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Literature- Memorare First Draft

### The Death of a Leprechaun

When you think of a leprechaun, you may think of a pot of gold or a short Irishman dressed in green. When I was little, you could say that I knew a "leprechaun" or even Saint Patrick. I can remember to this day walking into the Saint Patrick's party in downtown Dubuque with my dad and my friend, Ana Gall. I was only six or seven years old. When we walked into the Hotel Julien, I can remember seeing a very kind looking man dressed in green standing at the top of the stairs near the entrance to the party. He had a very kind and friendly way about him with a twinkle in his eye and a big smile on his face. My dad knew this man and introduced my friend and me to him. This man greeted my friend and me and made us feel really special by giving us each a really neat gold coin. I kept it all these years. At the time, this man had really reminded me of Saint Patrick and when I found out his name was Patrick, I knew it was no coincidence.

I also had another chance encounter with this man that same year in the summer. One time when I was at the Dubuque Golf & Country Club, I had noticed he worked there and when I saw him he took the time to show me some of the coins he had collected. I thought it was so cool. So, he told me to come back the next day and he would give me some of these coins and talk about where he got each one. I returned the next day excited to take some of these coins home with me and my friend came too. Patrick gave both of us some of the antique coins and we happily thanked him and left. That was the last time I ever spoke with Patrick and little did I know that his life would go down roads that left him homeless and without anyone. I always tried to believe that if you try only good things will happen to you and others you love. But life is the great teacher and I have learned differently through my experience with Patrick. Life has taught me that horrible things can happen to good, kind people. I have come to realize over the years that things are often not as they seem and even bad things can happen to leprechauns.

Six years later on September, 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011, my family and I were on our way to the Iowa game when all of the sudden my Dad reads from the obituaries, "Patrick Kennedy died". I responded in a calm way thinking to myself "Oh, it must just be a friend of my parents" when I couldn't imagine who this man was when I heard his name even though I had a creepy thought that the name sounded familiar. So, I asked "Who?" My mom responded with a sad look on her face, "Oh, Maria, you know that man who gave you those coins?" Just at that moment, it all hit me. I was really shocked and speechless. I then quickly asked "But how?!" I then found out that Patrick had no home. He had lately been sleeping under a bridge in Des Moines. The way he died I found unspeakable. He was sleeping right under the bridge on a flat suspension of metal, and rolled off and fell 30 feet to his death striking a concrete floor.

I then heard about the problems he faced that I would have never imagined were a part of this man's life when I first met him at the St. Patrick's Day party six years before. This news shocked me. I felt empty like I could have and should have done something to help Patrick. I learned that people encounter problems you never imagine could happen to them. I did not expect Patrick to experience life and death in this way at the age of 54. How could such a terrible thing happen to such a good person? Why was Patrick sleeping under a bridge? Shouldn't this have been prevented? And why was it not prevented? What is our responsibility to help people like Patrick who have fallen into hard times? I need answers but have none. Somebody failed somewhere. I wish I were older and I might have been able to help. I just will never fully understand it. I decided to place this in God's hands and not in mine. My dad told me Patrick wanted to start a park for children and had even picked out a piece of land south of Dubuque. He never fulfilled his dream. Like a leprechaun, I guess Patrick was always a dreamer. So we are all a little like Patrick—dreamers. I just never thought his dreams would end so soon. For I never knew that a leprechaun could actually die.