

St. Patrick's Day In The Jungle



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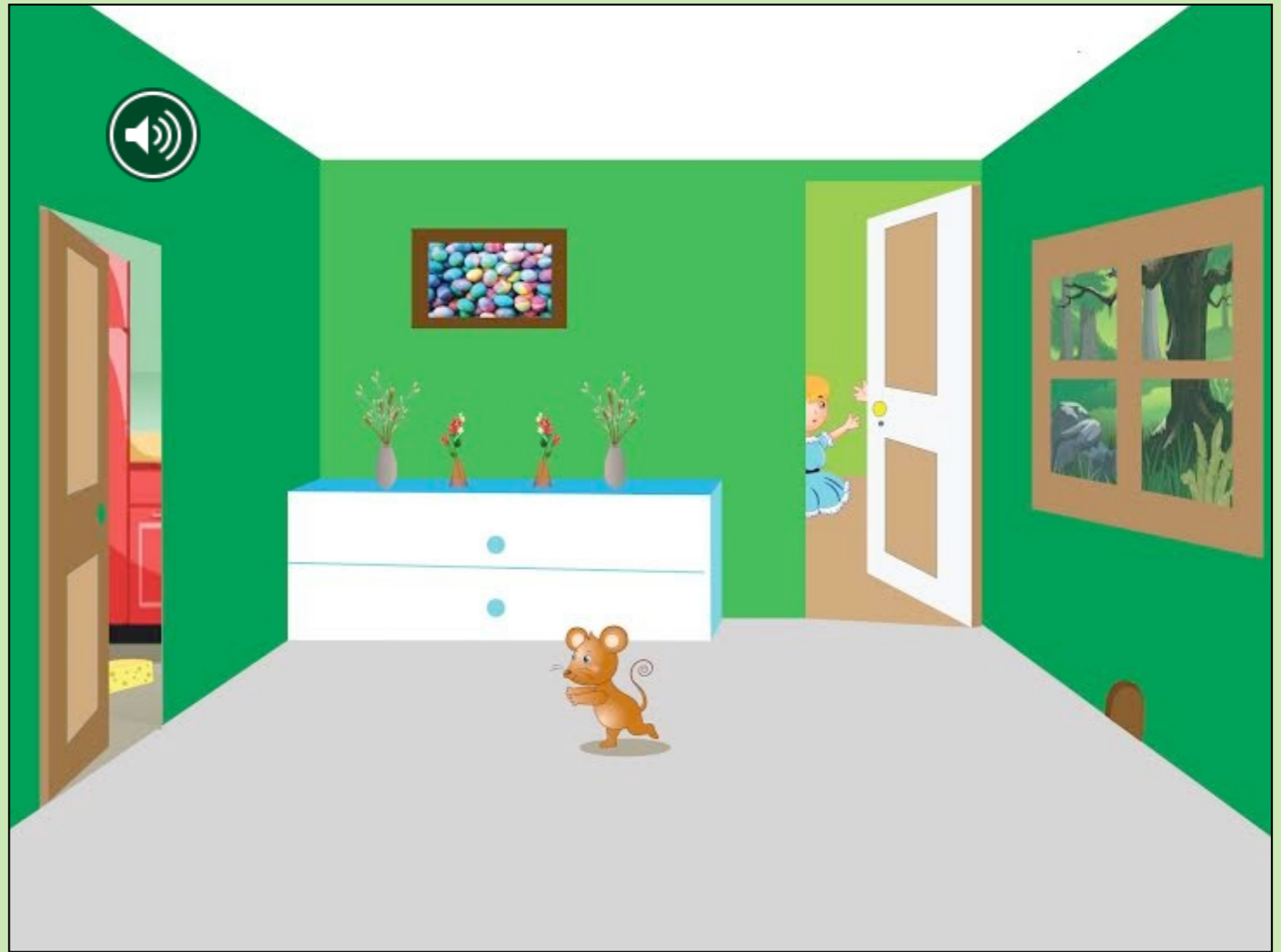
Janny Rat lived in the farmhouse in a small hole that opened into the children's room.

One afternoon in March, the children looked excited. They were preparing to celebrate St. Patrick's Day.

They were busy bringing shoe boxes down from the attic and getting out their art supplies all morning. Janny was hungry: the smell of fresh cheese was wafting through the doors.

Janny Rat had barely reached the kitchen door when he felt something odd. The kitchen door that normally stood open, was mildly shut, as though something was preventing it from opening completely.

He stepped in through the door carefully, when he heard a loud clap that sounded like thunder right behind him.



Janny Rat jumped so high in fright, that he banged his leg against a shelf that stood nearby; knocked into a jar holding spoons and the spoons fell clattering to the floor making an even louder noise. Janny could hear his heart thumping, and he could hear the children asking themselves whether they should go see what the noise was about.

Janny Rat looked around for a place to hide and saw that the huge thunder-like noise had come from a trap with a large piece of fresh cheese in it. The steel clasps that had released when he opened the door looked tight, and Janny did not want to think about what would have happened if he had been trapped in it.

He calmed himself down for a few minutes, took some cheese, and ran back to his hole.

He was sitting and nibbling peacefully at his cheese, when he heard the children say that were making traps for leprechauns for St. Patrick's Day. He did not know who or what leprechauns were, but he felt sad for them all the same. Janny Rat was not feeling kindly towards traps at the moment, and decided to take a short nap instead. When he got up, he saw the children had almost finished making the traps.



Their traps did not look like the vicious one that had tried to trap him earlier. These traps looked pretty.

The children had painted shoeboxes green and had stuck little shamrocks on them. For extra effect, they had sprinkled green sparkle dust all over the boxes and the traps were looking quite shiny and inviting.

Janny Rat went to get a peek at them when the children left the room and saw that the traps looked beautiful inside too. There were clovers, little shiny coins and beautiful spring flowers taped to the shoeboxes.

“I hope we get to see a leprechaun this time. I have put my favorite coins from my collection into the box, and they do love treasures, don’t they?” said the girl entering the room again.

Janny ran back to his hole and thought he would celebrate St. Patrick’s Day in the jungle with his friends after all. They could always release the leprechauns if they caught them.

That evening, Janny Rat ran to the jungle through the beautiful path behind the farmhouse to meet his friends.



His friends, Oby Elephant, Zebo Zebra and Spotty Deer were eager to try. Spotty Deer liked the idea of making a trap. “For once, it will be made by us and we can keep away from it, can’t we?” she said happily.

“Maybe, these leprechauns can be caught with traps on trees.” said Monty Monkey.

Perry Parrot and Nighty Nightingale were happy to help with the traps in the trees.

“Make sure there is nothing to hurt them in the traps.” said Janny Rat and set out to make his own trap near Luda Lake.

The animals were busy making their own traps and scurried up and down carrying grass, or digging holes under bushes.



When they were done, they looked around for pieces of treasure to put in their traps.

Janny Rat had saved a piece of cheese from the farmhouse as his treasure.

Perry Parrot had a heap of golden mangoes that he offered to the other animals.

Nighty Nightingale brought out a collection of beautiful peacock feathers. The animals were awestruck by them.

“I wish I could be a leprechaun. I would love to have one of those feathers behind my horns. “ said Biso Bison.

“Where did you get them Nighty? They will look beautiful against my black and white. Can I borrow them?” said Zebo Zebra.

“Peaky Peacock gave them to me. I taught him how to sing a song that will chase snakes out once and he gave these to me as a gift. “ said Nighty Nightingale, looking shy.

The animals all took bits of treasure to hide them in their traps and turned in for the night.



St. Patrick's Day dawned bright and beautiful. Janny Rat peeked out of his hole and saw that the children's trap had been thrown aside by leprechauns. Their room was a mess.

Janny Rat was tingling with excitement. He was waiting to see what had happened to his trap in the forest and ran out to see. He had barely reached the clearing near Luda Lake, when he knew that something must have happened here too. There was a huge commotion.



Janny Rat ran to the thicket of trees near the clearing to see what had happened. Oby Elephant was standing there looking upset and saying, "How was I to know that you two will come and fall in my trap before the leprechauns?"

Janny Rat could not help laughing. There was a large hole dug by Oby Elephant. Spotty Deer and Biso Bison had fallen into it. The large leaves that had been used to cover the traps were lying squashed at the bottom of the trap, and Spotty Deer was near tears. Biso Bison was angrier than he had ever seen him.

Biso Bison saw Janny Rat and said, “Luckily, both of us came together Janny. Imagine if Spotty Deer had fallen first and I had fallen on top of her! She would have become paste.”

Oby Elephant looked so distressed and unhappy that Janny Rat felt sorry for him. “Oby. Is this your trap?” he asked him.

Oby Elephant nodded sadly.

“How big did you think the leprechauns were going to be Oby? I mean we could all fit in here.” said Janny Rat.

“I don’t know. I did not stop to think about it. I just made a trap. I suppose in my mind, when you say trap, I think of something I must avoid, and so, I dug a trap big enough for someone like me.”

When Oby Elephant said that, all the animals started laughing, including Biso Bison.

“The children were using their shoeboxes for traps Oby. They must be small. Anyway, come, let’s get Biso Bison and Spotty Deer out and fill up this hole before someone else falls in. How did you not notice such a large trap?” Janny Rat asked.



Spotty Deer said she will show him how they did not notice the trap. When she got out, she did. The leaves made such an excellent cover that no one could see the trap.

Just then, they heard a small growl and Zebo Zebra came running into view. “Tango Tiger is up and about. Run everybody. Run!”

Oby Elephant caught the zebra just in time before he went skidding into the trap. All the animals ran out of the area as fast as they could.

A minute later, they heard a crash and a roar loud enough to curdle their blood.

“Oh no. I think poor Tango Tiger fell into the trap this time. “ said Oby Elephant.

Zebo Zebra was not pleased. “Poor Tango Tiger? Serves him right if you ask me. Charging after me like that first thing in the morning. “
The animals laughed.



“I have an idea. Why not play something fun, like hide-and-seek without having to worry about Tango Tiger springing on us from behind the bushes? It is a lovely, sunny morning.” said Spotty Deer.

It was a wonderful idea and all the animals were happy to play. They carefully destroyed all the traps they had set for the leprechauns, so there would be no more unpleasant surprises and then played all morning.

The forest was looking green and beautiful. Every bush seemed to radiate with the rays of the sun when a mild drizzle started. The animals did not worry about the rain and continued playing.

Oby Elephant first noticed the rainbow. He was so excited, he forgot he was hiding behind a large tree and trumpeted loudly.



The rainbow was beautiful and arced all the way across the width of Luda Lake.

A smaller rainbow was also there right above the big one. The rainbows made the morning look magical.

Every animal was glowing and looking happy. The rainbow looked so beautiful that they ran to see where it ended.

They stopped short when they saw up ahead of them a sight they had rarely seen.

Peaky Peacock was dancing in the rain. Her feathers were spread out to look like a marvelous fan and her dancing was so graceful, it made the others want to join in too.

Nighty Nightingale hummed a tune that would suit Peaky Peacock's dance and all the animals found themselves swaying to the music.



It was a magical morning and the animals were all silent when the dance ended. Nobody wanted to stop dancing.

Oby Elephant broke the silence and said, "Happy St. Patrick's Day everyone! I loved playing and dancing with you all. Thank you Peaky! You really made the day. "

Peaky Peacock beamed happily and gave all the animals a gift of one of her beautiful feathers.

"St. Patrick's Day sure brings luck! Maybe, next year we will even trap leprechauns." said Biso Bison tucking the feather between his horns.

"Happy St. Patrick's Day everyone!"



Credits

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