

## ERNEST'S LUCKY DAY

*[Illustration: Ernest is a little penguin who lives inside an igloo. Initially everything he sees is basically a shade of black and white. He begins by looking out a window.]*

“Oh no!” Ernest said after getting out of bed. “Cloudy again!”

Ernest had really wanted the sun to be out today. He wanted the sun to be out every day, of course, but today was special because today was Saint Patrick’s Day. Today was the day that everybody was supposed to wear green and celebrate the luck of the Irish.

*[Illustration: Ernest looks in his closet to find nothing but black and white penguin suits.]*  
But today was not lucky. Today was the same as every other day—gray. Things at the South Pole were always gray. Or white. Or black. Or gray. Ernest sighed. He wanted blue or red or yellow . . . or green!

*[Illustration: Ernest walks into the kitchen or family room.]*

“Good morning, son,” said Ernest’s father. “Is something wrong?”

“I’m just not lucky. Things here are always the same.”

“What things? What do you mean?”

“Dad,” Ernest said, “today is Saint Patrick’s Day! I want to wear green today—not black and white again!”

Ernest’s father chuckled. “Son, penguins don’t wear green. We’re proud of our feathers! Black and white. And good little penguins should be proud too.”

Ernest sighed and went outside without any breakfast. The snow was white, the ice was white, and the sky was still gray. Sigh.

He passed some workers building a house. This gave him an idea.

“Excuse me!” he called to one of them. “Do you have any paint?”

“Of course we do,” said the worker. “We are building a house, after all.”

“Can I see it?”

Ernest hoped they might have some green paint to color his feathers with, but when the worker opened the can, it was white. “In case the ice isn’t white enough,” he explained.

“Don’t you have any green paint?”

“Ugh! Green paint? What would we do with *green* paint?”

“Well . . . paint something green? It *is* Saint Patrick’s Day, after all.”

By now all the workers had gathered round. “It’s Saint What’s Day?” one asked.

“Saint Patrick’s Day! When everybody wears green to celebrate the luck of the Irish.”

The workers laughed so hard they almost knocked the house over. Finally someone said, “Penguins don’t wear green! And they don’t paint green either. Penguins’ favorite color is white: white, white, white.”

“And black,” added another.

“I know,” said Ernest miserably, and he turned away, dragging his feet in the—white—snow.

He looked in the baker’s for some green clover-shaped cookies, but all she had was fish cakes.

He looked in the hatter’s for a little green bowler hat, but all he had was black top hats and bow ties—for special occasions.

He even looked in the ice cream parlor for mint chocolate chip, but all they had was vanilla.

“Sigh.” Ernest decided he was the most unlucky penguin in the whole world and walked right out of town.

Ernest walked and walked, not looking where he was going. He didn’t look at the gray sky, or the white snow, or even his black feathers or his gray little feet. He hardly even noticed when the sky got darker and the snow started to fall—it just made him feel more unlucky. The wind blew and blew and the snow fell and fell, but Ernest just walked and walked and walked, until...

*Oof! [Illustration: Ernest trips on a lump in the snow.]*

*What was that? [Illustration: Ernest brushes the snow off and uncovers something a brilliant green.]*

“*GREEN!*” shouted Ernest to no one in particular. “I found *green!*”

He quickly brushed the thing off to see what it was.

A leprechaun! And wearing the most beautiful little green hat and jacket, with a little four-leafed clover in the lapel—he looked perfect, except that his face had turned all blue from the cold.

*[Illustration: Ernest tucks the leprechaun into the fluffy feathers just above his feet, like an adult penguin keeping an egg or chick warm. The storm has stopped.]*

Luckily, being a penguin, Ernest knew just what to do about that, and the little leprechaun was feeling better in no time.

“Lucky for me ye came along, laddy. Ye saved me life. Is there anything I may be doing for ye in return? I can grant wishes, ye know.”

Ernest didn’t have to think very long about that. “I’d like clothes like yours, if you please, sir. I want to celebrate Saint Patrick’s Day.”

The leprechaun rolled back on heels and laughed. “Ye want to look like a leprechaun? Well I quite agree with ye. Green’s the only color for me.” And without another word the leprechaun clapped his hands two times and—

*POOF! [Illustration: Ernest, elated, is dressed exactly as the leprechaun.]*

“It’s *perfect!*” cried Ernest. “I’m a real Saint Patrick’s Day Penguin! Quick, come with me! I’ve got to show everybody!”

So Ernest and the leprechaun hurried back to town, where everybody stared. In all the history of the South Pole, no one had ever seen a penguin look anything like *this* before.

Ernest’s mother and father ran up to him. “Ernest! Ernest! What are you doing?”

“Do you like it? I found a leprechaun and he gave me a wish!”

“Ernest, I thought I told you,” said his father, “penguins wear *black!*”

Everyone in the crowd whispered the same thing: “Penguins wear black.” “Penguins wear black . . .” “. . . And white,” one added.

Ernest’s mother stepped forward. “Ernest, I want you to take off this silly costume and go back to being black and white at once!”

“Silly, madam?” asked the leprechaun, who until now had been quiet. “That’s the traditional garb of Saint Patrick’s Day.” He turned to Ernest, “And ye did wish to celebrate Saint Patrick’s Day, didn’t ye, laddy?”

“Yes,” said Ernest, not knowing what to think.

“Then celebrate it ye will.” The leprechaun clapped his hands two times and—

*POOF! [Illustration: All of the flabbergasted penguins are now wearing green coats, hats, scarves, or skirts. In addition, all of their black feathers, except for Ernest’s, have*

*turned the remaining colors of the rainbow, grouped together by color—red, orange, yellow, blue, and purple—so that they form a rainbow of penguins around Ernest and the leprechaun.]*

“Oh my...” said Ernest’s father.

“Oh dear...” said Ernest’s mother.

“Oh, *YIPPEE!*” shouted all of the children.

Ernest smiled. “Happy Saint Patrick’s Day!” he yelled.

The grown-ups looked at one another. They saw how dashing they looked in their bowler hats and caps. They saw how sleekly their newly colored feathers shone in the sun. They saw how smart their four-leafed clovers looked on their lapels. Slowly, Ernest’s father turned to his little boy. He knelt down and wrapped his wings around him. “You were right, son. It’s sure lucky we had you to show us how exciting a little color can be.”

The leprechaun added, “It appears yer little Ernest is the luckiest penguin outside all of Ireland.”

“Three cheers for Ernest!” called his father. “Ernest the Lucky Penguin!”

They all lifted Ernest up on their wings. “Hip, hip, hurray! Hip, hip, hurray! Hip, hip, hurray!” they shouted.

And there, with his family, Ernest realized that he had always been lucky after all.

*[Illustration: Ernest embraces his family while others examine their clothing, throw snowballs, eat clover-shaped cookies, and otherwise celebrate. Some clover pokes through the snow and a rainbow hangs in the blue sky overhead.]*