

"If you can guess what I have in my pocket, you can have it." There was an impish glint in his eyes as Donal paced back and forth on the deck of the Perseverance. Mairead stood at the rail. Her face was turned away from Donal's, out towards the everlasting horizon of the Atlantic. There was nothing ahead but the gray blue plains of an ocean that went on for ages. At first, such emptiness had been jarring, and odd. But after four weeks, Mairead could scarcely remember anything else. "A seashell from Cobh," Mairead said, squinting at what might have been a pair of dolphins racing through the distant waves. Cobh. She tried not to think on it too much. The shore of that distant Ireland would never again greet her eyes. Donal chuckled. He reached into his pocket as if to draw out some object, then paused. "No." "A biscuit, to toss to the gulls later?" "Now Mairead, would I waste a good biscuit like that? No, not a chance. Keep guessing." "Alright then....how about a shilling? To buy an apple with after we reach port?" She smiled, imagining the taste of something so crisp and fresh. Donal closed his eyes dreamily. "Mmmm...no. I'm going to attack the first apple we see when in Baltimore." Mairead took her hands off the rail, where she had been absentmindedly rubbing a knot in the wood. One of the sailors was mopping the deck, although truthfully, she couldn't see the point. Between the storms and the mist, it seemed to Mairead as if the deck got plenty washed. "Is it a key?" They had only been married for two months, but already Mairead knew that Donal was particularly nervous about losing a hold on such things. Donal's expression froze for a moment. Then he shook his head, relaxed. "No, it's not that. Need a hint, do you?" 15 "No, I do not need a hint, Donal," Mairead replied, wrapping her woolen shawl more tightly around her shoulders. "We haven't brought many things with us. I'll puzzle it out sooner or later!" She had a sudden unpleasant thought, thinking of the roaches that plagued the steerage cabins. "It's not...alive, is it?" Donal smiled. "Not exactly. But you're getting closer." "Well then!" She returned her husband's smile, ambling about the deck, careful to avoid the sailors who were in turns cleaning and sleeping under the clear sky. "Lord, I'm knackered," Donal said, closing his eyes and pretending to fall asleep. "You're taking ages." He leaned lazily against the rail. "I bet you've got nothing in there," she said, poking him in the side. "You're all blather. Likely it's nothing more than an old shoe strap." Donal straightened up and dug into his pocket. "Is not. Close your eyes, and hold out your hand." Mairead felt a dozen or so tiny pieces fall into my palm. "Seamsóg," Donal said as she opened her eyes. "Wood sorrel seeds. I gathered them last May, before we were married. I thought that you could plant them, when we get to America." Wood sorrel. The flower of St. Patrick. Those beautiful little heart shaped green leaves that popped up along rocks, fields, and woodland crags all over the countryside. Mairead closed her hand gently around the precious seeds. A little bit of Ireland. She smiled up at Donal, and slipped the handful of delicate seeds into the pocket of her skirt, where they could wonder and wait, until they came alive again, in a new soil