



Second Watch

Karen Auto

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"Saara, this will be a travelling year for you!"

Saara wants so much to go to Finland with her family, to see the grandparents she has never met and the places her mother speaks about with such longing. One misfortune after another nibbles at the savings. Still, bit by bit, the coins keep falling into the coffee-tin bank. Saara's hopes rise higher and higher. But why does her beloved Papa scold and storm and talk of looking forward, not back, whenever she mentions the trip? A travelling year, Uncle Arvo predicted. But not the kind of travelling anyone could have foreseen. Before the year is up, Saara will have learned, not so much about where she has come from, as about how far it is possible for her to go.

Second Watch is based on true details of Finnish immigrant culture and the sinking of the great Empress of Ireland. Over the eight years that this Canadian Pacific steamship sailed the Atlantic Ocean, it transported more than 117,000 passengers to Canada. The sinking of the Empress on May 29, 1914, remains Canada's worst maritime disaster during peacetime. Of 1,477 passengers and crew on board, 1,012 were lost—more passengers than in the sinking of the Titanic. Yet the Empress of Ireland and its fate remain little known to most Canadians. Autio's novel, the first work of juvenile fiction to feature the Empress of Ireland, is set in 1914 in the Finnish immigrant community within Port Arthur (now part of Thunder Bay). Young readers will be drawn into eleven-year-old Saara's world. They will travel with her as she navigates a challenging time in her life at home—and as she boards the Empress of Ireland on May 28, 1914.

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