

An Sclábhaí - English Translation

A graphic novel by Colmán Ó Raghallaigh

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Back Cover

The harsh, cruel life of a slave lies in store for the young Roman, Patrick, when he is taken captive to Ireland by Niall of the Nine hostages. But when his chance to escape comes, many dangers still await him...

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The coast of Britain circa 400 A.D.

The young Roman - Patrick, son of Calpurnius.

I had always run on the shore by my home.

It never occurred to me that I might be in danger.

P4

But... I was wrong.

Niall... of the nine hostages.

I had often heard of the pagans from the island of Hibernia but had never seen them until now!

P5

I was in hiding by the time they came ashore but my heart was beating wildly.

It wasn't the pounding of my heart but the little dog that gave me away.

I tried to flee... but I tripped.

"Who have we here?!"

P6

Later...

I shall never forget that sea journey in chains and tears in my eyes.

an sclábhaí example 1P7

No sooner had the rat appeared on the deck before me than the storm broke overhead.

Beneath the electric blue of the lightning the cat inflicted the same fate on his prey as his master had on us.

Christ!

P8

My first sight of Ireland or Hibernia as we called it. A cloak of mist surrounds us as the slave dealers wait impatiently.

But who is this? My new master, Milchú.

"This one'll do! A fine young lump of lad, indeed! Come on, you little sniveler!"

P9

A long bumpy ride then, in the back of the chariot.

An interminable journey.

"My God..."

"Where am I?" Lash!

P10

Journey's end at last but now I'm a circus attraction in the middle of the pagans.

"Look!" "Slave."

"Here... Take this."

"So..up." "Soup?"

"Drink!"

P11

Hungry... and thirsty.

"Can it be that some of these people are kind?"

"O do they even know what kindness is?"

"My God... I'm exhausted!"

P12

Now a new life awaits me... the life of a slave! With no one beside me on the bare slopes of Slieve Mish but the one who created me.

"The Lord is my shepherd... I shall not want."

"My shepherd!"

P13

Life on the mountain has its own rhythm.

The passing seasons... and company... from the skies.

P14

Lash!

"Damn you, you little idler! Get up out of that!"

"I'll put an end to your nonsense!"

But I no longer care about the brutality of this man - my master, Milchú. He cannot know that I have another master... one who is invincible.

P15

"Little lamb, where are you?"

Grrrr! "What...?"

P16

A wolf! But...

"Quiet!"

"Sit, I say."

P17

"Christ with me, Christ before me..."

"Christ behind me..."

"Christ above me, Christ below me."

P18

"Come on, little lamb."

Homeward... but now I have the strangest feeling that my own day of freedom is at hand.

P19

Yet another dream... but this time a haunting nightmare.
"Arise, slave... your ship is waiting."
FREEDOM!?!

P20

I jumped to my feet and headed down the mountain... towards the camp.
The path to freedom lies before me, if only
I can distract that guard.
Necessity is the mother of invention!

P21

Clunk! "Who's there?!"
"Hey!" "After him!"
"Seize him, quickly!"

P22

"Oh God..."

P23

The Lord... is my shepherd,
I shall not want.

P24

"That bridge... I only have to get across."
"Christ before me..."
"Slave!!!"
"Milchú!"
"Wait a minute!"

P25

Crack! Shing! Slash!
"My God!"
"Lord, help me!"

P26

In the mouth of death... but...
"What?"
"Hold tight!"

P27

"Help me! Save him!"
"Uh... Uh... Uh..."
Thunk!
"Fire back, men!"
The fateful stone is released...

P28

...and finds its target!
"AAAAAAAAAARGH!!!!!"

P29

"Let's get out of here, fast!"
"Th... ank... you..."
"Careful, men. Don't hurt him any more."

P30

"Uh..."
"I'm Macha, daughter of Conn. You're safe now."
"Macha..."

P31

Within a couple of days I had almost recovered.
But now I felt great affection for this beautiful girl.
"Patrick, what is it?" "Tell me."
"I must go, my dear. A ship awaits me."
"Don't say that." "Can't you stay?"

P32

"I'd love to but I can't."
"I understand, but I shall have to speak to my father."
"Father... my young slave, will you set him free?"
"For you, of course I will."
"You are a free man now, Patrick.
I know you have a long journey ahead of you."
"A hundred thanks, Conn."

P33

A little later.
"My love.."
"Goodbye, Macha and bless you."
To the road then... like the wind.

P34

The following day...
My destination at last.
"The harbour... but which ship?"
"Now I remember."
"Home boy."

P35

A rush to the quay then... as far as the captain.
"May I take passage with you, sir?"
"No! I have plenty of crew."
"But I could work my way."
"Clear off, I say."
"Oh God, what will I do now?"
Grrrrrrrr.

P36

"For God's sake, mind those hounds.

They're our most valuable cargo for Gaul."

"Now's my chance."

"Easy now. Be patient. Give me that leash."

"How did he do that?"

"Good man, I've never seen the beat of that!"

P37

"Come on boy. I was wrong. It seems we
need you after all."

"Hoist the sails!"

"Thank you."

"Will I ever see this island again?"

"Who knows?"

Hissssss.

END