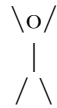


# Leprechauna

## *His Last Stand*

I'm thinking about Leprechauns dancing about. They have succeeded in getting dog food two feet from their enemy's house, which is exactly 23 cm more than they had ever done before. However, instead of accomplishing their task, they decide to celebrate something that will last until... now. A disobedient boy is leaving the house, so as to catch a leprechaun and play "biscuit ball" with it.

Despite his father's admonishes, he always walked in an elastic pair of sandals. His father was a crazy (woah-way tempered) angry (loud-voiced) scientist, and today his experiment was turning grass blue. Pete, the only child, the one with weird ridiculous sandals, had earlier that day walked right out in front of the house, merely to rub his feet in that fertilizer while he knew his father was watching, and spun around with his arms up in a V-shaped cheer like this:



The best his father could do—or rather, dared to do was rapidly open and shut his mouth, screaming endless babble and wagging his finger.

Their family name was "Fracatacafroo," but all the neighbors and people at school called him "Pete Sandals." His mother made frivolous efforts to stop this. At the end of her war, she resigned, and put four jars of black goo under the car. She was very fond of goo, but her goo was often eaten by leprechauns.

Now, see the house across that brown lake? That lake isn't water, it's bronze. The girl living there is particularly fond of dipping things in bronze, especially people. Her childhood is full of angry parents whose children smell like hot gasoline because of this. Her own horrible parents saw her

bronzing machine as nothing more than a sort of playground, and laughed when they watched other children be dipped and come out stiff and smelly. Little Lulu Gown was always tolerated, and she would also bite somebody.

She used to just do chip'n'dip. When she got bored of that, she threw her plate out the window where birds could come and taste it. Later, she would dip in the birds when she got the chance, but for now, Senator and Congresswoman Gowns were impressed, and they let revolting Lulu away from the mad (but better) parents.

There was always a long line outside the Gown household. So many people were in it that it looked like two long lines. Everyone had brought along roaches and termites they wanted dipped in bronze, even though Lulu was not allowed to let them. She'd charge quarters if she could. Congresswoman Gown was the one who said so, and that is why Lulu frowned and said she was dumb. Congresswoman Gown believed the vermin cultures to be deep and complicated. She often compared it to things like hair when she talked about it, and walked among the line snipping a pair of long thin oily scissors that said "squinch" whenever it moved. That made the people nervous. All the same, Congresswoman Gown would encourage the line-waiters to go for a swim while they left the cages behind. That way, she could set the vermin free.

Sometimes doomed realtors would come about and appraise the front yard. Then they'd leave after calling it a freakshow. "You're the freaks, honey." Congresswoman Gown knew when her husband wasn't speaking to her, because he never called her honey. "My Gal Lu, she dips 'em where she likes 'em, and nails 'em where she bites 'em." Senator Gown remembered to foist some propoganda relating to his latest political campaign, and everyone left. His targets often wondered if they'd truly met a Senator, or merely a real sleazy jalopy salesman dressed up as one.

Quick, look out! Phew, that was close.

A few doors down the hall, and that is where the girl with the silly medical condition was put. Nobody realized how silly it was when they put her there, otherwise she wouldn't be allowed.

Doctors don't work at the concussion hut, a cretin ran over them all. She'd had a spoiled dry induced seizure when the government decided to decline her a vehicle she could run over people with. This was silly, but nobody knew where the seizure came from, so they put her to rest in a concussion hut bedroom. She woke up from weasely schemes to get her way again and saw a gurney pushing past her room. That's when she decided to hijack it so that she might see if it ran over as good as a 5289 pound convertible. Hence the hospital's modern-day vacancy.

Jezebel, the awful one who rolled everything flat, would never have guessed just how much the professors and nurses would ugly up the floor. She already resented the floor after she couldn't pave it further. So there she drove, mad as a stove. When she couldn't look at the floor anymore, she peeled everything up and took it down to the basement. There, she pasted them to the wall. Nobody would ever have to look at them; Jezebel devastated the lightbulb by flicking the power switch off and on as fast as she could for two straight minutes, and then she cried, "Nacho shells!" There were also gnome eggs down there. They deserved to see the nasty corrupt wall when they hatched. Gnomes were filthy. Nobody mourned them when they splattered, not even Jezebel after she stepped on an egg and it spilled her Parkers™.

And so, she roamed the halls looking for more entities to drive over. Mother and father went into hiding after a while. Rootabega Schwop sang a drunken elevator chanty on her way to the infiniteth floor for an interview. That way, she could finally afford the hi-tech hunting apparatus to put a stop to the gurney madness. The people involved kept a checklist of things to try. The dog-catcher was crossed off (eliminated) and so was knight-and-shield. Romeo Schwop had long ago bicycled off to the racetrack. He won't win anymore bets, though. He ran out of mula seven months ago.

Occasioned the weekend and holiday when the neighborhood kids liked to surround the hospital and swipe urban rumors about what goes on inside. That's how I heard about all of this. The Cushion Hut kids club even submitted their own vicious hit lists and check the floor the next day for the clayey remains of their enemies. Speaking of floor, Jezebel would not resent it so much if it weren't something she couldn't flatten. So she rides on with a ribbon of toilet paper fluttering from the gurney's hind wheel.

See all this comfy furniture? No you don't. If you did then the Boardom house would be empty. There are thumbtacks to sit on, or a rusty brown nail. The only attraction here at the Boardom house is the TV. The idea of selling the house gave their realtor a nightmare. He dreamed that the TV was gone.

Whenever the Boredom TV was on, Mr and Mrs. Boredom noticed a steady but steadfast drop in picture quality. When they looked around the room to see why, they usually found out it was Putir tampering with the controls. "Oh no!" objected the wife one day in the middle of a valuable argument. "You won't kick the screen in. I need to see commercials for reliable advice about Lulu repellent, and getting rid of Leprechauns. No, I won't give up my access to it. Our son, on the other hand..." The argument resulted in letting the TV stay and stay on.

Putir said he saw omens in the static. Balogna, and other forms of lunchmeat, but crashing the thing just wasn't the way Mrs. Boredom would let her husband remove Putir's ridiculous delusion. "What if we scrapped the sofa instead?"

Now that they did, and Putir still prevailed. Their heavy stone-aged screen was too heavy for him to even scoot in the direction of a seat, so he had to sit on a coffin instead. "That's old man Jugglecone in there, right?" He sighed. "Scrambled channel 5 told us he'd kick the bucket soon. He might have lived five minutes longer if I'd got to a phone in time."

“He died of natural causes,” argued his father. “And not in some quick-dry molayssis vat, like that Zulu kid would have had it.”

“That reminds me, turn over to channel 10 and misadjust the tracking. I want to see who she’ll dip in this week.”

Mortimer Boredom did not change to channel ten, he put the set to sleep and usher his son outside. “Look for future predictions in fresh air for a change. The TV isn’t Miss Cleo, you know.”

“You can’t lock me out! There are rogue brownies out here, it said so on blank channel 99!”

But dad had fired up the noisy dishwasher, finished once and for all with his son’s oracular words.

Putir glared at Mortimer and considered him a sort of old fool. He was sitting in there, watching a teleshov, and even putting popcorn in his mouth so he could gloat over Putir's demise. Mortimer Boredom didn't have the knack to read the signs of the time like Putir did. He would miss them all (Putir) because of the lousy hi-def adjustments. Well, that's what Putir thought anyway. I guess we'll never know for sure.

And so, Putir went into the garage where legionous clutter piles spread all over the floor. Under all the nimrods and collectabilia were things he could use to get back in the house.

To demolish the window, he needed to crash his bike through it. He said goodbye to it. He didn't use it much, since he wasn't apt to run over everyone like Jezebel, which reminded him to put the color signal out of whack so he could see the next one she'd squelch. The window was so high up he assembled a makeshift ramp from a plywood board and two useless cinderblocks. He wanted to give his bike a decent burial, but he laughed so much at Mortimer's "keep-my-son-out" strategy that he couldn't spare reverence for the stupid thing. "Haha, Oh Mortimer, to think that a fool so dull as you would leave dangers like these lying around for your enemy son to use against you, but you're dull. This is what happens when you can't read the times in the maladroit tracking, so here I come!"

Putir pulled the stunt. After the stunt was over, the window survived, and embarrassed Putir rolled around on a bed of natural gravel between bike and concrete hunk, groaning and holding up his leg, waiting for his father to open up the window and invite him back inside for hot yackleberry punch. Mortimer did open the window, but not to let in Putir. He merely shook his head at his late plywood, which was the moment's biggest casualty. By the time Putir was on his feet, the window was closed again, and Mortimer shook his head, this time in disapproval.

He didn't make it back to the garage before the door closed. Mortimer obviously learned more to apply from the situation than Putir did. He dragged the cinderblock all the way back so he could crash through the door. It weighed exactly 45 pounds, and the manufacturers most certainly had in mind a situation like this when they made it weigh so much. Putir never did get back in. The garage had a weenie of a door anyway.

There were plenty of TVs around the neighborhood anyway. Putir went past other peoples' houses, peeking inside on a hunt for the oldest and sizzle-worthiest one. The biggest obstacle came up when lazy housewives peeped outside, and saw him coming a handful of feet away. They tugged their window cords and shut went the blinds and stopped Putir from doing his unimpressive job. He'd would just have to come up with a different plan.

Signor Jehosaphat tended to forget to lock his door, according to local rumor. The old man was asleep all day while his live-in frump kept herself in business by flinging mudpies at the ceiling. Just as the garage was closing, he rolled under the wedge and dumped a croquet set out all over the floor. He might have used it on his way to the living room if somebody hadn't snuck up behind him and thrown a musky pillowcase over his head, but since that happened, it was no use.

I'm trying to see who would make the most sense to capture him. Mortimer Boredom would have a full sunny afternoon of peace with his shows if he pushed his son into the back of a car and drove him seven miles away from their neighborhood, then pushed him out of the car and left him

standing in the middle of nowhere. Putir would then spend the rest of the day figuring out his mysterious location and by the time he got back to 747 Gravel Street, he would... no don't call the police. Pete was sandal-napped as well. It is hard to tell if he still wears sandals under all that concrete.

Dr. Sandals (why even bother?) was sick of having Gilligan for a son. If Pete was somewhere sandaling someone else's day, then he wouldn't lose so much youth, hair, and sunshine chasing after those confounded sandals as they made off with the experiment mushed all over them. Pete's sandals would never show up and corrupt his father's data, so naturally he'd eventually get a lot more work done. Nevertheless, it couldn't be the scientist. He didn't know the Boardoms. They didn't have a reason to nab Jezebel.

In fact, nobody had reason to get Jezebel. Yet they all had reason to get rid of Jezebel. Everyone's safe now, even though no one knows who did it. The marauders most after her were the those whose opponents were walking free willy instead of lying down flat on the sidewalk or school floor. Yet, there just aren't enough students smushed for it to have been them; that would have taken multiple dangerous tries. Romeo Schwop didn't do it, and neither did Rootabega. She didn't buy the expensive hunting thingies, she was still on the elevator yelling the 42nd verse. And Romeo was broke. The only ones left are the parents Gown. The capture of Lulu ruled them out right away.

The funny thing about their front yard was that no bronzed leprechauns were in it. If they were, then those light mythical nobodies wouldn't have been so heavy they sank the whole house about 2 stories below. Lulu didn't push in pot-bellied dwarves or twig elves in it, she pushed in a (maybe blind) fishermen, and then all his relatives when they came to find him. All of the statues weighed 26 lbs more than the ground could hold up when they added up. Therefore, the house fell two levels deep and made a sound like an Earthquake, which woke Lulu up.

"My copper mash (sheen) dumped!" She salivated with anticipation. "It pushes soft copper blobs with arms and shovels, and makes them into the shape I want," she explained to no one in particular.

Lulu did not open the door to any blob-masher contraption. She found herself (as well as her house) in a sort of fantastic laboratory. The next thing she ended up finding was a lot of her masterpieces over in a pile, a discovery that burnt her to fumes. Originally, she had arranged them in such a way in the yard so as to make it all look like rip-roaring ballroom being raided by maniacs, but these piles she was forced to witness had no art or poetry to them. She looked around for someone's leg to kick.

"Come out and go up with me, I'll dunk you brown!" She threatened.

"Hmm," considered someone, "I am not a chip for chip'n'dip. No, I'll rather stay where I am, hello, goodbye. And so, as I require, will you."

The captor then was Candylorum, King of Leprekind. He hiked his leg in triumph before realizing he was in for a pig-pen of uncooperation. Anybody who's wondering what he expected, don't continue doing that. You'll never understand, and that is that. Some of the kids plotted verbally to wad him for the ease of throwing him trashwards. Some of the kids chewed on their jails, not guessing it would bite back in the opposite direction. One of them said "Bombs to this seat, it doesn't steer at all!" and attempted to chair hop to a place where there might be roller skates. Jezebel didn't find any skates, as those were not the sort of thing King Candy left lying around his own personal lab.

The noise yelled on, slipping through the confines of the Leprecompound and fluttering away into the ether. The insanity of it all loosened a spring in Candy's tophat and let a jack-in-the-hat out to laud his praises. It wasn't much use, though. There were a lot of yells to talk over, so the hat-jack (along with its laudnia) was pointless. Candy looked to the idol he crafted out of garbage and chewing gum, then looked around for something to sacrifice. With the jack spring so close by, he didn't have



to look for long, so he plucked it out and placed it at the foot of the altar. "Hum-de-wala-wat-Nikolai-Ed," he prayed. That was the Loruman prayer for silence, a prayer that was answered with a spiraled Lepracane with which to show love to his captives.

Lulu was blessed on the teeth for being so slobbery in her way of escape (she didn't yet), Jezebel was blessed on the chair legs for taking gurney wheels for granted, and Pete was blessed on the foot-cement block for wearing such a disaster of a sandal pair.

"Next time, you'll think twice before wearing that tripe around here." He whistled once, and twirled three times. Now he could celebrate in peace. If he turned around, he might see the dejected eyes of the jack he'd torn out, but the idol was named Klumsus, and it blazed the thing three seconds later so that no one steal it.

Pete called Candy a stinky-head, and this interrupted his celebration. He consulted his idol for an even bigger silence. However, all he got was a spit in the eye. "Don't push your luck shorts." Although King Candy had to remind the idol that he was the tallest person in the room, mostly by knocking the noggin off the infernal thing with his tender loving cane, he obeyed the wisdom wishes of Klumsus, and arose to resolve his own problems. He doused a tissue in milk and then wadded it, aiming directly for Pete's mouth in a masterful toss. Pete's mouth was open at the time, as he was listing off his fingers everything that Candyorum was in addition to being a stinky-head. The tissue made it inside, and Candy was very proud. Klumses would have been proud too, if he wasn't in a condition that made him never wake up again. At any rate, the headache boy named Pete Sandals reminded those in the know how much he was like his father.

Now that they were all at a loss for words, Candy decided to reveal his plan for toppling the planet. "The world is an apple, ripe for the picking," he proclaimed. He called it his "planet plan," and the four of them would play a crucial part in it. He got into the specifics of what they would do, and what were the desired results after each step. He informed them eloquently on the matters of strategy,

scheme, and semantic, all the while illustrating his larger points with the choreographic panache of his newborn cane. His ideas were very precise and articulate; he even entertained himself as he recited them.

This proved he didn't know how much his captives were not listening. Some of them listened longer than others, the ones who did just didn't do it on purpose. Lulu stopped listening first when she heard the word "apple." Actually, she wasn't listening before she heard it. The knowledge that the king mentioned an apple was entirely incidental. Lulu was not deaf like all the people in bronze dippings. Before the word "apple" came out, she was crawling about and chewing on parts of her cage to find the softer parts. But then she salivated for a different reason, that being the unexpected urge to dip plant life and bags of groceries. She went back to chewing soon enough. The love the cane gave to her sure wore off. Candy noticed it, and not only reblessed what he could reach of Lulu, but also the parts of the cage where her spittle dripped. The way it barked when it hit was very musical.

Nobody was around to be impressed by the way he could instruct his prisoners and describe his plans at the same time. But Jezebel was the next one to stop listening. She was waiting for the part where she gets another set of wheels, and when the first six sentences had nothing to do with that, she looked around for a pair she could take herself. Headless Klumsus was one thing she saw. She called Candy stupid in her mind for ruining the idol that worked. She was also mad at Lulu, who was the thing she wanted to sacrifice. Slow Lulu, according to Jezebel, would never get anywhere with those bronze-dipped yardaments that had zero wheels. How viciously Jezebel wanted to run over Candy and paste him. It was this viciously:

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She imagined herself driving on the road once again, being able to scorn Lulu that she wouldn't even carry that rubbish around. It would ruin the speed, and people would manage to jump out of the way. She'd prove all this on Lulu because she forgot about having had to sacrifice useless her in order to get the car in the first place.

Instead of sorting out the rumples in her plan, she looked around for somebody who would agree with her. Not Lulu, she was the one she was going to sacrifice. Not anyone else; they were all boys. The only one left was nobody at all, and that wouldn't work. "Wait a minute, I agree with me." And so she imagined a second Jezebel coming into the room on anything with wheels. Not just coming in but driving in, so that she could promise that Candylozum would spread smooth and even on the Concussion basement wall.

"I will promise to you, if you will promise to me," said the second one. "Like butter on a bread-toast, promise that the shmuck will smear warm and smooth and even across the wall of the basement hatchery. I promise it to you. Will you promise it to me?"

"I will. Here I go! I promise the rumpelstilfink will splatter on the floor so we can peel him and slap him flat on the wall. And after that, we can run over caterpillar eggs."

Putir didn't listen either. He had TV-static withdrawal, and it made him say out-loud sentences, like, "Hey is anybody telling the future now?" and "Because you can't do that without a TV." And most of all, "You're not porphesying anybody, are you? Don't prophesy. Turn on a TV and let me do it."

In Candylozum's dungeon, there was a TV hanging from the corner tuned to security footage of an old man's front porch. Normal kids would have starting yelling for it to change to cartoons. Since nobody down here was normal, there would be instead Putir jumping to reach the controls so he could find out what happened next. He couldn't reach them because he was tied to a post, so he looked for something he could throw at it. He wondered what he could reach that would be just hard

enough to fizz up the picture, but too soft to actually break it. The head of Klumsus was soft yet firm; he kicked it square into the set.

Putir was two and a half prophetic messages deep when Candyorum's shiney gloves came along and corrected Putir's permission to look; he didn't have any. "Hey, stop that! I want to tell you the future."

"You're a goopy nimrod. I'm already telling that to you. It ends with me in charge and the rest of you following my orders, premember?"

"No it doesn't, the TV said something different."

Candyorum thus launched himself foot-first at the TV, and the innards burst in a blaze of sparks and metal.

"How do you know? The static's all gone."

Rootabega Schwop is having a hot flash right about now.

Lulu, with her heathen instincts so blaringly obvious, earned the obligation to be put on a leash. Otherwise, the kids walked in a single line behind the King as he fantasized about making pine cones the legal currency. "Shut up! What will I throw at my grandpa's mouth? I like to do it while he's sleeping, you know." Pete was pinched, and Lulu approached a puddle. It was brown all right. She tested it by taking Putir's finger and dipping it in. The results were not satisfactory. "Get outta here! It's not the same." She bit furniture the next time she saw it.

Pete and Jezebel measured vehicles. By the time she was out on the road, she pushed a kid over and swiped his rollers, somehow. Pete voiced his unimpressment. "No rinky-dink wheel chair is as goin' as these."

"GOIN'?"

Pete pointed down at his stretchers.

"You mean goin' out of fashion! Wheels are always have to haves!"

But Pete walked like an Egyptian to prove his point. He also raced her to show how faster he could go on foot, unknowing that she wasn't trying to beat him. Instead, she was trying to run him over. She thought that Egyptians equaled mummies, and mummies were supposed to be slow. When the floor wasn't all asplatter with Pete or Sandal residue, she screamed for the implimentation of sturdy oars.

Putir clapped his hands upon the threshold of 265 Eggshells Avenue. "All right so, hear's the plan. You guys distract the housemaster while I screw with the knobs on his junkavision. This looks like the kind of house of a guy who never updates his tech. Lulu, she can sprinkle bronze onto his toes so he won't come and chase me away from my duty. Or Jezebel drive over his foot-"

"Don't tell the girls!" Putir's scalp accepted a blessing without warning. "Don't tell what to do. And you will do nihl of the sort. Now, remember what I told you." They didn't. They weren't listening to that part.

Before it all started, Candylozum took the necessary precautions and made sure. When he was absolutely certain and there were never any doubts, the man of the house came out with a bowl full of peanut shells. Candy helped himself to a scoopful and pelted his face.

The rest of the crowd threw wadded up candy wrappers. "Trick or treat!"

"No. No. NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO."

With each new correction came a rap on the head. It worked (in terms of hitting) until it caught in Lulu's teeth. Its morphology would never be the same.

"You are to say, trick, or more evil trick. That's the most important part. Now, let's try it again, and get it correct forever."

He swivelled around, but by then, the housemate was fed up of the whole scene. He aimed the door straight at Candy's face and launched it shut. It was such a small face, and such a large projectile. Mr. Magorium pleased himself by the unlikelihood of ever seeing that stooge again.

"More evil trick it is, then." As Candylozum perused the neighborhood, looking for things to stack up so he could make it to Wafflehead's roof, he taught the children the importance of defaulting to the heaviest arsenal up your pant leg. He even recruited the kids in the task by waving around the Lulu-bit cane around in the air. When the pile was good and sturdy, Candylozum made it to the roof, and deduced what exactly to pour down the chimney.

The resident didn't suspect a thing. Wild reports indicate that it wasn't even the poor schnook they went after in the first place. What happened to all of the peanut shells? This homebody roasted a rubber chicken on a spit in the fireplace. No wonder he never married. With a household odor like that, everyone had to wonder who else he was trying to drive from the neighborhood.

Candylozum was the first to peer down. He didn't look long, because he smelt more than looked. He couldn't help it, but it warned him the chicken meal was fitfully ungarnished, and then came the next important lesson of the day.

"The most competent ovens of our generation could cook everything, even poison. That, however, is neither what the housemaster here is using nor cooking. No, even our ovens could not save this hoo-hoo. There is only one thing left to do, and that is to season the meal ourselves before it is all too late."

Somewhere in the middle of this speech, Putir Boredom began screeching the uncookability of TV; but a wad of rubbish somehow found its way into his mouth, and the boy's freak assessments were shushed.

Afterwards, the speech was all over, and Candy rolled over a mystery cauldron and started to pour it all the way down to the chicken. Lulu stopped rocking and frothing for once. That amber pour-down looked to her like bronze, something she could cheer on, but it was actually ketchup, something she could not. Either way, her ignorance toward the matter drove her to claw the door,

fixing to dip the man inside. She also made tasmanian devil noises, which would have caused the man to lose his appetite even faster than the junk he was miscooking.

Jezebel Schwop and Lulu Gown would never be friends. For all her Nascaresque ambience, Jezebel preferred the company of girls who talked about jewelry and horses. However, she soon discovered a practical use for her fellow prisoner, one that would save her a big fat heap of mileage instead of making her drive like Fred Flinstone, and that was to tie the leash to the neck of her chair, then dangle a live squirming hamster by a fishing rod in front of her. She got the fishing rod by sneaking Candylorum's cane while he was preoccupied with the fabled tomato carnage. The string and hamster came from that pile from earlier. And so, Jezebel had her brand new car, powered by a ceaseless quest for a brand new bronze-dip specimen.

"Come back, you have to share it!" Candylorum hopped alongside her, and she pushed him off, telling him to get lost.

"I invented it, no, what are you doing? Off off!"

Putir and Pete tried to get on too, and she also pushed them off. "What happened to those sandals you liked to run in so fast? Get off!"

Whenever she pushed them off, she tried to run over them, forgetting just how hard it was to steer. They, however, refocused her directions by dangling a photo of a teacher in front of the way, so she wanted to splatter him.

"B-b-but, Chimneyhead told me to be myself."

"And I'm telling you to be silent." Candylorum snapped his clapperboard, something else he rummaged out of the magical chimney pile. "We worship demons that make less noise than you do. Have you ever listened to outer space? Of course you don't because you're talking all the time."

Jezebel sneered. "You sure like to hear yourself talk a lot, don't you, rat teeth?"

The clapperboard was actually what Candy used when he lost his cane to imperfect conditionitis. He never retrieved it, and the altar had not reset to his daily demand quota. That was why he had to smack two Parist slabs together when the children a-needed corrections. It didn't work quite as well; he felt much less adventurous without something he could swing from afar. Some would even argue (I myself) that it didn't work at all.

He herded them out the following morning to dispatch them into the world. After the seventh clap - each of which were aimed at the nose of the blithering offender and missed - they ran off like a squirrel coven without hearing any of his empty nest speech. "Hey wait, I haven't recited my life story! Oh well. With lots of luck, they know where they are going."

At least he was still around to hear the details. He had earlier procured a tall ladder tall enough to watch over the landscape and graph the progress of his quartet minions. He shoved the clapper down his pants and orated lessons about the importance of tidy, few-person households, and that the point of raising kids was to get rid of them as soon as possible. Midway up, he was reminded of his babysitter by the discomfort of the current position of his clapperboard. The babysitter, Egwillla, used to pinch his nose with one while cooking unwanted sittersnacks. As she put it, he couldn't tattle over what he couldn't smell. But mother always smelt the aftermath, even though she'd left a full sitterbowl of babysitter food, and then refused to pay. "I have already paid you in the ingredients I never offered." Instead she dumped sour cream into the sitter's open palm.

Candylorum finally made it to the top so he could lift his binoculars to his eyes. "And to this day," he thought, "I want no involvement with sour cream."

In the morning, they failed to develop a better way to travel. They still tied a live animal to a fishing pole - sometimes so heavy that Putir had to help hold the line until Jezebel pushed him off, only for him to force his way back on again - and Lulu chased it so as to dip it in bronze. This only worked as long as the animal was alive. Sometimes they accidentally hanged it. After all, the hamster



was dead. Somebody must have sat on it and suffocated it. Whenever she pushed off Pete or Putir, she tried to run over them, and that just made the trip slower. Lulu just wanted to escape from Candyman.

What actually happened was the hamster chewed up the photo of the teacher and choked on it. That is why Pete and Putir were getting nowhere with their attempts to steer the chair, and Lulu gnawed through the leash and let them all roll head-long into a ditch.

Putir supposedly knew this would happen all along. "I caught it on cable last night." Nobody else caught it on cable, because he was the only one who could decipher the signal. The reason he didn't get off the ride at the last minute because he honored the sign of the times, so he wallowed in mud with the deplorables.

"What on Mars are you on about?" Jezebel sneered as wrinkly as she could.

There was no profit in the Candyman ordeal. Putir only could see it. Putir only could read it in the times. He said as much to the rest.

"He's right you know." Pete walked around in circles in his Sandals. "When you trickier treat at the store, you never know what you get until they throw it."

"You're a fool!" Jezebel attempted to start up her chair again by swatting Lulu with the broken fishing pole. But Lulu was gone and the legs were completely broken. The legs of the chair, that is. Hers made no difference, how little she used them.

Putir clapped for attention and safety. "All right, here's the plan. We'll start at the mall, because there they have shopping baskets. Shopping baskets have wheels, you know." He started off with the most alluring part of the plan. That was the kind of lesson that King Candylozum would have liked to take credit for, but the Lorum King never really taught it.

As planned by Putir, they made their first stop at the mall, where they acquired a shopping basket and glued plastic eyes to it.

"Wait," said Putir.

"Now what?" said Lulu. "I'm having a bronze-free hangover, and whatever mixes are in there wouldn't cut it."

"We need an HQ. You know, the room in the cart won't last forever. If we hit the jackpot with the first few locales, we're all gonna run out of space."

"You can walk!" snapped Jezebel, and instead of arguing, Putir noticed the line of TVs. He needed his prophecy fix, so he ran inside and spoiled the transmission so that all they played was jazzy static.

The other kids charged the shopping mall one treat. The guard was asleep on the roof at the time, and he found their chattering suspicious. He tried to discourage them by throwing the sundry merchandise he piled up to keep him awake, which included a swimming pool and lots of paint. Lulu took Pete's toe and tested the waters. "This won't do at all! If your parts don't freeze up like a rock, I'm mad and disappointed."

Eventually the guard ran out of stuff to throw, so he dive-bombed at the kids, and fell through a porthole. We've never been able to identify him because they forgot to write down his name, but a memorial was erected in California in the honor of a certain Jared P. Pisslips, whose whereabouts were last approximated about 15 miles underground.

It was around this time that Putir came out to observe the loot collection. "So the guard threw you an appreciable bounty? I knew he would; It said so on fuzzy 07."

"It didn't," declared Pete, and threw a doughnut at him before Putir stepped up his argument.

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And so it was that they went tricker treating at their favorite corporations. It wasn't halloween, so it all looked so odd and threatening. Wherever they went, from Lowe's to Pokey's Pet Dump, they parked their basket under the window and sang Leprechaun caroles until the guard came out and tried to demolish them with heavy furniture and livestock, most of which wound up in Lulu's paint-pool before it blushed in embarassment and scrambled towards parts dim and unseen.

They also went to school. "Only if I get to use the science lounge," prattled Pete. "I want to dump out all the elements and trapse through them. That's my favorite at home, but Dad locked all the cabinets invisibly. I'd scour his bald patch if I could only break in."

"I'll scour you!" Lulu tried, but the pool was too heavy. It sloshed on the ground, but still, Pete smeared his feet all in it, this giving way for his sandals to collect yet another unseemly shade.

The least luck they had was at the banks. Instead of human watchmen, the engineers there had left robots to guard the goods. The jewelry dealers didn't have much in the way of heavy arsenal. Pete pried Putir for details on the prophecies of the TV as regards to the bank. "It should have said they'd throw a safe," he ranted.

"If they wanted you to know what they'd said, it would have given you the gift. But only I have it." And so Pete threw a fistfull of gravel.

The last place they went before they ran out of room was Toyzarus. By then, the basket was getting two heavy to push, so Jezebel didn't obey when Putir told here where to drive. "Quick, he's about to dump an Arcade! With that, I can not only tell the future, I can control it."

"Who wants you in control of the future? You? Duh." Lulu bit.

The journey was not without moments of remembered instructions. At a few clothing stores, the kids did promise them a more evil trick, as clothing was not a big object of anyone's greed. However, they forgot to pour ketchup down anyone's chimney, not only because they didn't have one, but because they were really really lazy. All they had to do was make Lulu dump the remainder of her swimming pool paints over it, but she had gone into a trance upon learning that Candy's cauldron was no bronze chamberpot, only condimentia. Therefore, he wasn't an ally, and she lost her innocence.

Never once throughout this journey did it turn Halloween. That's why this whole charade looked fish and suspishy. Anchormen schlepped out their cameras and followed the runts as they made off with all that loot they didn't pay for. Teacher's groups took photos and printed newspapers,

using the whole scene as an example of the failure of modern-day parenting. Lulu demanded to be set free so she could go bite.

They made it all the way to the white house. They even expected a bag full of power from the big man upstairs. Instead, Security Agent Witherfra shook up two champagne bottles, crazy-glued them to the shopping cart, and uncorked them in the direction opposite of boss's 4-year abode.

"The basket is too full for more anyway," shrugged Jezebel. "Where will we put all the luggage?"

"Champagne is stronger than Jezebel, that's what that proves." Lulu and Jezebel then started a spitting fight. Pete pointed at a certain backyard, and thus they had the Pirate hangout.

They built there a treehouse and christened it, "The world." The backyard they chose was so random that the owner of it stood agape behind the window, along with her poodles as they assembled the goods they extorted from Lowe's, a place Pete used to call "Lousy's." But that was a time before he realized it would play a crucial role when he wanted to take over the world. All the same, the woman in the house summoned a nearby lumberjack by dressing in a gown and waving a pair of striped stockings out the window.

Up in the treehouse, they divided the goods they collected in unequal portions. Lulu dipped everything she got, from a watermelon (the splattered kind) to a pencil sharpener, in a liquid mixture that she hoped would add up to bronze. It just didn't, no matter how long she left it in there. Two minutes, three minutes, no difference whatsoever.

"I'm so amazed at us!" Laughed Putir. "We are all pirates, yanking out the shiniest pearl from the world the oyster."

"Poo. I'm not a pirate. A princess rather." Jezebel stuck her nose in the air.

"Elk."

Pete looked outside to imagine the sky had fallen. Two lumberjacks stood around trying to figure how to light a fire. At first Pete opened his mouth to tease them, but then he saw Candyorum frolicking along. And so, he teased him instead. "Look guys, there's a jit out there. Three of them. Jit jit jit!"

And Candyorum strolled right up, immediately introducing himself as an affront to their masculinity.

"Shut up," said one jack to the other, "I'm trying to figure out a reason to punch this short right in the nipple. Well, I guess no reason's as good as any. Look out."

Of course, nobody knew just how squirrely Candy was. They didn't get to punch him after all, though they chased him. So Candyorum pulled his pants down then ran into the house for a can of tuna to cram inside their nostrils, can and all. Then it was time to give the treehouse residence an employee evaluation.

They technically were not his employees, as he hadn't paid them. But as they dropped a cinderblock on his way up, he didn't plan to, not after that. Not before, either. Meanwhile, Pete pretended to be, not just any pirate, but a space pirate. He declared his emancipation from the outer space justice system, and called King Candy a space cop. "We follow no law of yours, space cop!" See?

Pete flashed the sole of his sandal, and that didn't slow him either. The items they dumped were the follow: a washing machine, a bicycle, sour warheads, a loaded book case, seventy-one different editions of monopoly, a parachute, Putir for throwing out what should have been their last resort, which was the parachute, a back-pack full of action figures, and a plastic bowling kit. Candyman evaded it all, and dumb Putir climbed right back up to rub their teleset-prophecied backstabs (his knowledge of them) in their faces instead of making the run that he should have for it.

"And now for a progress report," said Candy. "Gimme."

"We progress from under your stinky-rink-stinko nose of telling us to do all this," yacked Pete, "to doing it our own way. Your old-man rules just aren't goin'."

Candy granted them points. His "rules," as Pete put it, were not goin'. They weren't goin' anywhere. Pete, Putir, Jezebel and Lulu would be the ones goin'. They were goin to the supermarket. To run laps around in several circles "until I say the end," declared Candy.

Candylorum laughed inside his head. He already made evil plans for never saying the end. He listened to proverbs from parenting megacorp "Focus on the Family" and had stationed all four of them inside the grocery store, where they would run their embarrassing laps. Customers pointed when they remembered them from the news. Ew, some of those fingers have snot on them. Whatever. They decided to protect the items in their baskets, just in case someone wandered over. Plan B involved reaching for a sausage or cucumber as a backup, but fortunately no one came.

Candy braced himself for a life of doling out everlasting punishment. Each subsequent round, at the point where they passed insane Candy, would restart with them getting a head-knot. They put up with this for three rounds. Pete thought it was a huge waste of the way he used his Sandals. He wanted to stop at the X-boxes and beat the latest Explodio Brothers. Their peers were laughing, too. It wasn't long before all those laughs soon started to get to them. Jezebel and Lulu had already rebelled before the race even started. Jezebel was going to climb into a spare shopping basket. That way, she could drive the rest of the way if she was going to run around in circles. She could also sit up in the child loft and soak her feet in a footspa. And Lulu found a pail. Now all she needed was bronze. Finally Pete and Putir went to the bicycle zone, and the peer jeers ended right along. "Is it just me, or all we going about this are wrong?" The other kids traded glances of confusion and amazement. They had never thought of their own way before, and the picture of it looming in their minds was surprising them. "Here we are, following the whims of the oppressive upper class, and nobody's doing a thing. Isn't it just about time already?"

They all had spectacular epiphanies. The bicycles in the aisle, the skateboards, the roller blades, the pogo sticks, the trampolines were giving them epiphanies when they saw them. It made them wonder what they were ever waiting for.

Candylorum was still waiting while all this was going on. He checked his watch, which he could not read because it was the kind with x's and i's and things instead of numbers, but he knew they should show up for a fat-knot by now. He polished his cane to make sure to give them a good strong one for taking so long. He held it out and grinned. Maybe they would be going so fast, so as to make up for being so slow earlier, that they would bang right into it, then writhe about as he pointed with the cane and cried out, "There, there is a sample of a minion who disappoints his levels!" That would teach them a thing or.

Then there was an impact tremor. Candy looked, and nearby eggs were rattling with excitement. An elderly psychic was determined they were going to hatch, so she scooped them up in her dress. She couldn't believe she'd snatched such a deal! She was helping them along by rattling them around in her shirt, when the sweaty bacon went like the same. "Are the piglets returning to life? Throw some of that in there!" The eggs cracked before she got anywhere, and the stains would never get out. Mom was in the dairy aisle when she noticed some rhythmic shakes to the carton-bound milk. It looked like a preamble to an Earthquake.

Like a pregnant drumroll, groceries left and right wiggled with futuristic prophecies while the customers in the store and high school dropouts looked for reason and meaning. A taffyclown screamgested, "The end is upon us!" His marketmates responded by clamboring over one another in a speedy race to go out, not just away from the shakes but from the clown as well. Candy scoffed at anyone in earshot. "You had it coming all along, you fat flakey crybabies!" He stood there, stomping his foot so as to confirm that his targets would not go unsulted. A spider crept under his stomps to



take shelter, and then it was dead all of the sudden, perfect for throwing it at a running woman as she hoped an exit door stood somewhere in the direction she was going in.

Candy was the foolish one this time. Everyone escaping would be safe from clown and more. Dark was the night for him, and long was the hour. The store fell apart in ways he never thought possible, and he sneered who would live in this roach nest.

As he learned within the next couple of minutes, this wasn't any Earthquake prelude. Around the corner looking like a TV ad for a sports drink was the supermarket kids club. They bicycled and chanted "Gugu Lown, Gugu Lown" as they snatched up pieces of the store to use when the sky finally fell. When they saw the one person dumb enough to ignore all the warnings that sent the rest of the customers heading for the hills, the club yodeled and spurred one another with sewing needles to go faster, that they would definitely erase one fiend from existing.

Aisles fell over. Mosaic floor tiles popped out from their spots on the linolium and landed with sharp and pointy divisions. Weak and all asnivle that the collapse was not a testament to his own power, Candy made an attempt to lift one of the aisles back to standing. He wanted to usher in the apocalypse, not kids. He raised his rod to the air and said some words of protest, but they are lost to the winds of history as the crowd overtook him.

Counting the members of the riot would have left out Putir. He was always a sort of a homebody, but as the vast majority mounted bikes and everything else, he located the TV aisle and screwed with the controls until the screen was its optimal noisy mess. There, in a way that nobody else can, he read the impending collapse of Candylozum, King of the Leprechauns. For he tried to conquer the world, and instead it conquered him, just as the scramblings said it would.