

Nory Ryan's Song

from Chapter 1 of Nory Ryan's Song
by Patricia Reilly Giff

Characters: (3) Narrator, Nory, Sean

Narrator: Nory Ryan walked along the cliff road where the mist rose from the sea, cloaking the sea below. She didn't see her friend Sean running up the road below her.

Sean: Nor--ry. Nor-ry Ryyyyyan.

Nory: Sean Red Mallon?

Sean: Wait, Nory! I have something for us. Purple seaweed!

Nory: (taking deep breath) Dulse. The smell of the sea is still in it, salty and sweet. I am so hungry I can almost feel the taste of it on my tongue.

Sean: Shall we eat it here?

Nory: It'll be over and gone in no time. Let's go to Patrick's Well.

Narrator: As they climbed to the top of the cliffs, Nory danced in the rain, twirling and singing.

Nory: I am Queen Maeve, Queen of old Ireland.

Narrator: They scrambled up to Mary's Rock and squinted toward the sea that stretched itself from Ireland to Brooklyn, New York, America.

Sean: We will be there one day in Brooklyn.

Nory: I can't imagine it. Free in Brooklyn. My sister, Mary, is there now. Just think! Horses clopping down the road, bringing milk in huge cans. No one ever hungry. It even sounds wonderful! Brook-lyn!

Sean: Brook-lyn! I wish we had a coin to drop into the well. I would wish to be there right now. I don't even have an extra scrap of clothing

to tie to the tree over our heads. I see my mam's apron string. I wonder what prayer she tied with it?

Nory: Doesn't matter. Granda says it takes ages for coins to sink to the bottom. That's why it takes so long for those prayers to be answered.

Narrator: Nory looked up and blushed when she saw a piece of her sister Celia's slip hanging above her.

Nory: Oh, no! Now what does Celia want? Has she no shame hanging a piece of her underwear there to wag in the wind until it rots away! Every creature who walks by will be gaping at it.

Sean: I know what you'd be wishing for.

Nory: Do you, now?

Sean: You'd be wishing for your da to come back from his fishing.

Nory: (sadly) 'Twill be months before he can make enough to pay the rent...

Sean: He'll come. He always has.

Nory: (Gasp) Sean, what's happening down there?

Sean: Men. Bailiffs with a battering ram. Someone is being put out of a house.

Nory: (alarmed) I know who it is! The little beggar, Cat Neely...her mam...teeth gone...cheeks sunken... no money to pay the rent.

Sean: Don't think about it. There's nothing can be done.

Nory: Coins. If only someone...no one in the glen has an extra penny.

Sean: Not my family. My brother Francey is saving every bit he can to marry your sister. It will take years.

Narrator: The dulse on her tongue tasted bitter now. She thought of Cunningham, the English lord, who owned all of the land and the houses on it. Cunningham, who could put any of them out if he wanted.

Nory: Poor Cat and her mam....There is **someone** with a coin...

Sean: Who?

Nory: Anna Donnelly.

Sean: Anna Donnelly! Nory, the sidhe (she) live under her table!

Narrator: They shuddered, thinking of the sidhe, beings from the other world with tangles of gray hair, bony fingers pointing, crouched in the darkness. She had magic in her, too.

Sean: She can heal up a wen on the finger, or straighten a bone with her weeds...but only if she wants to.

Nory: She didn't save my mam the day little Patch was born...but Anna Donnelly has a coin.

Narrator: Anna had seen it one day she stopped near her house. The thatch on her roof was old and plants grew green over the top. And there was Anna outside, teetering on the stool, her white hair in wisps around the edge of her cap. She had peered over her shoulder, her face as wrinkled as last year's potatoes, then held something up before she shoved it deep into the thatch.

Nory: The coin. I could save Cat Neely and her mam if only Anna would give me that coin.

Sean: Nory, what are you thinking of doing?

Nory: Thank you for the dulse!

Narrator: Nory left him standing there with his mouth open. She flew down the path away from the cliff.