

LEVELED BOOK • N

The St. Patrick's Day Mystery



Written by Jan Mader • Illustrated by Stephen Marchesi

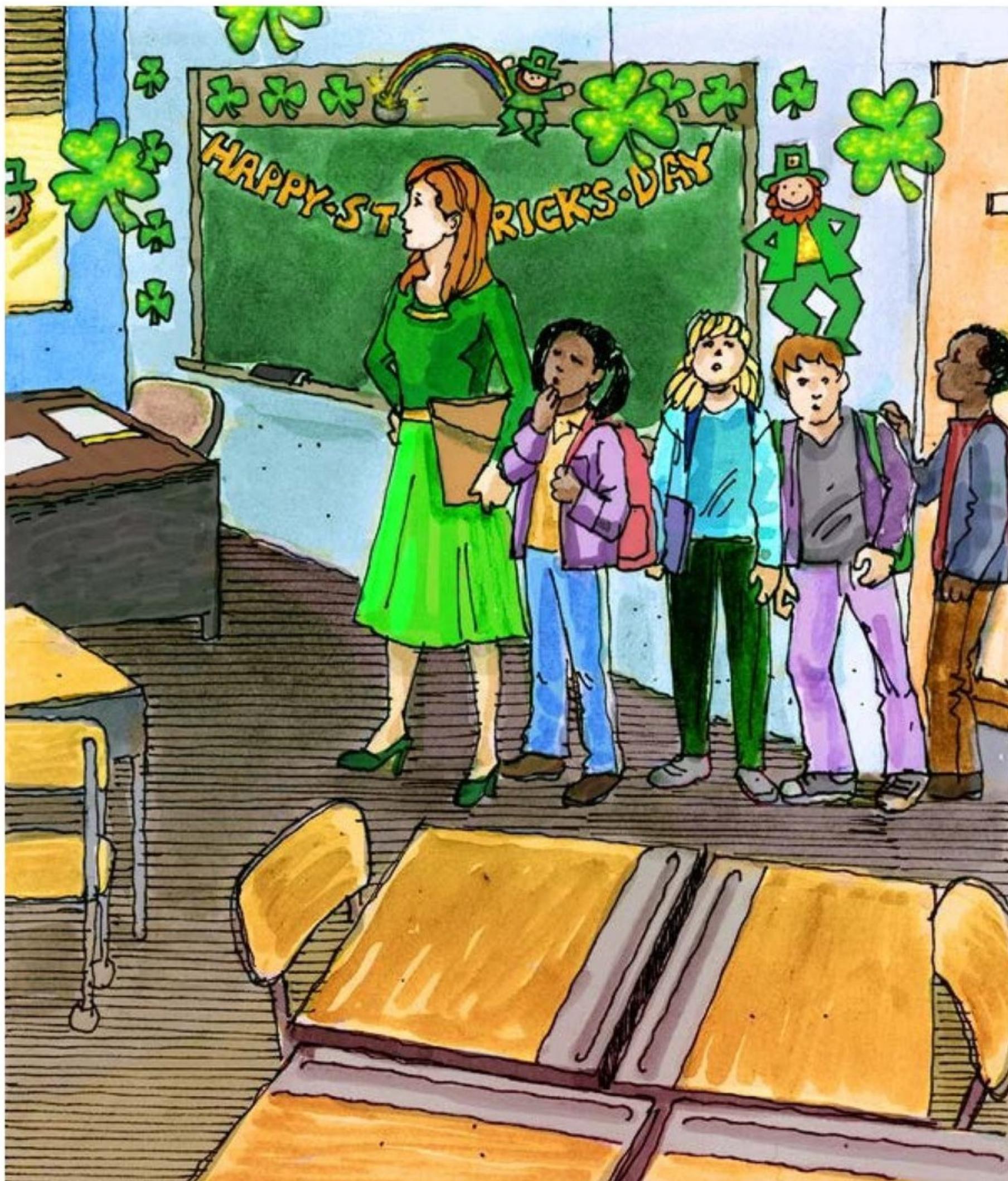
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Aja was excited when she arrived at school. It was her turn to be line leader. The bell rang for school to start. Aja proudly took her place at the front of the line. She walked beside her teacher, Ms. McBride, into the school and up to their classroom door.



“What on Earth?” gasped Ms. McBride as she entered the room.

The students crowded into the green and **glittery** classroom. All four walls were covered with **decorations** for St. Patrick’s Day!

"Our room looks awesome!" said Sammy.

"Yay!" cheered the kids. "Thank you, Ms. McBride!"

Ms. McBride smiled and shook her head. "Don't thank me. I didn't do this. It must have been the leprechauns!" she said with a grin.



“Really?” said Lucy. “Leprechauns came here?”

“What are leprechauns?” asked Sammy.

Now the whole classroom was **abuzz** with excitement. “Everyone come to the story rug,” said Ms. McBride. “I’ll tell you the truth about leprechauns.”



Aja smiled a little secret smile. Her older sister Ashley had Ms. McBride as a teacher two years ago. Ashley had told Aja what to expect on St. Patrick's Day in Ms. McBride's class.

"Leprechauns are **magical** little people from the island country of Ireland, across the Atlantic Ocean. They like to wear green and enjoy playing tricks on people for fun," said Ms. McBride.

Lucy held up her hand. "My dad told me that leprechauns bury a pot of gold at the end of each rainbow," she said.

"That's right," said Ms. McBride, "and if you catch a leprechaun, you get three wishes!"



Anna raised her hand. “Do you believe in leprechauns?” she asked Ms. McBride.

“Of course I do,” smiled Ms. McBride. “Where do you think these decorations came from?” she asked with a wink.

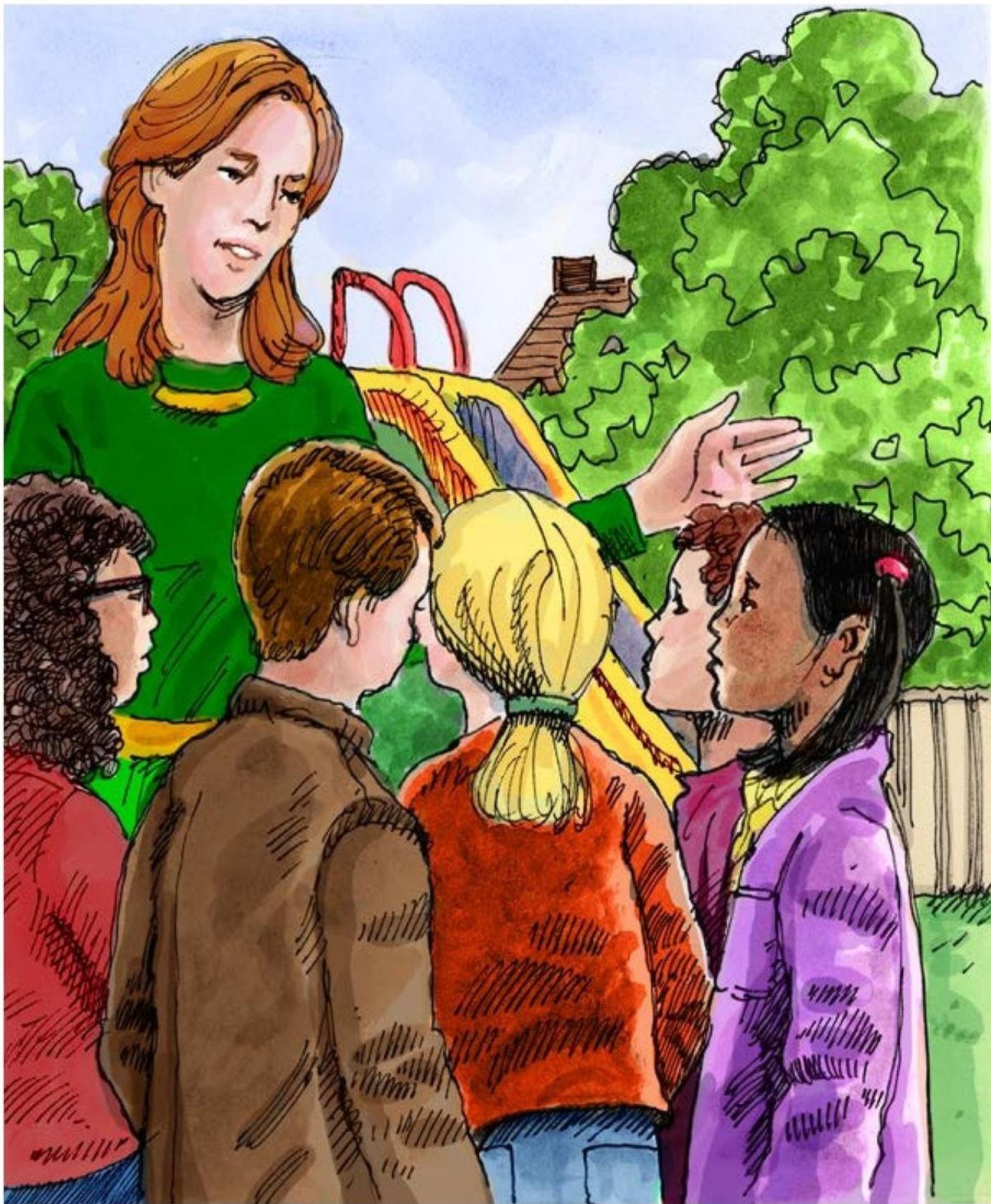
Aja turned to Sammy, who was sitting beside her. “Give me a break. It’s not true,” she whispered. “My sister told me that there’s no such thing as leprechauns. Ms. McBride decorates the classroom every St. Patrick’s Day.”

Sammy didn’t have a chance to answer Aja. All of a sudden, the fire bell started to clang. Ms. McBride got serious. “Line up, everyone! That’s the fire bell, and you all know what to do,” she said.



Aja's class made their way outside and joined the rest of the students lined up by classes on the playground. Ms. McBride counted the students to make sure everyone was there. "Stay here quietly," she said before joining a group of teachers who were huddled around the slide.





Aja and the class waited and waited. *What is taking so long?* they wondered. Finally Ms. McBride came back to the class. “We can go back inside now. It seems to have been a false alarm,” she said.

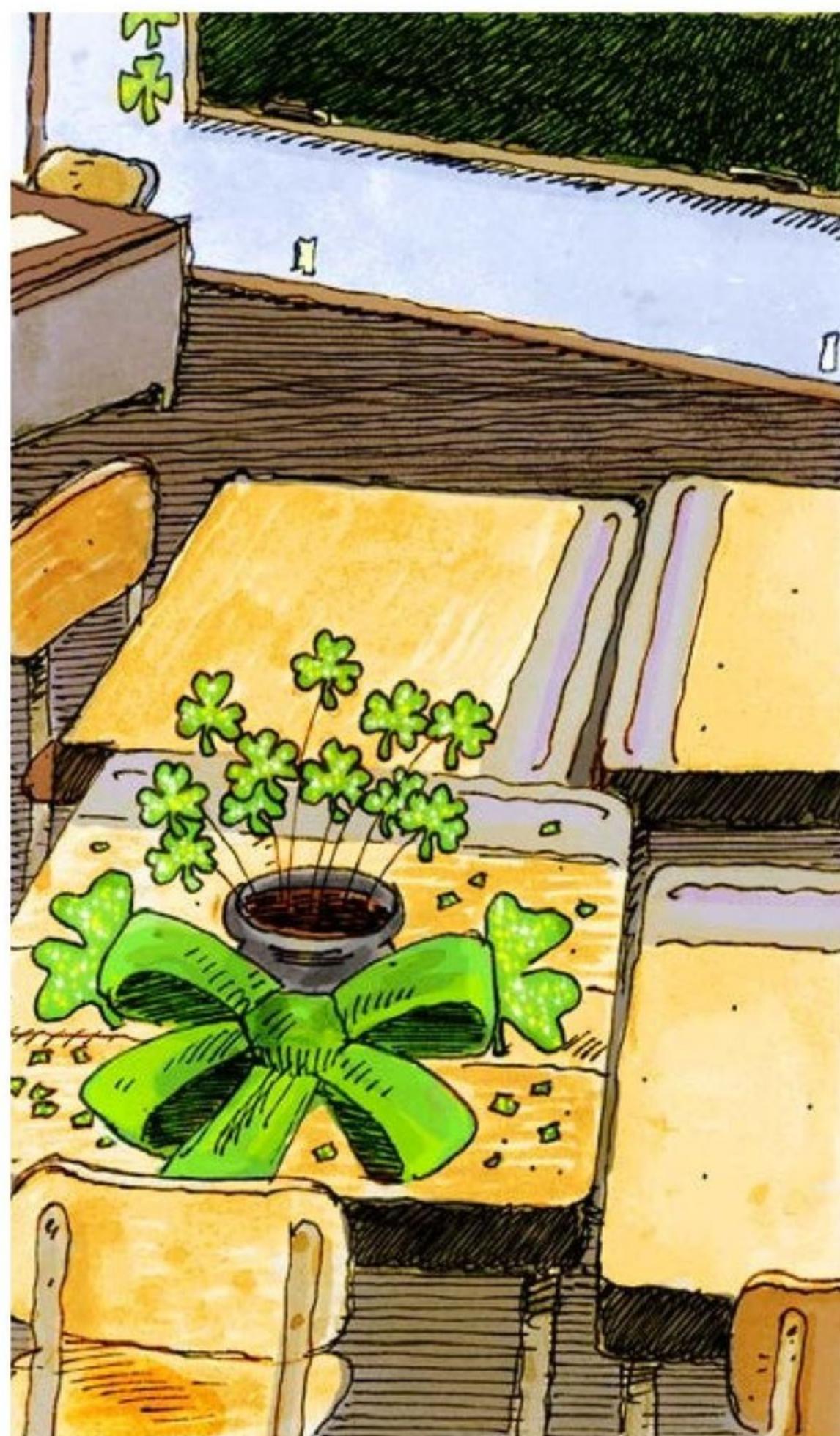


As they walked back inside the building, Aja saw something **strange** in the hallway outside their classroom. She pulled on Sammy's shirttail until he stopped. "Why is there a chair pushed up against the wall by the fire alarm?" she asked. "I bet that's why the teachers looked upset. Maybe a student pulled the alarm."

Before Sammy could answer, they heard excited shouts coming from the classroom. “Aja! Aja! Quick, come see! Look at your desk!” Aja and Sammy rushed into their room.

Wrapped around Aja’s desk were rows and rows of glittering paper **shamrocks**.

The top of her desk was covered with a gigantic green bow. All the other desks were untouched just as they had been before the fire bell had rung.



Aja did not know what to say. She knew no one had been in the room while they were outside. Fire bells were serious, and the teachers had counted everyone on the playground.

Even Ms. McBride seemed **speechless** for a minute as she stared at Aja's desk. "I wonder who..." she started to say, but then stopped. "Strange things seem to be happening this St. Patrick's Day."





Aja touched the beautiful bow on her desk. “It couldn’t have been you this time, Ms. McBride. My sister must have been wrong,” said Aja softly.

Ms. McBride smiled. “Aja, it seems that you have your very own special leprechaun,” she said.

Aja smiled, too. Her smile spread from ear to ear. Maybe leprechauns were real after all.

Glossary

abuzz (<i>adj.</i>)	busy with talk or excitement (p. 6)
decorations (<i>n.</i>)	objects used to beautify something (p. 4)
glittery (<i>adj.</i>)	shiny or sparkly (p. 4)
magical (<i>adj.</i>)	beyond the ordinary, as if caused by magic (p. 7)
shamrocks (<i>n.</i>)	plants often used as symbols for Ireland (p. 13)
speechless (<i>adj.</i>)	unable to speak (p. 14)
strange (<i>adj.</i>)	unusual, unfamiliar, or surprising (p. 12)

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