

GREEN

Linda Vaidulas

Saint Patrick's Day was in full swing. Grandma had a pot of corned beef, cabbage, turnips and potatoes boiling on the back burner of the stove. Hours of simmering had removed all the smells from the house except the boiled dinner.

The two Grandchildren, Susan and Patricia, were now in the living room looking for something else to do. Susan, who would be eight this summer, was telling her little sister Patricia, who had just turned four, not to bother her, in a tone that wasn't very friendly.

Grandma, hearing the problem, entered the living room, sat on the sofa and watched. Susan walking toward the sofa with the magazine pressed to her chest. Sitting down, she opened the magazine showing Grandma all the pictures. Patricia, feeling left out, came over and sat next to her sister trying to see what was so interesting. Susan pushed the magazine into her chest, making sure that her little sister would be unable to see.

Grandma could feel Patricia's disappointment. She gently got up and took Patricia's hand. Together they walked over to the living room cupboard and took out some large boxes loaded with art supplies, and brought them to the kitchen table. Sitting down next to each other, Grandma told Patricia that Susan was looking at pictures of Greenland in the National Geographic Magazine. "Maybe, Grandma said, you can surprise your sister with a picture of Greenland."

Patricia's face lit with excitement, her legs swaying back and forth in the large chair.

Patricia pulled out a new, green crayon and a piece of green construction paper and began to draw the sun, then the mountain. Next came some water, then the grass and in the grass, a cat, a dog, a cow, a horse, and last of all a single flower.

Patricia and Grandma went into the living room to show her sister, Susan, the picture.

Susan laughed at her little sister and said, "What did you draw? Everything is green!"

Patricia said, "It is Greenland." Her face scowled as she dropped the green crayon onto the floor.

Grandma asked, "Patricia may I take your crayon?" There was no response. Grandma picked up the crayon from the floor. "Come here both of you. I want to show you something." Grandma took the drawing and laid it down on the table, the light showed the crayon marks. "Watch carefully, Susan, I am going to put you, Patricia, and me into the picture." Grandma slowly drew Susan, with the green crayon, onto the green construction paper.

Susan, smiled and said, "Can I draw you Grandma?"

"Sure!" Grandma said giving Susan the green crayon. Susan drew a picture of Grandma.

Susan watched as Patricia pointed out where the sun, mountains, grass, cat, dog, cow, horse, and last of all, a small green flower. Susan laughed at the idea, that she had not been able to see all the pictures before.

The children's parents, having just returned from their walk, with their dog Buffer, heard the excitement and laughter from the kitchen. Susan held up Patricia's picture, and said, "This is a picture of Greenland."

Patricia took the picture from Susan and handed the picture to her Mother, Colleen. "See all the animals!"

Both parents came closer, staring at the picture questionably, a little green with envy, for they had only seen green.

Patricia led them to the kitchen table, where the sun's light showed the markings of the green crayon, as she drew her parents into the picture. "This is you Daddy and this is you Mommy." Patricia showed them where everything was on the paper. They too were able to see the wonderful work that had been done.

Her father, Daniel, picked up the green crayon and drew Patricia into the picture. "He then asked if someone would show him where the leprechaun was."

Patricia carefully drew her rendition of a leprechaun, "Right here, Daddy."

Daniel took a quick look, grabbed the leprechaun and put him in his shirt pocket gently patting his pocket. "Now I have to make sure he doesn't jump out, if I want my pot of gold that is waiting at the end of the rainbow."

"Ask him now, Daddy!" The girls teased, trying to jump high enough to look into his shirt pocket.

Colleen said, "It's time for dinner, let's wash our hands, and then, come into the dining room."

After grace, each person was served a portion according to his or her liking. Patricia, a rather choosy eater, was now frowning at her food in a very unappreciative manner. Grandma noticed the mood change. Remembering the leprechaun in Daniel's shirt pocket, said, "Dh my, Daniel, I believe that your leprechaun has jumped into Patricia's cabbage."

Patricia quickly picked up her fork, stabbed at the small pile of cabbage on her plate, and began chewing a few pieces of the cabbage, beaming with delight. After swallowing, Patricia said, "I think he is still in there." This time she took a larger bite of cabbage, her wondrous expression full of fantasy and willingness to see another world not yet known by the erosion of time. "Maybe he is in there," pointing to her turnips with her fork. She jabbed a chunk of turnip with her fork, aiming incorrectly, sending the turnip gliding along the plate nearly over the edge. "That silly leprechaun pushed my fork."

Thankfully, the meal was going well with laughter and talk. It was time for desert.

Susan said, "I wish Grandpa was here. I miss him." We all felt her sorrow, as well as our own. Susan's spot at the dinning table was always next to her Grandpa's right side. The large empty gap was felt. Susan put her hands to her face and began to cry. Her Mother gently held her. The air was heavy; our hearts were still tender. This was the first family gathering, for a meal, without Grandpa. Colleen's tears spilled down her own cheeks.

Patricia said "Grandpa's here," holding out her little hand, palm upwards, towards her Mother, with the invisible leprechaun in the palm of her hand. Buffer, barking excitedly, made little jumps as if he were trying to get a better look...

Susan laughed and said, "Grandpa came as a leprechaun today, is he really here?"

Patricia said, "See," as she came closer to them still holding out her hand.

There was laughter again; the children wanted to believe that their Grandpa had not missed dinner after all. Since his name was Patrick, it was fitting that he should want to spend this day with us.

As grownups we each had our own deep thoughts about life after our earthly death.

Grandma felt a need to explain that dead souls didn't come back to earth and visit as leprechauns. Then thought about the situation and said nothing.

Grandma's mind drifted, far away from the family's activity, to that mysterious oak leaf which came to play one snowy winter's day.

Soon after the death of Patrick there was a huge snow storm; leaving her to do the shoveling. Whenever Patrick shoveled the snow, it needed to be done in his manner. He was very methodical and it bothered him to think she would not use his method when shoveling, so the task of shoveling was left to Patrick.

Not at all pleased with the idea, she began to shovel in a dazed state of mind. When along came an oak leaf... It seemed to be running and skipping upon the new fallen snow. It came right up to her, danced around her feet, then took off into the wind, swirling slow and low along a tree line which boarded the sidewalk. The oak leaf's gestures made her laugh with its playful attitude. She began to shovel again, when along came the oak leaf, skimming over the snow mounds, twirling and flying into the air. Its antics were unnatural. She gently covered the oak leaf with snow; not really wanting the leaf to be still. When to her surprise and joy, the leaf released itself, dancing in the wind lightly touching the snow banks in the driveway. This time she told herself to dump a larger shovel full of snow on the leaf, keeping an eye on the leaf, as she shoveled. To her amazement, the oak leaf was free once more. Was it Patrick's teasing spirit that had somehow been allowed to play with her; giving renewed strength that snowy winter's day?

Who can say that Grandpa's spirit didn't come, first to me as the oak leaf and then in the form of a leprechaun, this St. Patrick's Day, and if it wasn't him, then isn't the imagination a wonderful friend.

"Mom," Colleen said, sitting at the other end of the table. "Mom," she said in a louder voice. "Did you hear me?"

"Oh, no, sorry," Her Mother said, coming back from her memories. "What did you want Colleen?"

"We would like to tell you, that we are expecting a new baby in the September."

Grandma beamed with delight, "Do you have any names in mind?"

"With the help of the girls were sure to find a name."

Patricia in an excited voice said "If it is a boy can we name it Leprechaun, Daddy?"

"Now there's a name that would be hard to live with maybe Lee Shaun would be better."

"Lee Shaun the leprechaun, said Colleen, we will put lots of names in a small golden pot and see what name will be the most fitting. What is it's a girl?"

"Lee Shauna the Leprechanna" Daniel laughed, coming toward his wife. He winked his eye at his lovely wife.

Returning his gesture, with a smile she gave him a gentle kiss.