

I got the idea for “Luck of the Irish“ after watching the movie *Titanic*. “Luck of the Irish” was published in the small Illinois literary quarterly journal, *The Ultimate Unknown*, issue 21, spring 2001, edited by David and Ralitsa Combs. *The Ultimate Unknown* seems to have stopped publication after issue 21, so here is “Luck of the Irish” for those who didn’t get the chance to read it in *The Ultimate Unknown*.

## Luck of the Irish

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“*Mein Gott*, you mean this man has been frozen in a block of ice since the *Titanic* sank?”

“Yes, Doctor Schumann,” said Captain Reinhardt. He thumbed through the papers found in the man’s pockets: a White Star Line ticket, some old British currency, an Irish birth certificate. “It is amazing that we found him. My U-boat was on surface, and my first mate saw him from the conning tower.”

“I’m more amazed that he was floating for all these years. He didn’t sink to the bottom. If he did swim to an iceberg, the iceberg could have drifted to warmer climes and melted, but it didn’t,” said Dr. Schumann.

The doctor reached into the tub of warm water to feel for the man’s pulse. The man’s eyes were closed, and he would have looked peacefully asleep except for the oxygen tubes attached to his mouth and nostrils.

“A pulse! A weak one!” cried Dr. Schumann. “He’s alive!”

Reinhardt gasped. “Your cryogenic research it’s successful!”

Dr. Schumann twisted some dials and valves to control air flow and water temperature. “A miracle! To find a man frozen in ice for twenty-five years neither dead nor alive and thaw him out and bring him back to life! This is a great day for German science!”

“It is a great day for Germany because of the ceaseless support from the *Fuhrer*,” corrected Reinhardt.

“*Ja*, of course,” responded Dr. Schumann. “If this is possible with just one man, imagine the advances we could provide to the *Fuhrer* with an unlimited supply of test subjects.”

“All in good time, *Herr* Doctor,” replied Reinhardt as he gazed out the window towards the East, where the *Fuhrer’s* visions would someday be realized. “All in good time.”

Robert Kilpatrick hummed softly as the Navy nurse massaged his shoulders.

“Does that feel better, *Herr* Kilpatrick?” asked the nurse in Teutonic-accented English.

“Oh, yes,” he replied. “I mean *ja*.” He reached for the orange juice and sipped it. Each day, after a breakfast of bacon, eggs, toast and orange juice, the nurse would come to massage his back, shoulders, arms and legs. After the physiotherapy, the nurse would take him for a walk around the hospital gardens until noon. Then he would eat a splendid lunch; he especially liked the bratwurst. In the afternoon, the librarian gave him English newspapers and books about the last twenty-five years. At night, the nurse gave him a dinner fit for an admiral.

Kilpatrick looked at the nurse. She was a svelte, beautiful blonde, and her snug white uniform hugged her graceful curves. A beautiful woman, excellent food, lots of recreation time, colourful gardens, a clean room – he never had such a life in Dublin or aboard the *Titanic*.

Captain Reinhardt and Dr. Schumann entered the room. The nurse snapped to attention and walked out.

“Mr. Kilpatrick,” beamed Dr. Schumann as he administered the stethoscope, “how are you feeling today?”

“Fine, Doctor,” he said.

“Good, good. It is not everyday that we find a Rip Van Winkle.”

“What year is it again?” asked Kilpatrick.

“1937,” said Reinhardt. “Has your memory returned yet? As a naval officer, I am curious as to how you became frozen in ice.”

Kilpatrick shrugged his shoulders. “Sorry, I still don’t remember much. I remember the ship sinking – all the people screaming and falling. I fell into the water, then I started swimming to a chunk of ice – and that’s all I remember.”

“I hope that our hospitality has been acceptable,” said Dr. Schumann.

“Oh, it’s great,” said Kilpatrick. “Much better than life back home. And much better than on the ship.”

“You were a worker exploited by British factory owners, and then you were treated like cargo by a British shipping company,” snorted Reinhardt. “Believe me, we Germans know all too well what it is like to be mistreated by the British ruling class.

“Greedy British businessmen,” continued Reinhardt angrily. “Save money by reducing the number of lifeboats on the ship. You would almost think they were...” He paused, composing himself. “But now you are a guest of the German Reich.”

“And you will continue to be an honoured guest of the German people at our consulate in New York,” said Schumann.

“New York?” asked Kilpatrick.

“Yes, New York,” said Schumann. “That was your destination, yes?”

“You mean I’m finally going to finish my trip?”

“Yes,” said Schumann, “and you will meet distinguished scientists, reporters, movie stars, diplomats perhaps even President Roosevelt.”

“You will tell the Americans about the wonders of German science and our warm hospitality,” said Reinhardt.

The nurse returned with another nurse. They carried white linen shirts, colourful silk ties, a handsome blue suit, a tuxedo with black satin lapels, and shiny black leather shoes. Kilpatrick’s eyes widened.

Reinhardt smiled. “Please accept these gifts from the German Navy. You will look like a first-class passenger when you arrive in America wearing these clothes.”

Kilpatrick rubbed the fine wool of the suit. “But there’s one problem I don’t want to go.”

“Why not?” asked Schumann.

“I’ll never go aboard a ship again!” Kilpatrick cried.

Capt. Reinhardt laughed and put his hand on Kilpatrick’s shoulder. “You need not fear. Germany has the most advanced transportation technology in the world. And so many choices. If you are frightened by the sea, you can *fly* to America.”

“Fly?” asked Kilpatrick, puzzled.

“So much has changed since 1912. Flying machines cross the Atlantic every week. Germany has the most advanced aircraft. My brother is in the *Luftwaffe*...”

At the airfield, Kilpatrick shook hands with Dr. Schumann and Captain Reinhardt. “Thank you for giving me a second chance for life,” said Kilpatrick.

“It is we who should thank you,” said Schumann.

Kilpatrick started walking through the airfield.

“Dr. Goebbels will be pleased,” said Schumann. “He wants to show that German science is the best in the world. Television, automobiles, tanks, airplanes, rockets. And now, cryogenics.”

“The propaganda will be great,” agreed Reinhardt. “The British kill their passengers; we bring them back to life. *Titanic* victim finally finishes Atlantic crossing under German protection.”

“Mr. Kilpatrick is a lucky man,” said Schumann. “What do the English say? He has the luck of the Irish.”

“He’s waving at us,” said Reinhardt. They waved back at Kilpatrick.

They were still waving at him as he boarded the airship *Hindenberg*.

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