

Chapter 1

Leaving Home

'Bridget.'

Edward whispered into her ear, accompanying it with a gentle shake.

'Bridget. It's time.'

She turned over to face him, rubbing her eyes in the pre-dawn darkness.

'I'll wake Austin,' he said.

He sat up and swung his legs to the floor, away from the wooden cot they used as a bed. Their cloth undercover had loosened during the night, allowing strands of straw to stick to his legs. He pulled them off before standing and walking towards a tiny annex to the main room. Austin slept there with John in the summer, while the twins and his daughter Bridy slept with them.

There was no need. Austin was already up. He must have heard them, thought Edward, while examining his son's form standing at the annex's entrance. He was difficult to see with only night vision as an aid.

'Wake John. Quietly,' instructed Edward.

Young Bridy stirred, not quite awake but aware something was going on.

'Mam.'

'Bridy. Wake Cecilia and Ann,' whispered Bridget.

Her daughter complied, whispering in like manner to her younger sisters. Cecilia and Ann groaned, reluctant to leave the meagre warmth provided by their straw bedding, a few ragged covers, the closeness of each other, and the almost dead embers of the previous night's fire.

'Girls. Remember what I told you yesterday. Be very quiet. We are away today on our adventure. Get up and pack what I told you. We will be leaving before light,' said Bridget.

'Mam, I'm hungry,' said Ann.

'We'll eat later. Do as I say,' replied Bridget.

'Mam, I need to pee,' said John, appearing behind Austin who seemed prepared to leave.

'Use the midden but be quiet,' replied Bridget.

It was not unusual to have to do a necessary, as Bridget called it, during the night.

'Anyone else?' Bridget had to ask.

'Yes, me,' replied Ann.

'And me,' added Cecilia.

'Wait until John's finished,' instructed Bridget.

Edward sighed. 'Quickly. It will be light soon.'

Austin and his older sister, Bridy, could understand the secrecy, but the younger ones seemed bemused by it. Edward had told them to see it as an adventure, a bit of fun.

The plan was to leave before dawn. It was decided unwise to say much to the others in the settlement, not even to Bridget's cousins. Only Patrick, Edward's brother, knew. Well, someone had to know, and he might follow them one day.

The younger children had been told just before bed on the day prior to their journey, and Bridy and Austin had been sworn to secrecy. There were less than a hundred in Uggool, and everyone knew everyone; and everyone knew everyone's business much of the time. Most would help where they could, but in harder times they had naught to give. With such a small community, gossip was always there, and there was always the risk that something might slip, risking the landlord discovering their intentions. Neither Edward nor Bridget thought that any would deliberately share their secret, but there was always someone you could not be sure of. It was a shame not to tell, but there were other considerations. Secrecy was unavoidable.

Austin had been brought in on the plan very early on. After all, he had a vital part to play. His task was to go into Westport and use the rent money to buy a hand cart for the journey. He was to hide it as close to the road as he could then return home.

Dublin was at least a week's long walk – hard, and likely dangerous in places.

Edward knew that the children would soon tire, and he also knew that he and Austin

would have difficulty carrying their belongings and the children very far. The hand cart would be acquired in Westport and sold in Dublin, its purpose served.

'Have you got everything?' asked Bridget of her younger children.

Each nodded in unison.

There was not that much to carry, and all the younger children had to do was to wrap their spare dresses in a blanket and tie it together. All three would also have to carry a cooking utensil, and at least a spoon and a bowl as well. Austin would take their two pots, and Edward the family's only piece of furniture – a three-legged stool; the one that was used for everything. He would also take a small sack of food they had managed to accumulate – mostly potatoes, some flax seed, and oats. Bridget hoped it would be enough to see them through to England at least. As for Bridy, she would bring her spare skirt, blouse, and shawl.

Almost all their money had been sewn into the garments each member of the family was wearing. There was too much risk in using only one.

The plan had originally been to leave the previous year, but events had taken their toll. John had been unwell for months, and it had been considered unwise to leave until he had improved. Fortunately, 1839 had been a better summer than the previous year. Even with the effects of the 'Night of the Big Wind', the family had fared well. Austin had found work in nearby villages, and their savings had improved. So much so that Edward had been able to buy a pair of shoes a few months earlier – second or third hand, of course, from one of Uggool's few visitors. He was so proud of them. Not many in the Uggool's community wore shoes, nor many in Westport for that matter.

'Quickly.' He instructed everyone to move.

Edward, followed by his wife, led each member of the O'Mhaille family from their small cabin. It was still dark, but as they started to walk, a half full moon had appeared from behind a cloud; it seemed to improve visibility.

'This way,' he whispered.

Bridget put her finger to her lips, reminding the children of the need for silence.

Not many minutes later, they were away from the settlement. Another half hour or so and they would be halfway round the mountain, and likely out of sight of any early risers. Everything seemed to be going to plan.

Edward stopped and beckoned them all to turn and look back.

He almost shed a tear. The morning air was still cool, not cold and wet like winter, but invigorating; it was clean and fresh. The sun had started to rise, illuminating the landscape, and highlighting the different shades of green, grey, and blue that were the colour of Uggool, the valley, sea, and the more distant Killary Fjord. It was a beautiful sight and one that he would certainly miss.

'Take a good look at it. We may never see its like again,' said Edward.

The younger children seemed puzzled. What did he mean?

'Mam?'

It was Cecilia.

'I'll tell you about it later. We have far to walk yet. But we'll eat soon,' replied Bridget.

Five minutes was all they had. Edward wanted to get past Westport and be on the way to Castlebar before the day was done.

The cart was where Austin had left it. Undisturbed and intact, it took only minutes to load, and they were soon on their way. Relieved of their burdens, the children were happier, and began to skip on their bare feet. They could not always eat a breakfast, but Edward knew that each would need their strength for the journey, and he and Bridget had ensured that two meals a day would be available. There was even enough money to buy some bread – not in Westport where there was a chance they might be noticed, but perhaps in a village on the way. Westport was where the landlord's man lived and would have to be avoided; they would walk around it.

Edward and Austin had never been out of Murrisk. Their whole world had been lived on the lands between the Killary Fjord and Clew Bay, and most of that in Uggool. As for the other children, not one of them had even been to Westport. Their world had always been Uggool, and a walk even to Barny or Gross was unexplored territory. It was an adventure for them indeed. Beyond Castlebar, and Edward would have to

ask the way to Dublin. It might appear foolish to some, but he thought most would look at their ambition kindly, as he had with other less fortunate travellers he had come across on his own forays beyond Uggool.

The first day went quite well, at least as far as Edward was concerned. They made it to Westport and on to just past Clogarnah. He had hoped they might make Castlebar, but Clogarnah was close enough. If they could keep up this pace, they might make Dublin in just over a week. But the warnings of possible delay were already there. By the end of the day, the younger ones were exhausted and had been complaining for the last hour, with John and the twins having to ride the cart on top of their luggage. Even with Austin sharing the task, it had become too much. They had to stop.

Austin was sent on ahead to find a place to rest, with Edward suggesting the tip of the Castlebar Lough; it was about the only landmark he knew in these parts other than Castlebar itself. He had slept near there once before on his only visit to the town, on an errand for his own long dead father. Within an hour, Austin returned. He had found a sheltered place amongst some trees, some distance from other travellers who had apparently already settled for the evening. It would be their first night away from home, sleeping under the stars and reassuringly familiar moonlight. They slept that night with the sound of the gentle lapping of lough water against the shoreline, whipped up by a light breeze. Its action acted as a natural sedative – a vague reminder of the sea shore not far from Uggool.

Austin woke first.

The cart had been emptied of its load and used as a shelter in case the weather should turn overnight. Spare blankets, luggage, and whatever brushwood they could find had helped fill the gaps around the makeshift refuge. But it was not enough. The gentle breeze of the previous night had transmuted into something much stronger, and with it some rain. The younger children had slept in a line underneath the base of the cart and in between its wheels, fully covered. Edward, the two Bridgets, and Austin, slept underneath its handles, a blanket being laid across, lengthened and supported at either side with some additional long wooden stakes. A blanket was meagre protection, but it was the best they could do. Austin had been the most exposed. Stretched out at the opposite end to his father, the two women in between,

he lay with his head against some flapping cloth; it was the side most exposed to the direction of the wind. A sudden gust had lifted it out of what they had thought was a secure hold, exposing him to an unwelcome damp blast. The weather had indeed changed overnight, and their precautions had been wise. But they were not enough.

'Ugggh,' grunted Austin.

He turned away from the weather, disturbing his sister who was lying by his side.

'Ouch,' groaned Bridy. Austin had caught her arm.

Within seconds they were all awake.

'It's raining. Wind as well. Looks like a shower,' said Austin.

'Rain or no, we have to be on our way. We can't stay here. Is the fire still in? Ann, check,' instructed Edward.

A fire had been lit the previous evening at what was now near the feet of the adults.

'It's still warm. An ember. It should light,' replied Ann, after placing her hand above the ashes.

'We'll have the herring for breakfast. It hasn't been salted, and it won't keep. Austin, use the dry twigs we brought with us and get it going again. And see if you can find some wood that is still dry,' instructed Bridget.

This would be the pattern of their journey, thought Edward, as he stood up and inspected the sky and landscape. Austin had been right. The clouds were not a threatening deep grey colour but more like an April day. With luck it would be a summer shower. Perhaps in an hour they might see the sun breaking through, just in time for the day's travel to begin.

'I'll need to ask someone the way to Dublin. I'll be back soon. Don't eat it all!' said Edward.

Beyond Castlebar was a mystery. He just hoped nobody would try to fool him and send them the wrong way. Asking more than one would be the answer; that is, if he could find anyone.

A half hour or so later, Edward had a direction at least. The only traveller he had come across had never been to Dublin and could only provide a broad direction. It

would have to be enough for now. Returning to their resting place, he found the herrings still cooking in a pot over what had become a healthy fire.

'I found a man. He didn't know for sure, but he said we should go on the road to Ballyhaunis, and ask again near there. Let's hope he is right,' announced Edward to his waiting family. In truth, they were more interested in breakfast than what he had to say, the smell of the frying herrings teasing their senses with anticipation.

With breakfast eaten and the cart packed, they were soon back on their way.

Ballyhaunis proved to be a little too far. After a hard but uneventful day's walking, they stopped a little short of the town in a place a local seemed to call Bacon. Edward had never heard of it, but the area had a useful lough, just like the previous night.

'Mam. Look. Where are the walls?' asked John, pointing at what looked like three shelters.

'They're cabins, John. Just like ours was,' replied Edward.

'But there's no stone. The walls are like our roof,' said Cecilia.

'That's true. They're built like that around here. We had the stone from the hills. We'll leave them be and stay over this side tonight,' replied Edward, a little wary of the dwellings.

The cabins John had seen were built completely of turf, sods, and bits of wood. Nothing more than pieces of raised earth, with holes at the top of their windowless cabins serving as chimneys. Only one smoked – the only visible sign of habitation.

As dusk fell, the light of their fire must have attracted some attention. A child, not much older than John appeared.

'Sir, can I have some food?'

Edward was taken aback. He had never been addressed like that before.

'Be off with you. We have none to spare. Ask your mam,' said Austin.

'Leave the poor mite be, Austin. I'm sure we can give him something,' interjected Bridget.

'But, Ma. There's barely enough for us. What if they all want some?' replied Austin.

'We can't feed everyone. But we can feed this one. It's what we'd do in Uggool,' said Bridget.

Edward remained silent. For the first time in his life, he felt better off than someone else. It was an uncomfortable feeling even thinking about turning a child away. How could he face his god? He examined the child more closely. Judging by his cadaverous form, it was clear the child had not eaten for some time, perhaps not even for days. He looked like he would be better off in a workhouse than roaming the countryside begging.

'Where's your mam?' He finally decided to ask.

The boy pointed in the direction of the turf cabins at the other side of the water.

'Has she not fed you today?' asked Edward.

'She's sick. No food. Da's gone looking for work,' replied the boy.

A wave of guilt rippled through his thoughts, but what could they do? They could feed the boy, yes, but what about the mother? And what about the other cabins? Did they hold starving occupants as well?

'Alright, Bridget. Share our food with the boy. But then you need to be off back to your mam. Is that clear?' said Edward.

The boy nodded, brightening up at the prospect of a meal.

With the meal over with, and the family settled for the night, Edward felt the need to address his family.

'He won't be the last. Things are worse than I thought they would be, if the boy's an example. We can't feed everyone. As Austin said, we've barely enough ourselves for the journey. There'll be times when we have to say no. And there may be times when we have to protect what we have. There will be thieves as well as beggars on the road to Dublin. I'm sorry to say it, but times are hard. This is why we are going to America.'

'America?' Cecilia chirped up.

It was the first time anyone had said anything to her.

'Yes. America. We are going to Dublin, then Liverpool, and then to America. Things will be better over there, so they say,' answered Bridget.

Drifting off to sleep amidst the occasional crackle of the cooking fire's receding flames, Cecilia, Bridy, and John wondered just what this America thing was. Too tired to ask any more questions, each resolved to return to the subject at a later time.

Passing through Ballyhaunis, Castlereagh, and Plunkett proved to be uneventful. After nearly twelve hours of hard walking, they settled down for a third night not far away from a lough on the road to Strokestown. The family had made good time again. The weather had stayed clement, and the children were already starting to become used to the long days on foot.

Crossing the Shannon was next; the bridge at Tarmonberry. If they could make that by midday, they would be close to halfway; at least, that was Edward's estimation. Not having ever travelled to Dublin, he had only the vague estimates of visitors to Uggool as a reference. Some said it would be seven or eight days, and others ten or twelve. Edward felt optimistic. It was summer, the weather was good, and the children were as well as could be expected. And the whole family was in good spirits, excited even, at the prospect of a new life.

An island in the middle of the Shannon acted as an intersection between the two bridges connecting Connaught with Roscommon. Edward and Austin could not fail to be impressed with the seven bridge arches on one side, and four on the other. It was the largest they had ever seen.

'Is there a toll?' asked Austin.

'I don't know. I can't see anyone paying. Perhaps there is no bridge-keeper,' replied Edward hopefully.

The family proceeded to cross at a leisurely pace, taking time to admire the flowing Shannon as they did. They stopped at the end of the causeway on the island, Austin and the younger ones on one side, and Edward, Bridget, and Ann on the other. There was little to see on the island, but it just seemed like a good place to stop. As Edward and Bridget started to cross to join the children standing on the northern side, a horseman suddenly appeared.

'Out of my way!' called an approaching voice with an unmistakably English accent.

Bridget quickened her pace to join her children, but Edward inexplicably froze, staring at the rapidly advancing horse and well-dressed rider. Austin's placement of the hand cart had reduced the width of the passageway, and Edward's position, although a few yards away from the cart, was in the way.

'Out of my way or you'll taste the whip, Irish scum. And move your cart!' the man shouted.

But there was nowhere for the cart to go, nor was there the time to move it. Edward blinked, recovered his senses, and began to move. But it was not quick enough for the rider. Increasing his speed, he raised his horse whip, his intent clear.

'I'm sorry, sir!' shouted Edward.

But it was too late. His few seconds hesitation had a cost. The rider whacked Edward on the side of his head as he passed the group, knocking him to one side.

'Edward!' shrieked Bridget. 'Are you alright?'

'I am too. There was no harm done. It was my fault; I should not have blocked the way,' replied Edward.

A red line started to appear on Edward's cheek, marking the place where the end of the whip had come into contact with his skin.

'You could have lost an eye. There was no need for that,' said Bridget.

'Who are we to say? What can we do? It's a master's world,' replied Edward.

'It shouldn't be like that. It shouldn't be like that at all,' said Bridget.

'I'm alright. We should be on our way,' said Edward, now more composed. 'And let that be a lesson to you all. Keep away from the masters and all will be well,'

Austin took the cart and began to move it. But there was silence for a time. The children had seen their father horse-whipped, treated no better than an animal. It had indeed been a lesson that none would forget, but perhaps not for the reasons Edward had given.

'Well then. You could take the road East to Longford, Edgworthtown, and Mullingar, then on to Killegad, Killcock, and to Dublin. I would say three or four days. Or you could take the towpath on the canal.'

At last. Edward had managed to speak to someone who took the road to Dublin on a regular basis. The names and places were all unfamiliar, but it felt reassuring to have a route.

'Which is the best?' asked Edward.

'I use both. I can't see the difference, if you ask me. You would have been better going to the harbour after Tarmonbarry rather than walking to Longford, but you can still find the canal from here. They call it the Royal Canal, and it goes all the way to Dublin. It would save you asking the way if you just follow the water,' replied the traveller.

'Thank you, sir,' said Edward.

'I'm not a sir. Good luck with you. Are you going anywhere after Dublin?' enquired the traveller.

'To America,' interjected John, pleased to show his knowledge.

'Ahhh. You won't be the first. There's many going now,' said the traveller.

'I'll thank you for your kindness,' replied Edward.

'Not at all. Good day to you. Oh, and just follow that road over there if you want the canal,' said the traveller.

Edward surveyed the potential route pointed out by the traveller before announcing his decision.

'We'll go by the canal.'

By the early evening, they had reached the canal near a village the locals called Barry. A day later it was Mullingar, where they spent a fifth night under the stars. At Enfield they were told it was only two days to Dublin, but to beware of the thieves who preyed on travellers, rich and poor.

A seventh night was spent close to Leixlip.

'I think we'll be in Dublin before the day is out tomorrow,' said Edward.

The children were already asleep, tired from the day's, and the week's, travelling.

'Will we need to find lodgings?' replied Austin.

'I think we will. We'll have to see when the boat goes to England. It might be a few days or a week. I dunno. We have enough money for a few days. And we can sell the cart,' replied Edward, now more confident in his estimations.

Austin did not reply, sleep already getting the better of him.

The Royal Canal towpath was narrow on both sides, so the hand cart they had used was too wide for anyone else to pass. Stoppages were therefore quite a regular event, especially for the horses pulling the flyboats and other trading vessels that frequented the waterway.

'There's another,' said Ann, who was walking ahead of Austin and blocking his view.

'Not again. It's not more than a few minutes since the last one,' replied Austin.

'Don't be too long. They're coming quickly. Children, out of the way,' interjected Bridget.

'It's that passenger boat again,' said Austin, now scrambling to increase the speed of the loaded cart.

'I'll get the other handle, Austin. We'll have to run with it. Bridget, Ann, grab the younger ones and run ahead,' instructed Edward.

There was a long stone wall to their right, and they were already too far ahead to turn the cart and return to a clearing they had recently passed. They had no choice but to rush towards the two rapidly approaching horses, one of which was being ridden by another canal man.

Fear suddenly spread across both men's faces as the enormity of the problem they faced sunk in.

'It's that fast boat, the one between Dublin and Mullingar. We saw it yesterday going both ways. It's even quicker today. Twice the pace of a walking man,' shouted Edward.

'I can see it,' replied Austin.

'Faster, Austin,' said Edward.

'Move! Move!' Move!' cried the boat steerer in the distance. He was remonstrating with his arms and could see what was happening; he also knew that he would not have the time to stop, even if he wanted to. In fact, neither of the two canal company men seemed in a mood to stop, or even to slow down.

'We'll be in the water, cart, belongings, and all. They're not going to stop,' said Edward, now in fear of being drowned and crushed, as well as losing the cart.

'Made it,' shouted Bridget, only yards ahead.

Splash!

A poorly secured cooking pot had flown off the cart as it encountered a small ridge on the towpath. Meanwhile, the two approaching horses relentlessly marched ever closer, their sweating skins and flared nostrils signalling both exertion and danger.

'Faster!' Edward shouted. The instruction was unnecessary. Both could clearly see the details of the draft horses – a black bay and a liver chestnut – and they seemed to be accelerating, not slowing. To make matters worse, as if they could be, they were being scowled at by most of the two dozen or so passengers, who were by now also participants in the spectacle.

'We can do it,' shouted Austin, desperately trying to suppress panic.

Fifty yards, forty yards. And then the two tethered draft horses could not have been more than thirty yards ahead, the gap shrinking by the second.

'Tip the cart when I say,' shouted Edward.

'Now!'

Austin and Edward tipped the cart over and leapt, one on one side, and one on the other, just as the horses sped past. They had perhaps no more than ten yards to spare and less in seconds.

'Fools!' shouted the boatman.

The boat's occupants laughed as it raced past the two sweat-soaked men, now lying on their backs amongst grasses, weeds, and the luggage littering the area, their faces flushed red by the experience. Austin and Edward stared back at them, helpless in the knowledge that there was nothing they could do. A minute or two after

the danger had passed, Edward suddenly started to laugh, soon followed by Austin. It was a nervous laugh but no less welcome, a relief from stress induced by what might have been a disaster or even a tragedy. The women in the party looked on, amused and smiling, but not quite ready to join in. It was a good five minutes before Edward declared an end to the incident, and a return to their task.

'It's over. Let's be on our way.'

Austin lifted himself off the ground and pulled the cart back to its loading position.

'The right wheel's loose. I'll need to tighten it before we can go anywhere,' replied Austin.

'Can you repair it?' asked Edward.

'It's not broken, just loose. I'll use a stone to knock it back,' replied Austin.

'We'll need the money for it in Dublin, Austin,' said Edward.

'I know it. It will be good. Fear not,' replied Austin.

'We can carry something if we need to. You said Dublin's not far,' added Bridget.

'It will be fine, Ma. Just give me a bit of time,' replied Austin.

The fixing took longer than expected and defeated Edward's ambition to be in Dublin by nightfall. When they finally got moving, there was not enough time to get into Dublin and find some lodgings, so Edward made a decision to stop near the small village of Blanchardstown.

'For sure, this will be our last night without a roof over our heads,' he announced as they settled down for the night.

'Tomorrow we will be in Dublin, and soon on a boat to Liverpool, and then America.'

'America?' John enquired. He still had not asked what it was.

'Tomorrow, John. Get some sleep,' said Bridget.

Like the rest of them, he needed little persuasion.

'Make way! Make way!

They had left the towpath and were making their way down the new road towards Dublin. A rapidly moving jaunting car had appeared behind, its driver ferrying two well-dressed passengers, a man and a woman, to what they obviously considered an important appointment. It was not the first time the family had been in the way of their betters.

Edward swivelled his head and looked back. It was his turn to push the cart. They were still some distance away, so there was little danger of a collision. Unlike the incident by the canal, all he had to do was to move the cart to one side and let the vehicle pass.

'Need a hand?' asked Austin.

'No. I'll be fine,' replied Edward, as he removed their cart to a space amongst the weeds and cottoneasters which lined the road.

The jaunting car sped past, its driver and passengers ignoring Edward and the children, all of whom were becoming increasingly curious about Dublin.

'How long before we get there, Mam?' asked John.

'It won't be long now; half a day's walk, so I was told last night,' replied Edward.

The road became busier as they neared. All manner of life was there to be seen – rich, poor, and wretched. At the Observatory Gate there were beggars spaced every few yards, all hoping to catch a coin or something else of value from the wealthier types entering Phoenix Park, perhaps to view the exhibits at the recently opened zoo.

'Is this the road to Dublin?' Edward asked of an old woman, dressed in what even Bridget would have called dirty rags.

She looked at Edward, her expression clearly searching for the prospect of some reward.

'It is so. Or you could take Black Horse Lane, that way,' she replied, pointing in its direction.

'Have we some bread to spare, Bridget?' asked Edward.

'A little,' replied Bridget, while delving into a pouch containing food. She pulled a couple of bites worth off and handed it to the woman.

'God bless you all,' announced the old woman.

'We'll take this Black Horse Lane,' said Edward, turning towards it. The rest of the family followed as he pushed the cart through Observatory Gate and by the park.

'Watch for the beasts that way,' shouted the old woman as they continued.

'Beasts?' asked Cecilia.

'I dunno. Murphy once told me they had strange beasts in Dublin City. Perhaps that's what she means,' replied Edward.

With the exception of a few strange noises emanating from the zoo area, there was little to see. If they did have strange beasts, then it wasn't for the likes of the O'Mhailles' pleasure.

'What's that?' asked John. Dublin was already proving to be a place of wonder.

John and the rest of the family had stopped to examine a partially constructed column. Edward shrugged. It was baffling to him, as it seemed to serve no purpose.

'We'll need to move on if we are to get there before the afternoon is over,' said Edward.

Less than a half hour or so later, the river was in sight.

'That'll be the Liffey. We're here, in Dublin,' announced Edward.

To the former residents of Uggool, Dublin appeared a vast metropolis, far bigger and more intimidating than Westport or any of the small towns and settlements they had seen on the way. The Royal Barracks, a stone edifice of English military might, towered above them as they passed. Its mere presence exuded the power and control it had over Edward and Austin's fellow Irishmen. There was no way they could fight the British Army, even if they wanted to.

'We should find some lodgings for the night before we do any more. And we need to sell the cart. No need of it now,' said Edward.

'Stay close to me,' said Bridget, addressing the younger ones. 'There are many people here. I don't want to lose you.'

She grabbed John with one hand and Cecilia with the other, who was already holding Ann's hand.

It did not take long to find somewhere. A few questions to fellow travellers and they were directed to the Brunswick Street area, close to the lunatic asylum and workhouse – ‘House of Industry’, they seemed to call it. Flashing coin in front of a potential landlord soon did the trick; there was always space for someone with a bit of money.

‘Tonight, we stay here. Bridy, help your mam unload the cart. Austin, see if you can sell it today, or you’ll have to sleep with it tonight. We can’t have it stolen; we need the money from it. And I’ll go and find the docks,’ said Edward.

Instructions given, Edward left the rest of his family to go and explore Dublin. He needed to find the docks, yes, but he also had to satisfy his curiosity about the place. Dublin was a wonder indeed, but it was also just a staging post. Or was it? Might there be work here as well?
