

The Edge of Possibilities

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/108904) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/108904>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Beyond the Western Sea - Avi
Characters:	Maura O'Connell , Laurence Kinkle , Patrick O'Connell , Ralph Toggs
Additional Tags:	Community: femgenficathon , POV Female Character , Female Protagonist , Community: fanfic100 , Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence
Language:	English
Collections:	femgenficathon_2010 , Focus on Female Characters
Stats:	Published: 2010-08-23 Updated: 2020-03-17 Words: 1,434 Chapters: 2/5

The Edge of Possibilities

by [nocowardsoul](#)

Summary

Five Things That Never Happened to Maura O'Connell.

Discovery

Chapter Summary

Maura takes a risk and learns something she doesn't like

Tuesday, January 28, 1851

When Maura O'Connell opened her eyes that morning, she saw that Bridy was awake, Mr. Drabble was asleep, and Patrick was not in the bunk. "Did he go to see his friend?" she asked.

"Yes," was the answer.

"I'll wait for him," Maura said mostly to herself, and Bridy nodded.

Soon Patrick joined them, looking worried. "What is it?" she said, steeling herself for some mischief.

Patrick hesitated. "Laurence wasn't in the hold," he whispered.

She gasped. "But where else can he be? He knows better than to go up on deck, or anywhere else he might be seen. Doesn't he?"

"Maura, I'm afraid that Mr. Murdock might have found him."

"Patrick O'Connell! Must you always be making trouble for us?"

"I'm sorry." And he looked so upset that she found it difficult to be too angry with him. Maura sighed, then the bunk was quiet except for the sound of Mr. Drabble breathing.

"Wait. We haven't been caught," she said with relief. "Only your Laurence has, and Mr. Murdock won't know who helped bring him on the ship unless Laurence tells him."

"And he would never do that."

"So there's no trouble."

"Not for us, but I'm wondering what will happen to him."

"Faith, I can't tell that," said Maura. "Now, I'm going on deck." She climbed out of the bunk, but instead of walking down the aisle she stopped in her tracks. Ahead of her, Mr. Murdock was pushing a reluctant Laurence. Maura watched the sailor pause and look at the boy, who kept his eyes on the floor. They walked to the next bunk, and Mr. Murdock paused again.

What was he doing? she asked herself. He was seeing if any of the passengers would react, she answered.

Then she had an idea. Turning back to Patrick, she told him, "Let me handle this."

"Maura, what -"

"Just sit here, say nothing, and let me handle it." He and Bridy looked curious but did not question her. She stood in the aisle, her heart chilling as Mr. Murdock led Laurence closer and closer to bunk seventy-four. Quickly, briefly, she prayed for everyone's safety, her mind saying amen as Mr. Murdock stood before her. Her brother's friend was next to him, resolutely looking down.

Maura made the sign of the cross before saying, "Laurence?" more loudly than she had meant to. Out of the corner of her eye she could see Patrick's surprised face.

Mr. Murdock looked directly at her. "Have yer aided him?" he asked.

She bowed her head and clasped her shaking hands together. "Yes. I brought him on board this ship. I didn't tell anyone, not even my brother."

He turned to Laurence. "Is that so?"

"It's true," Laurence squeaked.

"I - I knew it was illegal," she continued, "but he was all alone, and I wanted to help him."

"How very Irish of yer," with a sneer. "Can't even help a person without stepping outside of the law."

Though Maura's blue eyes flashed with anger, she did not answer him, and neither did Laurence.

"What's yer name, Miss Paddy? Are yer traveling with yer parents?"

"Maura O'Connell. Only my brother, Your Honor."

"And yer, Laurence?"

He did not reply. Mr. Murdock shook him back and forth. "I'm a Kirkle," he said in a rush.

"A Kirkle!" cried Maura and Patrick at the same time as Mr. Murdock said, "Lord Kirkle's son?"

* * *

Maura was no longer certain what to think of Laurence Kirkle. In Liverpool she had been sympathetic to the poor and friendless boy, even though he was English. After the revelation of his true identity, she did not want to like him. His father had caused her and all of Kilonny so much sorrow. She thought that neither Mother nor Da would like Patrick helping a Kirkle.

Furthermore, it was because of Laurence that she was cleaning the main deck of the *Robert Peel* on a grey February day.

She had explained to the captain and the first mate that she was going to meet her father in America. Laurence had told the story of how he left London. She was still going to debark at Boston and take Patrick to Lowell. Laurence would stay on the ship and sail back to Liverpool, then go back to London. He and Maura had both been sentenced to work on the ship. As far as anyone else knew, Patrick had been unaware that there was a stowaway.

"Why did you lie?" asked Laurence as he scrubbed with his ballast stone.

"For Patrick's sake. I couldn't let him be thrown overboard."

"Do you think they would have thrown him overboard?"

"Jesus, I don't know. What I thought was that they might have thrown a boy overboard, but not a girl like me."

Laurence did not reply at first. Then he said, "Patrick doesn't want to be my friend any longer."

"And don't you know why?"

"No."

Maura wrapped her red shawl tighter around her shoulders. "Your father owns the village of Kilonny and all the land around it. Those of us who lived there were supposed to pay him rent. When the potato crop failed, we didn't have the money. People starved, and became sick and died. Like our brother Timothy. That's why our mother wouldn't leave Ireland. She wanted to stay near his grave." They were no longer working; they were staring down at their ballast stones. "And the soldiers came and tumbled down our houses and sent us away from our home. If we had known who you were in Liverpool, we would have never helped you."

"I didn't know about any of that."

"Well," said Maura coldly, "now you do," and they both resumed their task.

Footsteps were heard behind them. It was Mr. Murdock. "Yer can go back to steerage now," he said. Maura stood up and stretched her arms. Paying no attention to Laurence or the sailor, she turned and walked back to her bunk.

Conversation

Chapter Summary

Maura has an unexpected visitor.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Wednesday, January 22, 1851

Mr. Drabble asked Maura if she desired to accompany him in his work. She gently declined, but she walked with him to the porch. She lingered there, watching people pass up and down the street. Some of them were English, but others, she thought, were emigrants like herself. More people walked past than the entire population of Kilonny. One could easily get lost in Liverpool. She felt glad that Patrick was safe inside.

Maura gave a start when she saw Ralph Toggs. *He's not coming to Mrs. Sonderbye's*, she thought. *He's alone*. But he noticed her and doubled his pace. She turned to go inside, but there was a man leaning on the door.

"Stop," she heard. Toggs was halfway up the steps. He wore the same hat at the same angle with the same grin and the same way of standing with his legs apart. "I want a word with you."

Maura's anger flared up. "And what would you need to say to me? The Union House didn't burn down. You told us a lie."

"I was only doing my business. Besides, I came to give you your money."

"My money?" said Maura, taken aback.

He reached into one of his pockets and produced a few coins. "Your money," he repeated.

"But why?"

His face had a new expression on it, one that she recognized. Father Mahoney had worn it when the children of Kilonny asked him difficult questions. To see it on this trouble-maker was so absurd that she almost laughed.

"Well now," in a quieter tone, "I thought you might want it when you get to America."

"Why didn't you think of me wanting my money before you tricked me out of it?"

"I didn't make you come here."

"You ripped up our tickets."

He closed his fist around the coins and climbed two steps in order to stand one below her. "Will you just take it? I won't leave until you do."

Maura wanted him gone. She held out her hand, Toggs dropped the coins into it, and she placed them in her skirt pocket. Her blue eyes met his. "Well, is that all?" she said.

The cocky grin returned. "I could show you around the city. Or I could stay here and you could tell me about yourself."

"No. No. Be off with you! Or I'll call for Mrs. Sonderbye."

"All right, I'm going." He started down the steps, then turned back to her. "I never got your name."

"Maura O'Connell."

"Maura O'Connell," he echoed and touched his fingers to his hat.

She watched him go before heading inside.

Chapter End Notes

For Fanfic100 Prompt 080. Why?

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!