

Leprechauns in the House

Stephen

Josh was groggily drifting in and out of a semiconscious state as he euphorically watched a special holiday episode of the Tellytubbies, a pitcher of spiked eggnog in hand.

Just as he was watching Dipsy drown himself in a bowl of Tubby custard, Josh was rudely awakened from his eggnog-induced haze by the sound of someone attacking his front door with a nailgun.

Josh got up and staggered into his kitchen. He then proceeded to plunge his head repeatedly into a sinkful of ice-cold water. Still not quite entirely awake, he rummaged around in a drawer, pulled out a dirty spatula, and began beating himself in the face with it.

After a thorough self-flagellation, Josh went to answer the door. On it was a notice:

Dear unfortunate homeowner,

Your home has been chosen for a complementary despoiling, desecration, and destruction. Our representatives will be arriving momentarily; if everything is in order, you may expect our workers to arrive no earlier than 12:09 today. For any questions, comments, or complaints, feel free to contact the overseer at the time (Steve, Bob, or Vladimir), who will be happy to point you in the wrong direction.

With best wishes,

The Anti-Santa

Somewhat confused, Josh tore the letter off his door (with much difficulty, because of the overzealous nail-gun job that had left about three dozen nails embedded in the door) and was about to go back inside, when he heard an evil snickering echo from across the street.

Josh whipped out his rocket launcher and opened fire. The first rocket exploded in one of his neighbor's bushes, blowing it apart and leaving a smoking crater. His hiding place now destroyed, the leprechaun (still snickering evilly) dashed under a nearby car.

The second rocket blew in the neighbor's front window, scattering debris into the room. A kindly old granny sitting on the couch inside had a heart attack on the spot and died.

The third rocket exploded in the tailpipe of the car, leaving the back half of the vehicle a smoldering wreck. The car alarm blared, adding more noise to the sounds of the explosions.

The leprechaun (still snickering) scurried out from under the car, only to be hit squarely in the kneecap by a fourth rocket. He was blown apart into meaty little pieces.

Josh reloaded his rocket launcher as he walked across the street. He fired another rocket into the window of the car and the car alarm finally stopped.

Surveying the destruction, Josh came across the severed head of the leprechaun. Looking at him, it muttered a foul-sounding and evil phrase in a language Josh had never heard before. Just as Josh raised his foot to stomp on the disembodied, snarling head, there was a loud *pop* and it disappeared.

Looking around, confused, Josh suddenly felt ugly little gnarled hands clutching him around the neck from behind. Trying to dislodge the incredibly strong little hands from around his windpipe, Josh threw himself backwards onto the sidewalk.

With a sickening crunch and a low, evil snicker, the hands let go. Josh jumped up to see the leprechaun looking at him, an evil grin spreading across his face.

“Never kill a leprechaun, boy—we only become stronger.”

With that, the leprechaun spun around and ran at Josh’s house. At full gallop, it merely passed through Josh’s front door like water. Josh heard the door being locked.

Now worried, Josh ran to the door and tried to open it. Naturally, it was locked, so Josh beat it in with his rocket launcher.

The leprechaun was running towards Josh’s bedroom, but it rudely gestured over its shoulder and various things started throwing themselves off the walls at Josh.

Trying to dodge the angry hail of inanimate objects, Josh followed the leprechaun into his bedroom. When he stepped into the doorway, it jumped at him, murder in its eyes.

Josh caught it by the ankles as it sailed past, turned, and began beating it savagely against the edge of his dresser. Blood sprayed everywhere.

But as Josh was mercilessly beating the leprechaun to a bloody pulp, it abruptly disappeared with a loud *pop*. Angry and confused, Josh spun, looking for his foe.

It was standing calmly in the middle of the floor, impossibly reincarnated again, and it spoke:

“Kill a leprechaun, and you make it immortal.”

As it launched into an evil, rising laugh of triumph, Josh grabbed it by the neck and

ran to the kitchen. He stuffed it into his industrial-strength blender and pushed LIQUEFY.

Amid loud, rending snaps, crunches, and rips of flesh and bone, the blender began to smoke. Just as the leprechaun was turned into a thick liquid, the blender caught on fire. There was another loud *pop* and the leprechaun-liquid disappeared.

Josh turned around again, realizing that there was no way that he could permanently rid himself of the evil leprechaun. Just as it lunged at his ankle to bite him, another leprechaun appeared with the usual *pop*. The first one immediately let go of Josh's leg.

"Steve. I assume all has been going grandly?" asked the second leprechaun.

"Yes, of course. I've been killed three times already."

"Marvelous!" the second leprechaun said, now smiling and rubbing his hands together in evil anticipation. "I'll begin at once."

With another *pop*, the leprechaun Josh now knew as Steve disappeared.

"What's going on?" Josh asked, by now used to being confused.

"Well, bless me! Didn't Steve tell you anything?" The leprechaun looked genuinely surprised.

"Why, Steve's part was the physical stage. His assignment was to get your anger up nice and good. Now I'm here—my name's Bob, by the way," he said as he flashed a small business card at Josh too quickly to read. "—and my job is to commence the actual destruction. Vladimir will be here later," he added as an afterthought.

With this, he snapped his fingers and a group of leprechauns appeared in a circle around them with a very loud *pop*. Bob gestured to them in a lazy, almost bored manner, and they dispersed in the twinkling of an eye, dashing off to the corners of the house, giggling merrily.

"Anything else I must inform you of?" Bob asked.

"Any specific reason that *my* house was 'chosen for a complementary . . . um . . .'" Josh rummaged in his pocket for the letter.

"'Despoiling, desecration, and destruction,' my dear sir," Bob said, with a devilish twinkle in his eye. He pulled out a large gold pocket-watch and studied it intently. He pushed a knob on the top and said, "Well, that'll be all. If you have any questions during the mayhem, *please* don't ask Vladimir. I don't know *why* the boss hired him . . . *really* . . ."

There was a loud *pop*, and Bob disappeared.

At that precise moment, a crash echoed from Josh's bedroom. He ran to see what it was.

When he got to his room, he saw that the leprechauns had pushed his antique 8-track player and favorite Beach Boys record out the window and set fire to them. Josh had just sold them on E-Bay for £2000, but now they were destroyed, so his customer was going to be mad . . .

He went to the kitchen to get water to put out the fire, but when he got there, he was distracted by a cluster of leprechauns attacking his espresso machine with grenades.

Before long, most of Josh's material possessions had been destroyed—the leprechauns torched his bed, attacked his TV with carving knives, covered his computer in peanut butter, attacked his X-Box with a flamethrower, threw his refrigerator through a window, and so on, until finally they sucked up all the things that were left with an industrial-strength vacuum cleaner at least half the size of France and set fire to the empty house.

Josh staggered about the inside of his house in a daze, financially and emotionally ruined, all his possessions gone (they had even blown up his car with his own rocket launcher), and his will to live was broken as he wandered from room to room of his flaming house. Before he could jump into the flames, though, a group of leprechauns dragged him out.

Outside, Josh heard the roof of his house collapse and listened to the joyful, evil, sadistic laughter from the leprechauns. He drowned himself in a mud puddle before he could meet Vladimir.

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