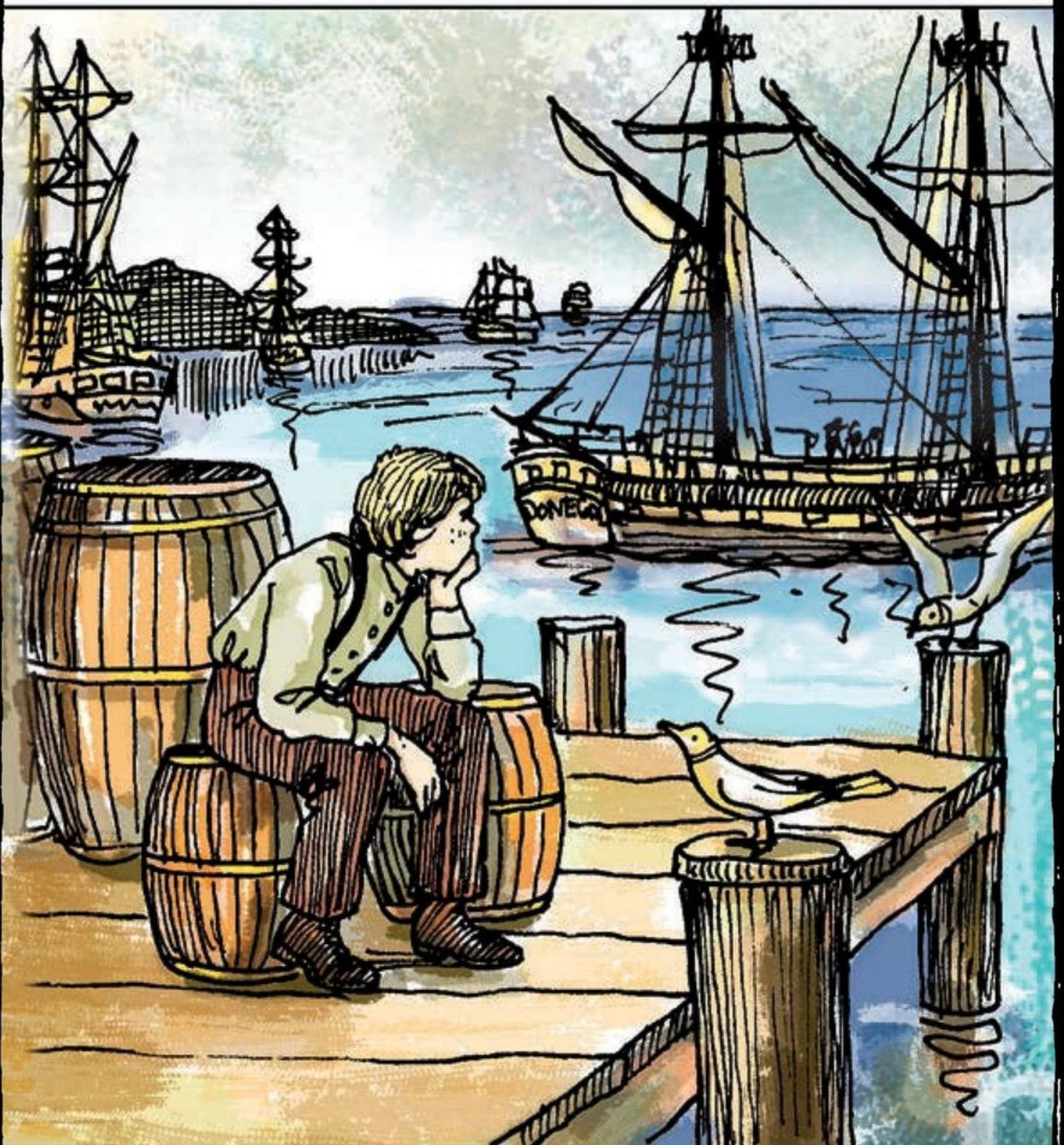


LEVELED Book • W

Atlantic Crossing



Written by Troy Wolff • Illustrated by Marcy Ramsey

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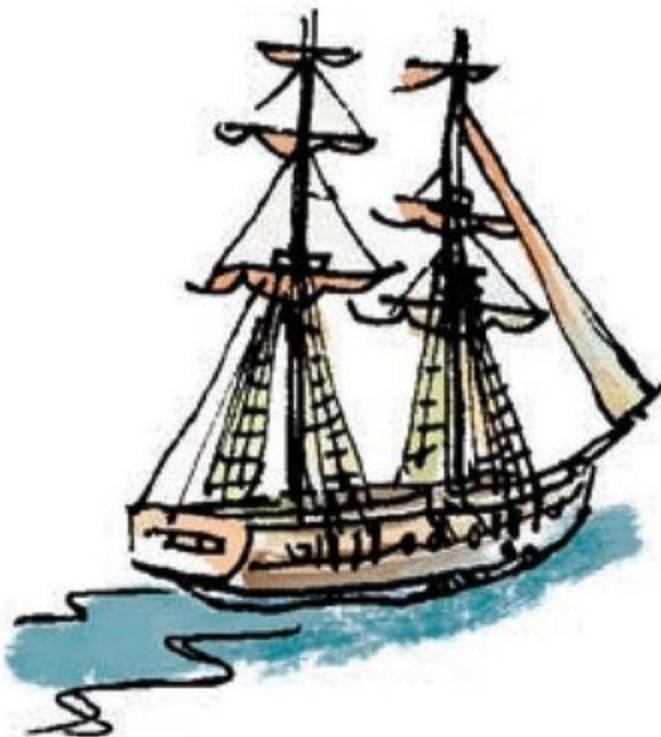


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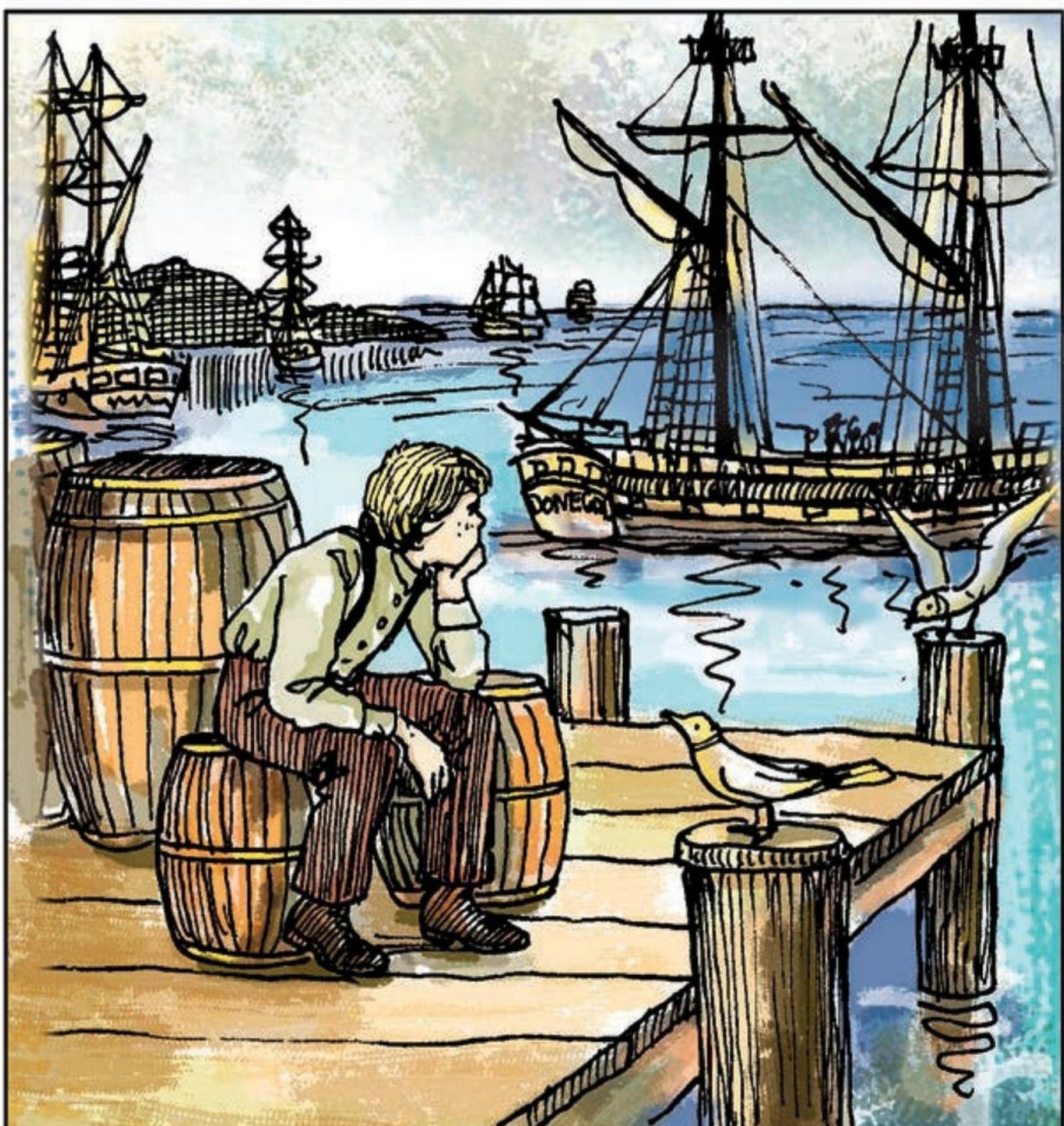
Leaving Dublin Bay

Patrick Kelley looked out over the ships floating in Dublin Bay. Below him, he saw hundreds of people crowding the docks, looking for space on one of the ships bound for America. The year was 1846, and many Irish people, most of whom were farmers, were starving. For the past two years, Ireland's potato crop had failed due to disease, resulting in a great famine.

To avoid starvation, Irish families like Patrick's bought passage on ships of all sizes sailing to the United States and Canada. The journey was dangerous, but the promise of a better life in America, where there was more land to farm and no diseases destroying the crops, drew many to the harbor. Patrick heard his father talk of jobs in big cities like New York and Boston. His father, who was a **blacksmith**, hoped to find a job working his craft in New York, which had thousands of horses to pull carriages and wagons through the streets. For that much work, Patrick's father was ready to leave Ireland.



Patrick knew his family was suffering, and he knew that America might offer a better life, yet Patrick did not want to leave Dublin. This was his home. He did not want to leave his friends, despite the food shortage, and he did not want to leave Dublin Bay, his favorite place. He often sat on the shore overlooking the bay during storms and felt the sea spray in his face, and he would listen to the stories of the suntanned sailors returning from journeys all around the world.





Patrick wanted to be a sailor in the warm South Pacific Ocean; he did not want to be a crowded passenger aboard an **immigrant** ship crossing the cold Atlantic.

So, Patrick sat on the docks by himself, angry with his family, mostly his father, for making him leave. He shaded his eyes from the setting sun on the horizon and looked for the tall **mast** of the *Donegal*, the ship that would take his family to America the following morning. He spotted the *Donegal* a little farther down the docks; it was easy to pick out because it was larger than most of the other ships. He could see the name painted in gold letters across the **stern** of the ship as it gently bobbed in the water. Patrick glared at the massive boat, wishing it would sink to the bottom of Dublin Bay. He shut his eyes, closing out the sight.

Promise of a Better Life

By the time Patrick finally decided to go home, it had grown dark. Patrick lived on the edge of Dublin, where his house was connected to his father's large blacksmith barn and shop. After he left the edge of the water, which reflected the oil lamps along the docks and the faint moonlight above, the streets and alleyways leading home were so dark that he could see just a short way ahead. The dim glow coming from the windows of houses did little to light his way.

After a few blocks, Patrick noticed footsteps behind him. The streets were usually deserted after dark, and Patrick wondered who might be out tonight. The footsteps drew closer and closer, and as he listened, Patrick detected a strange metallic clicking along with the footsteps. Frightened, Patrick kept his head down and began walking faster.

Another block later, the steps and the clicking got closer still. **Frantically**, Patrick tried to remember an alleyway or doorway he could duck into to get away from this stranger following him.

Suddenly, Patrick felt a small jab on the top of his shoulder. His blood froze in terror.



"Excuse me, young man!" he heard behind him. Patrick stood still, afraid to turn around.

"Young man, I say! Where are you off to? I noticed you eyeing the *Donegal* down at the docks."



Still frightened, Patrick slowly turned around. Standing over him glared an older man with a silver beard glowing in the lamplight and a military sword in his right hand.

"Who are you?" Patrick asked, trying to sound confident.

"I am First Mate Thomas O'Brien, an officer of the *Donegal*, at your service," he answered in a serious tone.

"The *Donegal*?" Patrick repeated. "My family and I are sailing on the *Donegal* tomorrow."

"Ah, very good," O'Brien answered. "She's a fine ship, and the sailing conditions are better than most other ships these days."

“But I hear the living conditions are bad on these ships,” Patrick said.

“Well, they often are,” Thomas replied. “Some ships are worse than others. Unfortunately, conditions usually depend upon how much money a family can spend on their fare.”

“Yeah, I know,” Patrick interrupted. “My father spent most of our savings on this trip.”

“Your family will travel on a ship with a record for bringing its passengers safely to America, even though the journey will still be difficult and uncomfortable,” O’Brien said. “The Atlantic is a huge ocean, and the weather can be dangerous on the open sea.”

Patrick thought about this for a moment. “I can’t remember the last time I wasn’t going to bed feeling hungry. I don’t want to live like that much longer.”

“Exactly,” Thomas responded. “In an emergency, people must make difficult choices to make life better. But listen to me, young man. I’ve seen America many times, and I think that a better life is waiting for you and your family. You will have to work very hard, but if you do, there should be no limit to what you can accomplish.”

"Yes, sir. That's what my dad keeps telling me. Maybe he's right," Patrick admitted.

"Of course he's right, son," Thomas answered. He then looked back toward the harbor. "Well, young man, it's getting late. You should be off to bed. After all, this may be the last peaceful night's sleep you'll have for several weeks," he said with a wink.

"Okay, sir. Thank you for the advice. Maybe I'll see you on the ship," Patrick said as he turned to go home.





Stormy Seas

A week later, Patrick and his family were well on their way to America aboard the *Donegal*.

“All hands on deck! All hands on deck!” Patrick heard from above. In the darkness below decks, Patrick heard his sister groaning. She had been sick for three days, like many of the people on the ship. After several days of calm seas sailing from Dublin, the *Donegal* had run into a violent storm.

On the first day of the storm, Patrick watched from the deck with excitement as giant walls of water would swell and approach the ship. Patrick's stomach would rise in his throat as the *Donegal* climbed, hovered for one awful second at the **crest** of the wave, then crashed down the far side of the wave in a great rush.

This was exciting, but the storm was getting stronger, and the constant rising and falling of the ship was churning the stomachs of the passengers, many of whom, like Patrick's sister, became seasick.

"All hands on deck! We must lower these sails, boys!" Patrick heard these commands again from above. He knew that "hands" only meant the sailors, not any of the passengers, but he felt he couldn't stand staying below in the darkness one more moment. He desperately wanted to see the sailors handling the stormy conditions. So, when no one was looking, Patrick burst up the main **hatch** and into the howling wind and freezing spray.

The deck of the ship was wildly confusing—sailors running around, officers barking orders, sails flapping in the wind, and white ocean spray crashing over the rails of the ship.



"Captain! One of the sails has wrapped itself around the upper **yardarm**!" Patrick heard a sailor yell out to the captain.

"Well, send someone up there to untangle it. We need that sail down before the wind tears it!" the captain thundered.

"We can't, sir," the sailor replied. "The yardarm has been damaged in the wind and can't support a sailor's weight. We would need someone much smaller."

The sailors hadn't noticed Patrick yet, but as he heard this, he only needed to think about what they said for a moment.

"Excuse me, sir!" he said as he tugged on the captain's coat. The captain turned quickly and, seeing Patrick, yelled, "You, boy! What are you doing above deck? Get yourself below with the other passengers."

"But, sir," Patrick protested. "I can climb the mast and untangle the sail."



“What? You? What makes you think you could do this? It’s howling out here. These are no conditions for a passenger.”

“It’s really no problem, sir. I’ve grown up along the coast all my life. The wind doesn’t bother me, and I have to climb in the **rafters** of my father’s blacksmith barn every day to hang up his tools.” Patrick said this with as much confidence as he could fake, but the wild wind and water frightened him. He didn’t dare to actually look up at the mast.

Before the captain could answer, another sailor interrupted them.

“Sir, we must do something quickly, the sail is beginning to tear!”

The captain looked out over the stormy sea, then leaned down and grabbed Patrick by the shoulders. “All right, lad. Be careful, climb slowly, and do NOT look down. Just concentrate on the mast ahead of you. You can do this! Now, up you go.”

Climbing the mast wasn’t scary for Patrick at first, as long as he just looked straight ahead. Halfway up, however, Patrick was unable to resist temptation and, holding tightly to the mast, he looked out and below him.



Through a crisscross of ropes whistling in the wind, he saw the white tops of the waves surrounding the ship and the small heads of the sailors scurrying around the deck of the ship. He briefly thought of his family out of sight below the deck, and how worried his mother would be right now if she saw him up here. This thought vanished quickly, however, as Patrick felt a wave of dizziness overtake him. The rocking of the ship on the waves was twice as strong up on the mast, and seeing all the waves around him made his head spin. Fighting against this dizziness, Patrick refocused on the mast in front of him. His head quickly cleared, and he climbed the rest of the way up the mast.

At the top, he could see the crack in the wood of the yardarm, but it didn't look very large, so he knew if he took care, he would be okay. Looking out, he could see the top of the sail flapping in the wind and the clip he needed to unhook to lower the sail.



"Okay," he said to himself. "Here goes."

Carefully reaching out from the mast, Patrick stretched his hand toward the clip. Glancing down for a moment, he could see the faces of the captain and crew looking up at him from below. Stretching a bit farther, feeling the mast sway dangerously under him, he caught hold of the clip. Tugging with all of the strength he could find in his awkward position, he felt the clip give way and the sail drop below him. A cheer rose from the sailors below, and the captain happily waved at him to come back down the mast.





Arriving in America

Three weeks later, Patrick stood on the deck of the *Donegal* with his family. Before them the buildings of New York City came into view. At last, they had made it to America! On the docks, Patrick could see the activity as other ships were unloading from their own ocean journeys. Patrick could feel the energy and **bustle** of this new, growing city, so different from the centuries-old calmness of Dublin.

“Why, Patrick, my boy!” he heard a familiar voice behind him. It was First Mate Thomas O’Brien, whom he had not seen for several days. Thomas came up to Patrick and put his hand on Patrick’s shoulder.



Looking at Patrick's father, Thomas said, "You know, Mr. Kelly, none of us would be here in New York right now if it weren't for your son here." He looked down at Patrick and gave his shoulder a friendly shake. "What he did up on that mast in the storm was quite courageous. Quite remarkable."

"Thank you, sir," Patrick said, a little bit embarrassed.

"Well, we are all very proud of Patrick," Mr. Kelly said, looking fondly at his son. "And we are also very thankful to you and the rest of the crew of the *Donegal*," he continued. "Thanks to you, my family now has a chance for a new life—a better life—here in America."

"I wish you all the luck in the world," Thomas answered. "And, Patrick, I hope to see you at the Harbor whenever the *Donegal* is in port. You have the **makings** of a fine sailor, and you're welcome on the deck of this ship any time."

Patrick smiled excitedly at this invitation and imagined his future, sailing the oceans of the world, but always returning to his family and to America, his new home.

Glossary

blacksmith (<i>n.</i>)	someone who works with iron, including making horseshoes (p. 5)
bustle (<i>n.</i>)	busy and noisy activity (p. 21)
crest (<i>n.</i>)	highest point, or top of, something (p. 14)
famine (<i>n.</i>)	major food shortage (p. 4)
frantically (<i>adv.</i>)	wildly acting with emotion (p. 8)
hatch (<i>n.</i>)	covering for the opening that leads from a ship's deck to the areas below (p. 14)
immigrant (<i>n.</i>)	person who has come to a new country to live (p. 7)
makings (<i>n.</i>)	the qualities needed to do something (p. 23)
mast (<i>n.</i>)	a tall pole made of wood that stands on the deck of a ship to support the sails (p. 7)
rafters (<i>n.</i>)	wooden boards that support a roof (p. 17)
stern (<i>n.</i>)	the rear end of a ship (p. 7)
yardarm (<i>n.</i>)	the outer tip of a horizontal beam supporting a square sail on a ship (p. 15)

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