To find a treasure, you must look within your heart.

The Leprechaun’s Gold

by Caryn Brady

Once upon a time there was a poor woodcutter and his family who lived near a deep, dark wood. His three daughters were named Esther, Clara, and Katy. At one time their food supply became very meager, and the faces in the often grieved little household were pale and appeared exhausted. The kind father could not bear to see his daughters starve, so he announced one day, when the last of the bread was nearly gone, “I’m going out to forage for food in the forest today. Perhaps I will find something for us to eat.” The women could not protest, so off he went.

It happened that an Irish leprechaun dwelled near the little cabin. The fortunate father seized the little man when he saw him passing. “Aha!” he excitedly exclaimed. “It has been said that when anyone captures a leprechaun, the leprechaun’s duty is to share his gold!”

“Hogwash, all of it!” declared the leprechaun, who only reached his captor’s knees. He thought awhile and
said craftily, “I might give some treasure to one who can prove he needs and deserves it. But how am I to know that you will not spend unwisely and carelessly?”

The woodcutter replied, “I have three young daughters and a loving wife. I should desire only a bit of gold, to provide food for them, so they need not starve!”

“Well!” exclaimed the magic dwarf. “A pitiful story indeed! Very convincing, but how can I trust any human? If you are to prove yourself honorable, caring, honest, and trustworthy, you must be able to make a friend, despite difficult circumstances.”

Aha! thought the poor man. How simple! He said aloud, “I shall be put to the test.”

The leprechaun chuckled with glee. “As you wish!” he chortled. He then pulled out a staff made of polished wood that gleamed like silver. As the staff touched the bewildered woodcutter’s shoulder, the larger man suddenly shrank and was transformed into a wretched, ugly dwarf. “To prove you are trustworthy, you may not return home to your family and tell them of your cheerless situation. Instead, on your own, you must befriend someone in three days without informing them of your true identity. That will prove you are caring indeed!”

And, with a wink of his green sparkling eye, the leprechaun disappeared.

When near the end of the day the father had still not returned to the cabin, the mother and daughters became frantic. The eldest daughter, Esther, pleaded with her forlorn mother to allow her to go and search for their missing father. At last the anxious woman relented, but warned Esther to return home before dark.

Esther set out into the woods, confident that she would surely find her beloved father. As the hours passed
and stars began to sprinkle the darkening sky, she grew more and more worried. The young girl was about to turn and go back when she happened to see a repulsive dwarf with a crooked nose and a tangled beard. “Ugh!” she shuddered, and began to run swiftly.

“Wait!” cried the dwarf. “A man’s face does not determine his character!” But the terrified girl ran on.

When she arrived at the cabin, frightened and out of breath, she broke into tears and sobbed out, “I did not find anything but a disgusting old dwarf!”

Upon hearing this, Clara, the second eldest daughter, begged, “Oh, Mother, may I please go search for Father?”

“What makes you believe you can do any better than Esther?”

“I may try, though, can’t I?”

“Very well, child. Set out in the morning, and I do wish you all the luck in the world.”

As soon as the sun rose, Clara quietly left the house and resolved that she would find her father. She walked on and on until she could walk no farther, and then collapsed from pure fatigue. The dwarf, observing her situation, hastily ran to her aid and helped the maiden to her feet. She turned to thank the little fellow, but one glance at his hideous face and she instantly bolted, despite the dwarf’s protests and her weakened condition. She never stopped running until the little house was in sight.

When she walked in the door, Clara, like Esther, began to weep and told them that she too had found only a dwarf. This broke down the courage of them all, except for Katy, who tried to comfort them, though she herself despaired.
“Mother dear, never worry. I shall search for our father.”

“Oh, you silly girl!” sobbed her heartbroken mother. “How could you find even a clue of him when your two elder sisters have found only an unsightly troll!”

But kind Katy pleaded and pleaded, and at last her mother gave in. “You may start off early tomorrow,” she said. Katy prayed with all her heart that she might find her father, for she loved him greatly.

As soon as dawn broke, Katy softly closed the door and began to walk briskly through the forest. It grew dark as she passed through a thick, lonely section of the woods, and here she nearly gave up entirely. But something told her to continue, so she asked a white rabbit on her path whether he had seen her father. The tiny animal made no sign that he understood her—but scampered away in a different direction. Katy followed him.

Soon she reached a clearing where the sun’s rays shone down brightly. Her gaze fell on a little dwarf with his head in his hands, weeping bitterly. “Oh, do stop,” Katy begged. “Whatever is the matter that makes you cry so?”

The dwarf looked up slowly and nearly leaped with joy at seeing his youngest daughter. But he did not show any sign of recognition, as he had promised the leprechaun to tell no one of his true identity. In spite of his frightful appearance, the young girl did not flinch at all.

“I have no friends in the world,” explained the dwarf, “because of my ill-looking face.”

“I don’t mind it a bit,” said Katy resolutely, as she clasped his hands in hers. Then she told him of her
troubles.

Just then the leprechaun appeared because it was the end of the third day. He stared incredulously at the dwarf and the maiden, deep in earnest conversation. “Great Saint Patrick!” he exclaimed loudly. “You have actually made a true friend!”

“Yes, he has,” volunteered Katy. The dwarf looked up at her appreciatively. The leprechaun once again took out his shimmering staff and touched the dwarf gently on the shoulder, whereupon he immediately sprang back into his original form.

“Father!” cried Katy, as she flew at him with hugs and kisses. They tried to explain very quickly what had happened, both at the same time, and if you have ever been in a similar situation, you’ll know they got absolutely nowhere.

The leprechaun was quite generous with his gold and jewels, and Katy and her father thanked him graciously over and over again. Then they returned home, where everyone laughed merrily and kissed and hugged and explained. Because of Katy’s kindness, her father’s loyalty, and the leprechaun’s gold, they all lived happily ever after.

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About the Author

Caryn Brady lives in Canandaigua, New York, where she attends Canandaigua Senior Academy. Among her interests are writing short fiction, reading, soccer, canoeing, and sailing.