



SHAMUS' STORY: STORY 1

My story starts in a town in Roman Britain. There was a bright boy in the Roman town – his name was

Gricola - whose parents realised he was clever. He was the sort of boy who would ask questions like - Why is it, that the stars we see in the winter are different from the stars we see in the summer? Why is it, that the flowers which come out in the spring are usually different colours from the flowers that come out in the autumn? His family were tired of the questions they couldn't answer, so they had decided he was old enough to travel, to see a bit of the world and learn from the people he met. They had collected a **bag of coins** he could take to pay for his food on his travels.

*"*Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram, perque domos ditis et inania regna"* Gricola spoke only the Latin language, coming from a truly Roman family... So Gricola set off on his travels, and his sister Livvy so envied him- she, a girl brought up in the Roman style, **had no such freedom** - her life was to be a private, at home affair.

Meanwhile in a little Celtic village in Britannia, there was another boy of the same sort of age, called **Emlyn**. He too was the sort of boy who would ask questions like - why is it that the tides come high up the beach at some times of the year and other times they don't? Why is it that that some creatures have many offspring all at once and others take months to produce just one? Why is it...? His family said, "We've had enough of your questions - we have a plan for you; the village Wiseman has taught you what he can, but now you should travel to other places. The old carpenter has offered to share his treasure with us, for the sake of the village, and we will exchange the treasure for Roman coins, so you will be able to buy food and pay for shelter as you travel.

[Explain that Emlyn has no concept of money, or how it is used! Trade a jug for a chicken, some wool for some wood.]

Then Emlyn remembered the story he had heard so often around the village fire, of how the old carpenter had come upon this treasure. It had happened in their little village, far from the old Roman town.

STORY 1

The old carpenter worked hard all day and slept soundly at night. One night he dreamed that he was making the long journey to the nearest Roman town, he had never been there, but he knew the road that led to it. He came to the gates, there were two soldiers at the entrance who watched him come through. In his dream he could smell a strange smell, strong, fishy, and realised it came from an eating place, where a huge pot, bigger than anything he had ever seen, was standing, **and a man ladling out the fishy smelling stuff for people to take in exchange for little round pieces of metal, not even big enough to make a dress pin!** He knew, as you do in dreams, that he had to walk on along the street, and he saw a place where men were sitting drinking wine, that was not theirs, but poured out for them, again in exchange for these tokens. He came to the bridge in the centre of the town, he knew he had to look in the water, under the bridge, and there in his dream he saw a box which he knew was full of treasure. The dream was so real he could see the treasure box in the clear water. His heart was pounding then - bang - he was awake, shaking with excitement.

Next day he thought about the dream as he worked, and maybe that was why, that night, as he slept, he had the same dream again. He came to the gates, again there were two

soldiers at the entrance who watched him come through, different men, but same uniforms - **did all these Romans look the same as each other?** He could smell a strange smell, strong, fishy, just like before, and, once again, he realised it came from an eating place, where a huge pot, bigger than anything he had ever seen, was standing, and a man was ladling out the stuff for people to buy with little round pieces of metal! He knew, as you do in dreams, that he was going to walk on along the street, and he saw a place where men were sitting drinking wine, that was not theirs, but poured out for them, again in exchange for these tokens. He came to the bridge in the centre of the town, he knew he would look in the water, under the bridge, and there in his dream he saw the box which he knew was full of treasure. And then BANG he was awake. Night after night he dreamed that same dream over and over - he could get no rest.

After two weeks of this, weary from lack of sleep, he knew what he had to do. He decided to walk to the Roman town - it took three days. There was the gateway, just as in his dream, there was that smell of the fish sauce, there was the drinking house, and he found the bridge easily from his dreams. He looked down into the water - but there was no treasure - perhaps if he looked on the other side? But, no luck here either - maybe he should go under the bridge to look. So down he went, under the arch and ... as he was looking underneath he felt a big hand on his shoulder, "You, stranger, what are you doing in our town?" The soldier hauled him away for questioning.

"Why are you in our city? What is your business here? What is a stranger like you doing under the bridge?" In desperation he told them the truth, that he was looking for a treasure he had

seen in his dreams. "You stupid man", said the officer who had arrested him, "Do you believe in dreams? I am not so dumb. Why, for the last two weeks I have dreamed about a stupid carpenter living in a miserable house, somewhere miles away, where the man doesn't know that his grandfather buried a treasure under the cooking stone. You don't see me wasting my time and effort looking for him, for something that doesn't exist!" Roaring with laughter, the soldiers threw the old carpenter out into the street - "Go home, foolish dreamer!"

He had plenty of time to think as he walked home, and I think you know what he thought about as he walked; and when he reached home I think you know what he did - he moved the stone, and under the stone he found a great treasure.

And this was the treasure, which the people of the village had shared and changed into the coins for Emlyn's travel. Emlyn thought about it often afterwards - it's strange, that you don't know what it is that you have, until you have left it behind and moved on to another place. He said goodbye to his family, and his little sister Alana cried a bit as he left.

As it happened Emlyn and Gricola crossed paths and they agreed to travel on together. Of course neither knew anything of the other's language but they got by with gestures and making faces, and became good friends. At night they sheltered where they could, under a tree, by the bank of a river.

They shared their food and travelling money for many weeks, until one day in a distant, dry, hot land, when they were particularly dusty and thirsty, they arrived in a village with only one small coin left to share for their last day's food. "Ah," said Emlyn as he looked at the village shop, "We shall buy some

Bainne with this." Gricola had no idea what that meant – his mind was full of some delicious Lac, that's what they should buy!

"No, No," said Gricola, "its Lac we should buy."

Well they argued, they waved their arms about; finally they were rolling around in the dust, fighting and the villagers, who had come to see what the fuss was about, came and pulled them apart. Now no-one in the village could work out what it was they each wanted to buy, and no one spoke either of their languages so they took them to the old wise woman for her to sort it out.

She listened to them both for a while. She gestured to them that she would spend their coin for them and went inside the place with the food and drink. "Bainne." muttered Emlyn, "Lac." muttered Gricola.

After a few moments the old woman came out with a jug. She placed it between the two boys and lifted off the cover - it was full of fresh milk.

"Bainne", smiled Emlyn happily!

"Ah, Lac", laughed Gricola. So peace was restored.

Both boys realised then, that though they both wanted the same thing, yet, because they had not taken the time to learn to understand each other, they had finished up fighting over nothing!

Every day from then on as they walked, they talked and learned to speak each other's words. The best time was in the evening, as they sat round the cooking fire. One night Emlyn told his friend the story of the old carpenter and the dream

treasure, and Gricola said, "Now I will tell you a story my father told us. My sister Livvy doesn't like it, you'll see why, but it's something that he heard about when he served with the army in the East." And this is the story that Gricola told Emlyn as the boys sat by their fire at the end of the day's travelling.



SHAMUS' STORY: STORY 2

The Sultan (like a King, or Emperor) depended upon the money raised from successful trading across the country. Food, wine, pottery, silk, timber - **everything that was traded was taxed**, and the money sent to the Sultan to pay for roads, soldiers, judges, administrators...

There were rumours that one of the distant Caliphs - maybe like a Mayor, or Chief Executive of a city bank - whom the Sultan knows as, after all he appointed him to the job - had been taking bribes and holding back some of the taxes. The Sultan was distressed, but the truth had to be discovered. The Grand Vizier - perhaps like a Prime Minister - serves his master the Sultan without question... Reluctantly the Sultan sends the Grand Vizier to travel across the desert to confront the Caliph. If he's found guilty, the Caliph must be executed "I trust you to do this" says the Sultan, and the Grand Vizier knows that even he is not beyond suspicion.

So, the custom was that the head of the executed man must be brought back as proof to show the Sultan that his orders had been obeyed. The Grand Vizier travels for many days across the desert sands stopping at oases for refreshment and news. At last he arrives but news had travelled ahead of him and the Caliph rides out to greet him; he has brought fresh fruit and fine wine, clean water and soft towels to refresh the weary traveller. He begs for a private audience with the Grand Vizier and admits his guilt, which everyone in the district knew of, and pleads for his life. "All my wealth you may take, just to let me go, as a beggar, into the desert? Your mercy will be rewarded I promise."

"No", said the Grand Vizier, "Tomorrow morning you will die." At the moment when the sword being swung, the look on the

poor man's face was terrible to see - imploring, full of fear and despair - then, thud, it was over. The head lay on the ground, and quickly, not because of the blood, or the smell, or the flies, but because of the look on the face, the Grand Vizier placed the head in the bag he'd been given and set off on the journey back.

After a few days travelling in the hot sun, in the cool of the evening the Grand Vizier tentatively opened the bag, to make sure the head was in good condition. He wished he hadn't - it was as if the face of his victim was screaming and pleading at him all at once. Horrible! Quickly he closed up the bag, but that night, and the next, he dreamed of nothing else. His whole existence was built round trying to avoid the image of that execution and he concentrated on looking forward to his grateful Sultan's reward.

Several days passed and again he checked the head in the hope that decay might have loosened the tightness and anguish of the features, but no, if anything it was worse!

Over the next two sleepless nights he gradually formed a plan. If the next time he looked there was no change then he would have to take action. And so he did. When he opened the bag, the face of the Caliph seared into his sight, and working quickly the Grand Vizier used his sharp knife to make little cuts, just here, just there, into the muscles and tendons of the head to relax it, to soften the look. It worked - almost the head was smiling. Not a very attractive smile and not one the Grand Vizier recognised. But at last, peace, and that night he slept better.

The Grand Vizier arrived and presented himself to the Sultan; yes, he had done what was ordered; yes, the man had



SHAMUS' STORY: STORY 2

pleaded, had tried to bribe him, but he, the Grand Vizier, was steadfast and loyal. There were always doubtful looks exchanged by the courtiers at this point in any executioner's story, so with a flourish, the Grand Vizier produced the head. The Sultan looked at it unsmilingly.

"This is not the Caliph", he said. "I do not recognise this face. I never, ever, knew the man to smile."

"But..." stammered the Grand Vizier

"You have taken a bribe, and you have let him go, to cause more trouble."

"But..."

"I trusted you and you have proved unworthy, now you will be executed. "

And so it was. Isn't fate a cruel master!

"But that's so unfair", said Emlyn as Gricola finished the story, "The man was obedient, and still he was punished."

"Yes", said Gricola, "Maybe the story shows that you can't tell what is true with your eyes alone. I suppose people's faces aren't the only guide to what they are really like."

... Mmm, murmured Emlyn, I don't think that's one I'll tell Alana when I get home. And who knows how well, or not, the boys slept that night?!

NOTES

There are two sisters in the story, so the boys do not have a monopoly on involvement.

Text in bold highlights subjects that reflect on the theme of the pack e.g. use of coins, food and transport, cultural differences.

At the end of each story in the narrative, the talk between the boys can be used to emphasise the relevant points made.

, - denotes a dramatic pause