

## Patrick O'Donnell and the Leprechaun

Patrick O'Donnell was walking home one night from the county fair in Donegal. As he came over a hill, he heard a shrill little scream out in the swamps.

"Now what could that be?" he asked himself. "It's not a little child, but it's not an animal, either. I had better go and see."



So he made his way out into the swamp, taking care not to sink in the thick mud. There were thorn bushes all around him, and they kept snatching at his clothes and hands. But he kept going, because that shrill little cry kept urging him onwards.

Finally he reached the middle of the swamp, and blinked his eyes in surprise. The moon overhead was bright and full, so he could see all around quite well. And there, caught by his pants on a long black thorn, was a little fairy man!

"Now how did you get caught there?" he asked, bending down so he could see better. Then he caught sight of a tiny cobbler's bench under the thorn bush. "Why, you must be a leprechaun!"

The little man swung at him with both fists, but he was firmly trapped on the long thorn. "It doesn't matter who I am!" he scowled. "Just get me down from here! And be careful, because these are new pants!"

Well, Patrick O'Donnell was no fool. He knew that he had some power over the leprechaun because he'd seen him, and was going to help him. So if he asked for the leprechaun's pot of gold, the leprechaun would have to show him where it was hidden.

"I'll help you," he said, gently taking the little man off the thorn. "But I'm not letting you go just yet. I want your pot of gold, so I can feed my family and make my fortune!"

The leprechaun didn't want to lose his precious gold, and he argued with Patrick O'Donnell for a long while, as the moon rose across the sky and then started to fall toward dawn. But finally, because he had no choice, he told Patrick where to go.

Patrick made his way deeper into the swamp, until they came to a certain black thorn bush. "My gold is hidden under that bush," the leprechaun told him with a sigh.

Patrick looked around the swamp. There were thousands of black thorn bushes around him, and in the moonlight they all looked exactly the same. "Are you sure this is the right one?" he asked.

The leprechaun nodded. "I'm as sure that's the right bush as I'm sure that I'm the one who mends all fairies' shoes after they're worn out from dancing! Just dig under that bush, if you must, and you'll find your pot of gold."

Poor Patrick O'Donnell! He didn't have so much as a spade in his pocket, or a sharp stick to dig with! "If I go home for a shovel, I'll never be able to find my way back to this bush!" he sighed.

"That's not my fault," the leprechaun said. "You wanted to know where it was, and I've shown you. Getting it home is your own problem."

Patrick thought and he thought, and then he thought some more.

Finally he had an idea. "I'll tie my bright scarf to the bush! Even in the darkness, I'll be able to see it, and find my way back!"

The leprechaun began to laugh. "So that's your solution?" he asked. "Well, then, Patrick O'Donnell, tie your scarf to the bush, and let me go home! It's almost dawn!"

Patrick let go of the little man, who vanished like a shooting star into the night. He watched the leprechaun go, then tied his scarf tightly around the black thorn bush.

It took him the rest of the night to make his way back out of the swamp, go home for a shovel, and return.

Patrick was so very tired as he stumbled back into the swamp that he didn't really look where he was going. So he was halfway across the huge field before he noticed that every thorn bush had a bright scarf tied around it, and each scarf was exactly the same as his!

"That wicked little leprechaun did this!" Patrick cried, shaking his head. "If I live to be a hundred, I'll never be able to dig up every thorn bush in this field!"

So he threw his shovel down, and stomped back to his home. And that was the end of the O'Donnell fortune.