

The Golden Shamrock

James couldn't remember how he got there. He remembered he'd been walking for miles and that he'd been really tired. He remembered closing his eyes, just for a moment.

That's when it must have happened.

He must have fallen asleep and slipped from the mountainside. That's how he ended up here, deep between the rocks.

James tried moving his body. Aside from his head and hands, he was covered in armour. It seemed too big for him and the metal scratched and scraped as he moved. Everywhere ached but, luckily, nothing seemed to be broken.

He noticed something glinting in his hand. He lifted it closer.

It was a shamrock. It was a greeny-gold colour and it was huge. The leaves seemed to sparkle. Strange, he thought...

James' memories suddenly came back. Visions of druids and knights and palaces filled his mind. There was a mission... something to do with the King of Ireland... his daughter...

"I am a knight," James whispered to himself. "I must be..." He glanced at the shamrock and carefully placed it inside a pouch he had hanging from his waist. "I must... continue," he muttered to himself. "The King is counting on me."

Before long, he had reached the summit from where he must have fallen. There was an old path that led through the mountains and James started on his way.

He had been walking all day and all night when he eventually came to the city walls. James staggered. He could see guards rushing towards him as he collapsed to the floor.

Then everything went black.

James woke up feeling cold and unwell. He was lying on the floor surrounded by pigs! He felt his body; the armour was gone! He was dressed in rags but he still had his pouch around his waist. Then he looked up and his heart sank. He was in a prison!

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“Let me out!” he yelled, shaking the iron bars. “I am a knight of the King’s Court! The King’s daughter is in danger!”

From the darkness, an old man appeared. He was thin, with white hair and a fuzzy beard.

“We know she’s in danger,” the old man groaned. “The princess is very ill.”

“Who are you?” James said.

“Who am I?!” the old man spat. “Have you lost your mind? I am Anvir the druid, and you are my apprentice! You stole Sir Galway’s prize horse and scratched all his armour!”

“N... not... a knight?” James stuttered. Suddenly it all came back to him. It was true. He was a druid’s apprentice. He had needed the horse and armour to get past the forest beasts on his way to the mountains. That was where the golden shamrock grew. It was the only thing that could save the princess...

“...Hold on... I can save the princess!” James exclaimed.

“How, exactly? Nothing but the golden shamrock can save her now,” sighed the old man.

James pulled out the sparkling plant from his pouch.

The old man nearly fainted. “I don’t believe it...” he gasped. “The golden shamrock! Guards! Quick! We can save the princess!”

A few months later, Sir James stood in his armour, looking across his land. He tried to remember how all this had happened. Not only had he been given a full pardon for saving the princess’s life but he had also been knighted and given his own castle!

But what now? It was all a bit boring being a knight...

Sir James looked towards the mountains and his imagination ran wild. “I think it’s time for another walk,” he smiled to himself.

1, Which of these best describes what a shamrock is? Tick one.

A type of medicine

A clover-like plant with leaves

A form of animal

A piece of jewellery

2, Which two things did James take from Sir Galway? Tick two.

His prize horse

His daughter

His armour

His guards

3, How did James end up between the rocks?

4, Find and copy a phrase from the first section of the story which shows that James was in pain.

5, Explain why the shamrock in this story is unusual.

6, Then everything went black. Why do you think this happened?

7, Summarise what James had intended to do in 20 words or less.
