

## A Family Tradition

Sammy hated his red hair, his freckles and the fact that he was short. He was half the size of the other boys in the second grade.

“Everyone in our family is short,” his mother said. “Short people can do things tall people can’t.”

“Like what?” From what Sammy could tell, being short wasn’t an advantage. He couldn’t see around crowds, he couldn’t reach things on tall shelves and the other kids made fun of him, calling him shrimp and pipsqueak.

His mother just smiled and never answered him when he asked her what short people could do.

It was a chilly, March day when Sammy finally figured out what his mother meant. The school day started like any other day. The bell rang, kids shuffled to their desks, the teacher passed out papers, and they said the Pledge of Allegiance.

“Did everyone wear green today?” the teacher asked.

It was St. Patrick’s Day, and the tradition was that you wore green or someone might pinch you. Sammy intentionally had not worn green. Instead, he had on blue jeans, white athletic shoes and a blue tee shirt. He knew if he wore green, with his short stature and his red hair that the other kids would have made jokes about him being a leprechaun.

It didn’t matter, though. The jokes started at lunch and continued onto the playground.

“Can I have a wish, Sammy?” Megan Night skipped around him, laughing at what she thought was a funny joke. Sammy didn’t think it was funny.

“Sammy the leprechaun,” Marc Catz taunted.

This time, Sammy didn’t cry and he didn’t go back inside to hide from the other kids. He got angry at how unfair they were being. He couldn’t help being short. It wasn’t as if he had *chosen* to be short. The anger simmered and simmered, growing hotter and brighter inside him until Sammy blurted out, “I wish you were short, so you’d know how it feels,” Sammy said.



With a rush of air and a shimmer of movement, Megan shrank three inches instantly. Her green dress that had sat just at her knees now hung to her calves and the sleeves covered her hands.

“What did you do to me?” Her voice was even smaller than it had been, coming out as a little screech instead of a shout.

“I don’t know.”

What had just happened? Had he just wished someone into being shorter? Sammy felt terrible. He wouldn’t hurt anyone on purpose. They had been words - just words - and he hadn’t thought they’d come true. Still, if wishing her shorter had worked, perhaps wishing her tall again would work as well?

“I wish you were taller,” he whispered.

The rush of air was faster this time with an underlying roar. Megan disappeared in a blur. Sammy closed his eyes and when he opened them, Megan was six feet tall. Her dress was super short and the sleeves were so tight that they had started to rip at the seams.

“Oh! Sammy, stop. Make it stop!” Tears filled Megan’s eyes.

“I wish Megan was her normal size.”

Instantly, Megan returned to the size she’d been before he’d made a wish.

“How did you do that?” Megan put her hands on her hips.

“I don’t know.” He was going to ask his mother. Was this what she meant by short people being able to do more than others?

That evening, he asked his mother about what had happened on the playground. She laughed. “Finally. Your father and I wondered when you’d finally get your leprechaun powers.”

“Leprechaun?”

“Yes, we are short because we are leprechauns. Now that you can wish things into happening, though, you must be very careful with your words. What if you had wished something really bad on Megan? That would have been horrible.”



Sammy agreed, and he knew, after seeing how upset Megan had been that he'd never use his words without thinking about them first. Now that he knew the family secret, being short didn't seem like such a bad thing anymore. Especially since he could wish for that new video game he'd been wanting since January.