

Pot of Gold



Jay Dubya

Pot of Gold – Sample Chapter

A Young Adult Fantasy Novel

By Jay Dubya

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Chapter I

“The Flat Tire”

Larry and Janet Garrison, twelve-year-old fraternal twins, were traveling with their parents in western Virginia. Mr. John Garrison was driving his green sport utility vehicle north on Skyline Drive through the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains. The March scenery was magnificent. Spring flowers were already in bloom. Mr. Garrison had to drive slowly because deer would occasionally dart from wooded areas across the highway.

“In two days we’ll finally be home back in New Jersey,” Janet happily reported.

“Then I could go to the Hamilton Mall and buy some new CDs for my computer,” her blond-hair brother stated. “Hey, check out the store behind that gas station,” the blue-eyed twin pointed out to his sister. The Garrison boy was referring to a small general store made out of logs and mortar that resembled an old frontier trading post.

“Dad, can we stop for gas?” Janet asked. “I want to buy a candy bar.”

“I still have over a quarter of a tank left,” her father replied.

“Perhaps at the next stop,” Mrs. Karen Garrison added. “I want to purchase some mints and maybe a few souvenirs to take back to Hammonds Grove.”

Larry looked back at the log cabin and thought that he saw four elves dressed in green clothing servicing a car at a gas pump. One elf was looking under the hood while another was putting air into a tire. A third elf was pumping gas while the fourth was cleaning the windshield. The boy rubbed his eyes in disbelief. He looked over at his sister, who was busy reading a map of the area.

“Kids, your mother and I wanted to mix a little sightseeing fun between educational places like Monticello and Harpers Ferry,” John Garrison declared.

“Thomas Jefferson’s home and John Brown’s raid are two vital parts of American history,” Mrs. Garrison observed.

“Even though you kids were bored by Monticello,” Mr. Garrison interrupted, “some day you’ll be taking your children on this exact same trip.”

“Great,” Larry dully answered. “I’ll remember that the next time I look on the front of a nickel. I’d rather be home playing *Internet* video games with my new friend in California.”

“Now you can tell that young man in California all about how inventive Thomas Jefferson really was,” Mr. Garrison lectured. “Remember, our third American president was a scientific genius as well as the author of the Declaration of Independence.”

As the parents conversed, Janet saw a billboard that read: *Limerick Caverns Seven-Miles Ahead*. Four leprechauns were pictured on the billboard, and Janet

was stunned when she noticed that the four little men jumped out of the billboard's advertisement onto the side of the road. Before the girl could utter a sound, the four tiny creatures did backward flips into the air and suddenly became two-dimensional figures represented on the Limerick Caverns billboard.

“Did you see that?” Janet asked her brother.

“See what?” Larry answered as he leafed through the pages of a super hero comic book.

“Never mind,” the sister replied. “I must be imagining things.”

John and Karen Garrison continued their adult conversation in the front seat. The parents exchanged comments about the educational value of the family's Virginia vacation.

“John, being a high school science teacher gives you a special interest in Thomas Jefferson's Charlottesville' home,” Mrs. Karen Garrison told her husband.

Larry had acquired a great science background from his dad, a Hammonds Grove High School chemistry teacher. The boy's favorite interests were engines, simple machines, electromagnetism and electronics. Larry's special homing-device had won statewide recognition.

“Larry, did you bring along your science fair project?” Mr. Garrison asked.

“I'm carrying it in my pocket,” Larry said. “But I haven't had a chance to use it yet on this boring trip.”

“I’ll bet you’ll be glad to get back to the town library,” Mr. Garrison said to his lovely wife.

“I’m sure my six employees have managed quite well without my supervision,” Hammonds Grove’s chief librarian answered. “The public still reads books in spite of all the multimedia computers and music disk players. People will always like the feel of a real book with real pages in their hands rather than just see words scrolled on a flat computer screen.”

The Garrisons had instilled the desire to learn in their children, even though Larry and Janet seldom admitted that they enjoyed doing those “school things.” While Larry liked to tinker with circuit boards, Janet was a very skilled tap dancer and choral singer. The cornerstones of the family philosophy were “freedom of expression” and “tolerate each other.”

“In two short days both of you will be back in the good old Garden State,” Mrs. Garrison said in a soothing voice as she turned to face the back seat.

“Then I can go to Atlantic City with my girlfriend and her parents,” Janet happily said. “I can’t wait to walk the boardwalk and lay on the beach.”

“It sure beats Monticello,” Larry cynically claimed.

Mrs. Garrison was an expert on word origins. “Children, did you know that Monticello means *little mountain* in Italian,” the mother lectured.

“I thought a *monty cello* was a small, flat bass fiddle the Italians played on top of large hills,” Mr. Garrison said with a laugh.

“Get me away from parents!” Larry jokingly exclaimed.

“Yeah, they’re even crazier than moms and dads,” Janet chimed in.

“If we stop for lunch, we should make it to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia in about six hours,” Mr. Garrison said while ignoring his children’s criticisms. “I hear they have a terrific Civil War wax museum there.”

“Give me my soap operas any day over this,” Janet jested in a mild complaint.

“I’ll even watch *them* over parents’ stupid jokes!” Larry said. “And believe me, I like cod liver oil more than I like soap operas.”

John Garrison thought that a stop on the two-lane road would be a good place to observe nature’s beauty. He pulled into a scenic overlook and everyone got out of the sport utility vehicle. Mrs. Garrison took some still photos and some motion pictures to document the family sight seeing, and then the four family members hopped back into the family’ Ford Explorer.

“Children, you’ll just love Harpers Ferry,” Mrs. Garrison said to the disenchanted back seat passengers. “It’s a very beautiful sight where two rivers join together. A train tunnel is built right through a mountain, and it’s an official National park too.”

“No daaaaa!” Janet protested. “Aren’t there any amusement theme parks around here?”

“I think I’d rather wrestle alligators than drive around these dumb mountain passes,” Larry agreed.

The dark green Ford Explorer exited the scenic overlook and descended the steep two-lane road that zigzagged down from the majestic mountains. About five miles down the highway a massive billboard came into view. It read: *Limerick Caverns: Only Two Miles Ahead.*

The four leprechauns on the new billboard waved at the SUV as it passed by. Larry and Janet saw the elves greeting, and they stared at each other with mouths open.

“Hey, let’s stop at *Limerick Caverns*,” Janet suggested. “Anything’s better than sightseeing from a car. At least we’ll see some people walking around.”

“Yeah, maybe we’ll see Johnny Appleseed hangin’ out with some of his *buds* before he goes out to the Shenandoah Valley to plant some apple trees,” Larry chuckled.

“Children, make fun of silly things, not at serious people in legend and in history!” Mrs. Garrison reprimanded like a stern librarian.

“I think we oughta’ stop at a restaurant and get a bite to eat,” the father insisted.

“Okay Mom, here’s something serious,” Larry remarked as he ignored his father’s comment about stopping for lunch. “Today’s March 17th.”

“Just four more days to the vernal equinox,” Mr. Garrison informed. “The first day of spring. Equal day and equal night.”

“No Dad,” Janet injected. “March 17th is special. It’s St. Patrick’s Day. Don’t ya’ think it’s peculiar passing a place called Limerick Caverns on St. Patrick’s Day?”

The unique coincidence excited everyone in the sport utility vehicle. “The temptation of visiting Limerick Caverns on March 17th is quite irresistible,” Mrs. Garrison acknowledged. “John, what do you think?”

“I think,” said Mr. Garrison, “I think

Larry is a boy on this planet
Who has a chatty sister named Janet
Instead of eating steaks at taverns
They’d rather visit Limerick Caverns
So you can’t take Larry and Janet for *granite!*”

“Very clever limerick!” Karen Garrison informed her husband.

“I’d rather look at cave formations in the dark than eat adult food at a fancy restaurant,” Larry lamented.

“Daddy’s not only our protector, he’s quite a rhymer too!” Janet noted.

“Then it’s a must,” Mrs. Garrison said while her husband was still recovering from delivering his poetic humor. “I hope we aren’t haunted by elves and gnomes from the old *Emerald Isle*. I don’t want any ancient *Celtic* curse hanging over our heads.”

“The only ones under a *Celtic* curse are the Philadelphia 76ers,” John Garrison laughed as he alluded to professional basketball teams. “The 76ers have had trouble beating Boston for the last thirty years.”

“Show more respect for *Irish* legends and folklore,” Mrs. Garrison demanded of the rest of the family.

“A science teacher must remain objective,” the SUV driver maintained. “I don’t believe in goblins, ghosts, spirits or elves. I’m going to Limerick Caverns simply to study the area’s mineral deposits.”

As Mr. Garrison made a wide turn, his sport utility vehicle veered up on the road’s right shoulder as a tractor-trailer came around the bend of the two-lane highway from the opposite direction. A loud bang was heard, and the right front wheel began to shimmy and then wobble.

“Oh no! A flat tire!” Mrs. Garrison bellowed. “It’s a good thing we’re all wearing our safety belts!”

Mr. Garrison stopped his green Ford Explorer inside a scenic overlook. The adults got out and inspected the damage. “I’ll have this thing fixed in a jiffy,” the driver predicted.

“Do you need any help?” Larry asked.

“No, just don’t fall off the cliff while I’m putting on the spare,” the father advised. “You’ll be a couple-hundred-feet away, so be careful! There aren’t any other tourists here right now, so you’ll be all alone.”

While Mrs. Garrison helped her husband change the front tire, Larry and Janet ambled over to the rocky ledge of the upland overlook. It was a brisk Virginia late morning. A gentle breeze made the clover and shamrock growths shake along the rocky slope beneath the overlook.

“More boring scenery,” Larry observed.

“This place is about as exciting as a kiddy-ride at the July carnival,” Janet agreed. “Wait a minute! What’s that!” the sister yelled in an excited voice.

“It looks like a little man! He’s dressed in green! It’s an elf!” the brother exclaimed as he observed the same dwarf figure standing on a ledge twenty feet beneath their position.

“A leprechaun!” the sister corrected. “He looks just like one of the elves we saw on the billboard. He’s waving at us. Now he’s pointing north toward Limerick Caverns.”

“He just disappeared!” Larry yelled. “He’s vanished!”

“*Outa’ sight!*” Janet exclaimed.

“You could say that again, and both meanings would be right!” the twelve-year-old brother agreed.