

The Story of Jack

1.

"Wife! Meat! NOW!" Echoed loudly for the fifth or sixth time causing the mortar in the walls of the enormous hallway to crumble slightly.

Helen heard, but again ignored her husband. Instead, she stood over the stove wringing a checkered white and goldenrod dishtowel around her red and swollen fingers. She let her tears mix and mingle with the plumes of steam enveloping and caressing her face from the boiling pot of farfalle pasta below her. Some of her tears fell into the pot, moistening the knots of several bow ties, causing them to swell. Eating these would surely bring on a wave of melancholy for most, but not her husband.

He was an ogre of a man. They had met in college. It's a stereotypical story, but unusual just the same. She was head cheerleader; he was captain of the football team. He was dumb as a post and she was brilliant. The only reason he was even at that school was due to an athletic scholarship. And as stereotypical stories go, he knocked her up and they got married. They moved when their parents threw them out, and when everything seemed as if it might be bearable, Life just had to show her that it was good and pissed at her. Helen miscarried in her second trimester. Now they were stuck in the ass end of town and she was crying into her pasta.

As Helen thought this he screamed for his dinner for what might have now been the seventh or maybe the fifteenth time. No one was keeping count. "It's on its way," she managed to squeeze past her larynx. Red spider webs of blood vessels ran across Helen's puffy eyes. She rubbed them dry with the backs of her wrists and strained the pasta in the sink. While she was tossing the salad, a sour feeling erupted in her stomach when her dishpan hands came across a pod of peas with a hairy, multi-legged friend peeping out from between the shells. Caterpillars possess a brain that is smaller than the mole on Marilyn's face. This probably explains why it hardly noticed being flung out the window by Helen's giant hands.

She arranged the meal on a TV tray and composed herself in the reflex ion of the microwave door. Helen paused just before pushing the Dutch kitchen door open with her much-too-large-for-cheerleading-anymore rear end, and inhaled just once before engaging herself with the din of the Giant game and her husband's roars of hunger.

2.

Jack rolled down the street with a slight swagger in a manner that is inherent to those in his genre. He was hunched forward at approximately a 45-degree angle due to the extreme weight of the fifteen or so gold chains hanging about his neck. His tear-away warm-up pants swished and flowed around his legs like laundry blowing about on a line

in the bad part of town. His Yankee cap wasn't in the normal backwards, or even in the "Fresh Prince" side position. No, it was just slightly skewed to the left of forward, giving it the look of a middle management cubicle worker threatening to jump from the 32nd floor. As he walked, Jack cupped his left hand about his groin, and let his right hand swing back and forth, almost as if for momentum. Each time he brought it in to his body, he touched the bag of cocaine in the pouch of his hooded POLO sweatshirt.

'Last one...' Jack's thoughts raced across his synapses. 'Last bag of Milky White I have to push for that bitch!' Jack of course was referring to his mother. When he was 12 years old, she caught him sampling from her private stash. He was lucky she made a deal with him. Not that he had any choice in the matter seeing as he was enduring Chinese water torture at the time. She agreed to let him have all the Milky White that he wanted (and live to use it) and in return, he would make her deliveries until he was eighteen and ready to go away to school. Well, Jack was 17 years, 11 months, 28 days, 12 hours, 32 minutes, and 45, no, 46, no, 47 seconds old. There were no more scheduled deliveries for the rest of the week after this one, which meant THIS WAS IT!

Jack rounded the corner of East and Main and only had two blocks left to walk. He was breathing hard and people stared at his sweating, pasty face as he pushed by. The pimples on his forehead were especially red and prominent from the perspiration. Jack reached the drop off point and stood by the mailbox. He tapped his hand on his leg to some beat from a recent pop song that wouldn't leave his head. He stood for about three minutes when he heard the sound of knocking on metal. He whirled about, but there was no one in sight. Again, the knocking came and this time Jack realized that it was from inside the box. He leaned down and opened the flap. He put his face to the dark opening and said hello. A voice from inside the blue box whispered the secret code that had been agreed on earlier and told Jack to mail his package.

"The money first," Jack said indignantly. He'd dealt with too many assholes to trust a talking mailbox. The mailbox told him that an inconspicuous assistant should be walking down the street wearing a white carnation on his lapel. Jack looked and sure enough there was a man walking towards him wearing a white carnation. However, the man was anything but inconspicuous. His brown tweed three-piece suit had obviously been inherited over at least two generations and his hair puffed out crazily at strange angles a la Christopher Lloyd from the Back to the Future trilogy. The worst though, was the enormous blazing red suitcase he dragged behind him on tiny almost ineffectual plastic wheels. The box once more asked for the goods and Jack decided to oblige. He figured that if they planned to rip him off, the man in the box surely wasn't going anywhere fast, and most importantly, he felt like an idiot talking into a

bright blue post office box. Jack slipped the package in, and the box grunted its thanks and was silent. At the same time, the “inconspicuous” assistant had reached Jack.

“Here ya go kid!” he croaked. The man coughed and Jack could have sworn that he saw a moth or two flutter out from the man’s rotting mouth. The man stooped down, groaning as he did, and sighed when the last of his joints popped. He unlatched the case and gave Jack a wild a knowing smile as he flipped it open.

“Shouldn’t we do this inside? Or at least someplace out of sight?” Jack worried as he glanced up and down the street and fresh sweat formed under his arms.

“No need,” the man said, “nothing illegal in here just some harmless saplings.” He winked an over-animated wink at Jack like in the cartoons and gestured at the case. Jack looked for himself and felt his temper rise. There was no money, just some odd looking plants encased in rich brown soil. “What is this!?” Jack exclaimed. “Where’s the cash?!?”

“This, my friend, is better than cash.” The man explained. “These plants are of the highest...” Jack cut him off by calling him a nasty name. The man tried to continue, “that we nurtured from huge...”

“My mom is going to be soooo pissed!” Jack yelled as he headed for the mailbox. The man with Christopher Lloyd’s hair gave up and stumbled off, turning his back on the maelstrom of insults and barrage of cussing. Jack snapped the case shut and turned on the mailbox. Its friendly blue metal sheen seemed to be mocking him. He kicked it and it toppled over revealing a hole in the sidewalk below it. “Mom is gonna kill me,” Jack sighed as he brought a Kamel Red to his lips and hefted the suitcase.

3.

Jack’s mom was usually a reasonable person. If you didn’t have the cash on you, she gave you the extra 24 hours before breaking your kneecaps. She liked to think of herself as flexible, and generous. But this was not one of those times. “You fucked up so royally this time sonny!” Jack could only look at his feet as his mother paced around the chair he was tied to. “What am I supposed to do with these plants? I can’t sell them, they don’t even remotely look like weed.” Jack’s mother sucked noisily on her Marlboro with the filter cut off. She blew smoke in Jack’s face and asked him again. This time she tried to rationalize with him. “I have bills to pay, honey, do you think electricity is free? Your brother’s college tuition is going up. Again! I needed that dough.”

“But he said ...” Jack attempted to sputter, but his mother interrupted him with an elbow to the ribs.

“Horse Pucky! You’re going to pay a visit to our friend tomorrow and you will not return without the cash. Got it?”

“Yeah.” Jack mumbled.

“What?!?” His mom screamed up his nostrils, vibrating his mucus membranes.

“Mom YES MOM!” Jack blurted and whimpered at the same time. She untied his arms and unshackled his legs and sent him to bed without supper. ‘Damn kids,’ she thought to herself. ‘More trouble than they’re worth on the black market.’ Jack’s mom cleaned the house to make herself feel better and to calm her nerves. She tossed the plants into the compost pile in the backyard. After all, she was concerned about the environment and a member of Greenpeace.

4.

The next morning, Jack awoke to the sounds of hubbub outside his window. He scrambled out of bed and yanked the blinds open to reveal a sea of people surging around in the backyard. Jack ran through the house calling for his mother and finally found her outside, leaning against the back door smoking another of her filter-less cigarettes. Her gaze was fixed on something in the yard and she mumbled quietly to herself something about bodies under the compost heap. Jack followed her stare up and to the strangest thing he’d ever seen-other than that two headed kitten he got for Christmas one year.

The green trunk growing out of the compost heap had to be at least six feet around and extended into the clouds and beyond. Jack too felt the need for a smoke. A reporter wearing a hat and carrying a spiral notepad leaned into Jack and his mother’s faces as a photographer snapped their picture. “Can we have a statement on this unusual plant in your garden?” The reporter asked. Jack’s mom tried to explain to him, as she had to the others, that it was a composting pile and not a garden, but he persisted and prodded for more answers. “So where did this “Beanstalk” come from?” He waved his hands in little circles on the word beanstalk to show them that it was indeed an unusual occurrence to have a beanstalk growing out of your garden or compost heap. There was no answer from either Jack or his mom. The reporter was becoming increasingly flustered. “You, kid, what’s your name?” This was easy one and Jack was pleased to at least know the answer to some of the questions.

“Jack,” Jack said. The reporter was delighted, tickled mauve even.

“Hey, you hear that Larry?” He jabbed the photographer. “Jack’s got a beanstalk, HA!” He snorted as he laughed and to Jack’s amusement, slapped his knee. “So...Jack,” He began between snickering, ‘Do you plan on climbing this beanstalk?’”

“Sure,” Jack said coolly. “Let me get dressed.”

5.

Jack stood at the base of the plant and was in the process of being interviewed by channel five. The hair and makeup people kept trying to set Jack’s hat on straight, but he always reset it to its cockeyed position. They gave up and went for a smoke break to talk about the latest people they were having affairs with. “...And good luck,” the interviewer finished. He grasped Jack’s shoulder and said something stupid like, ‘be brave.’ All the while he smiled for the cameras.

Jack checked his backpack before tossing it onto his back. P B and J, check, six-pack of Jolt cola, check, Gameboy, check, extra hat, check, change of clothing, check, cigarettes, double check...He grasped some lower limbs and began his ascent. Luckily for him, Jack’s father left behind his golf cleats when he “disappeared.” They should double nicely as climbing shoes.

The climbing wasn’t too difficult, but after awhile, Jack’s gold chains started to weigh him down. He decided that if this really was the same kind of beanstalk as in the fairy tale, he’d come across some great treasures. So, he dropped most of the gold chains. He watched as they tumbled toward the ground and disappeared out of sight. He kept climbing with renewed strength not knowing that his mother had chosen the wrong time to walk beneath the beanstalk. The pendants buried themselves in her skull killing her instantly. If Jack had been there he might have finally understood why one isn’t allowed to throw pennies off the top of the empire state building. But, since he wasn’t there, Jack kept climbing.

He stopped for lunch at about lunchtime and perched on a leaf the size of his bed to eat his P B and J. Some birds flew by and alighted near him. He tossed them some crumbs and most were grateful. There was the one though, that was horribly allergic to peanuts and swelled up to the size of a basketball.

When Jack reached the top, he hauled himself onto clouds that were solid and took a breather. In front of him was a magnificent house with an adjacent barn. The walls of the house, or rather the *castle*, were made of stone and the mortar between was starting to crumble. It gave the house a majestic and ancient look. ‘Whoever lives here must be loaded,’ Jack mused. He couldn’t help smirking as he started towards the house. He envisioned gold dining sets and

remembered something about a singing harp and a goose that lays golden eggs. Jack whistled Camptown Races as he neared the ginormous front door.

6.

Helen was pretty startled when she was suddenly interrupted by an awkward clanging at the front door during her daily bubble bath, complete with Calgon anti-stress balls. She sank lower into the tub so that the water covered her ears and prayed that whoever it was would just go away. She closed her eyes, listened to the water's soothing silence, and tried to feel invisible. The following silence was so long that she was completely put at ease, which is why the knocking startled her again. This time it was louder and longer. She rose above the surface of the water and was met by the TV blaring an advertisement for toilet cleaner. 'Gee my soap scum. Why gel and scrub? Shove a ring flush, man!' sang the ditty on set. It ended in a nice three-part harmony on the word man, but was still nauseating. Helen swept up the remote from its resting place at the side of the tub and switched off the overplayed commercial. She wondered why they always played commercials having to do with domestic items like cleaning supplies during Oprah.

Bubbles raced down her body as she pulled herself out of the embryonic cocoon. She wrapped a towel around her body and tied one up in her hair. Some water splashed onto the black and white tile floor and Helen was careful not to slip on her way out the door.

7.

Jack stood in front of the point-studded door looking for a doorbell. He did not want to have to climb up to the doorknocker again and swing it while balancing on the door nubs. He had lost his footing once and scraped his elbow on the cloud/ground which he was pretty embarrassed about. "Who gets cut by a cloud?" he wondered aloud. Jack rehearsed what he was going to say. He figured something like, 'excuse me, I was just in the neighborhood...' wouldn't be too believable. He thought about taking the role of a salesman, and couldn't think of anything he had to sell. Finally, he just decided he'd wing it. It all depended on who answered the door. As he became weary of waiting, he heard movement from behind the door, and a woman's voice called out, "Who is it?"

8.

There was no answer to her call, so Helen, unable to see anyone through the peephole, asked again. "Is anybody there?" She clutched the towel to her chest and worried that the water dripping on the floor might ruin the grout. Helen was about ready to get back to her bath and think nasty thoughts about neighborhood children when a

small voice crawled under the door. “Hello?” it asked. ‘I’m your neighbor from downstairs and just thought I’d say hi.’”

Helen didn’t know of any neighbors downstairs and didn’t particularly care to meet any right now. “Go away!” She spoke near the floor this time for that seemed to be where the voice had come from.

‘I’m lost.’ Came the pitiful answer.

‘Right,’ Helen thought, but the stranger didn’t seem as if he would leave until she opened the door and told him face to face, man to man, and all that rot. She unbolted the locks and opened the door just enough to peek out. To her surprise, no one was there. Puzzled, she thrust the door open creating a small dent in the wall where the doorknob made contact. Helen surveyed the front yard, but saw no one still. A small voice called to her from about kneecap level. When Helen looked down, she saw the most amazing creature. He was handsome and dashing and only one quarter her size, but this didn’t bother her in the slightest. In fact she was a little excited by the prospects; Helen was in love.

9.

Jack knew the woman behind the door didn’t buy the ‘I’m lost’ routine. To his surprise the door swung open and a giant woman in fluffy white bath towels appeared. In her excitement, the towel wrapped around her body came slightly loose, exposing part of her left breast. Needless to say, Jack was in love.

10.

Helen invited Jack in for coffee and sat him in the living room while she ran to put some clothing on. Jack sat on an enormous black leather couch and was perplexed at how many cows would have to lend their hides to make such an item. As he was contemplating this and other highly essential theories of the universe, he noticed strange music emanating from the fish tank across the room from him. One solitary fish swam about, almost as if it were dancing to the music. It looked like the type of fish you might see under a bridge in a Japanese restaurant. Jack easily remembered that it was a carp because he always called them crap. He walked over to the tank and put his ear to the glass. It was surprisingly warm. He listened and definitely heard a tune of some sort. Perhaps the woman, who had introduced herself as Helen, piped music into the tank to keep the fish happy and healthy. Jack remembered seeing something like that on the botany channel...or was it crocodile hunter? He listened again and anyone who knows anything about opera would have surely recognized the tune as the main reprise from Carmen. But to the rest of us, it was the theme music from “The Bad News Bears.”

He didn't see any speakers, but he thought that maybe they were hidden under the sandy bottom. Jack decided to open the tank and "fish" around. He dragged a chair over to the tank and stood on it to get a better view from the top. He rolled up his sleeves and heaved the heavy glass lid open. To his surprise, the music became deafening and he had to close the tank quickly for fear of losing his hearing. "The glass must be soundproof" he surmised. Jack was amazed by such a stupendous sound system and had to know how it worked. He stuck the index finger of his left hand in his left ear and lifted the glass lid open just enough to wedge his elbow in. He stuck the right index finger in his other ear (which blissfully dampened the unbearable music) and pushed the lid the rest of the way open with his elbows. Jack scanned the tank, but saw nothing that could produce sound in such magnitude. Surely the bubbling aquanaut next to the treasure chest filled with plastic jewels was as innocent as it looked. As Jack was considering plunging an arm in to the tank, the all too familiar sounds of a woman yelling at him filtered through his fingers. Before he could turn to face Helen, she had thrown him back to the couch and slammed the tank closed. "What were you doing?" She asked between breaths. "You could have hurt Lucinda."

"Lucinda?" Jack asked, very puzzled.

"My golden singing Carp," Helen answered matter-of-factly.

11.

Helen and Jack talked for several hours. She told him about her cheerleader days and he enlightened her with knowledge from the public school system. "Are you sure?!" asked Helen, bemused.

"Absolutely," Jack answered. "I've tried it several times myself. Helen twisted and contorted her face and took several deep breaths.

"I think I feel one coming." She concentrated on her inner nostrils and thought of fabric softener, dandelion seeds, hay fever, and pollen spores attacking in droves. She finally let out a sneeze that reverberated the marrow of Jack's bones. Thankfully he hadn't been in the path of its gust, or he would not have survived the monsoon. Helen giggled with delight. "You CAN'T sneeze with your eyes open! Jack, you're amazing! And a genius." Her love for him grew more with each nugget of useless knowledge.

A door slammed at the other end of the house and the coffee cups rattled on their dishes, jostling their contents onto the tabletop. "GEE MY SOAP SCUM..." thundered between the cracks in the floor causing the termites living there to write letters to the landlord. Helen's husband reprised his rendition of the lousy commercial jingle. "WHY

GEL AND SCRUB, SHOVE A RING FLUSH, MAN!!!!” This time he was much closer and even more off the tune. Helen scrambled around the room collecting the dirty dishes.

“Quick,” she said frantically, “ my husband is home and if he finds you here, he’s liable to eat you. I haven’t made his dinner yet and he’s always starving after work!” As if to punctuate the exclamation point on that thought, “WHERE’S MY DINNER!” boomed from just down the hall. Helen put Jack in her apron and carried him and the dishes into the kitchen. She practically threw the cups and plates into the sink and began madly chopping and slicing and boiling things. Jack got earfuls of sliced carrots as the shavings cascaded into the apron pocket. “Hey! Let me out!” Jack screamed in his quietest whisper.

“Oh, I’m so sorry!” Helen apologized and sat Jack on a stool. She told him that he should make his way out the front door and hide in the barn while she tended to her husband. And not to worry because once he sat in front of the TV, he usually didn’t even bother to get up to go to bed. Helen resumed her frantic cooking and called to her husband that dinner was running a bit late, but was on the way. He grumbled something back about women that Oprah no doubt could make the theme of an entire miniseries or after school special. Helen ignored his comment and tried to make small talk. (Relatively speaking of course)

12

Jack tiptoed his way outside the house and around to the attached barn. He hid in the back near the geese and looked for one that seemed like it might lay golden eggs. He only found geese that were pissed off that he was looking at their rear ends. He sat on a haystack and waited for several hours. Luckily for him, he had brought his Gameboy along and Tetris passed the time easily. He was interrupted from his highest scoring game ever by an odd looking sheep. The sheep itself wasn’t odd looking, it had an odd look on its face. It looked as if it were concentrating incredibly hard on a tricky calculus problem. Its eyebrows (this sheep had eyebrows) were at inverted angles to each other forming a wrinkled V on its forehead. It stood this way in front of Jack for an eerie three to four minutes. Then it seemed to screw its face up even more, and suddenly had an epiphany, bringing on a calm, relaxed and satisfied look to its sheepy punim. It even opened its mouth and let out a very small baa of relief.

When the sheep trod off, Jack noticed it had left behind a present. He chuckled and thought maybe Mr. Sheep should cut some oats out of his diet, but then became aware that the brick the sheep had left behind was glittering. Jack leapt up from the haystack he had been lying in, and without brushing himself off, ran to the glittering piece of dung. He bent down and closely examined it. ‘Sure looks like gold,’ he surmised. He ventured forth and picked it up

gingerly between his thumb and forefinger. He didn't dare clarify its goldness by the teeth biting method. Jack almost retched at the thought of putting something that just came of a sheep's ass into his mouth. He decided that seeing was enough to believe and was amused to have found the sheep that shat the golden brick. Jack pocketed the brick and resumed his highest scoring Tetris game ever.

13.

Several hours passed and Jack noticed that he was getting hungry. It had been a long time since he ate lunch on the beanstalk. He ate the last of his peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and took some heavy swigs of the high caffeine cola. He might need the energy if he had to deal with that giant. As he popped the last bit of sandwich into his mouth, the barn door slowly squeaked open and Helen walked in. She sat beside him as best she could and told him of her plan. "Jack," she began, and realized that there was no need or time to beat around the mulberry bush. "You need to kill my husband." Jack was a bit surprised at this request but at the same time knew it had to be done if they were to be together. They couldn't just run off, where could they live? Back at his house? Not likely. Although Jack had been involved in his share of beatdowns, smackdowns, throwdowns, and crackdowns, he had never killed anyone before.

"How should I do it?"

"Well..." Helen paused and wet her lips before continuing. She looked around the barn for help. "I suppose you could shove this pitchfork through his eye into his brain...but that would be such a mess." Jack agreed vehemently. Helen thought a bit then cocked her head to one side. "Do you know kung fu?" Jack shook his head in the negative. The closest thing he had to a black belt was at home in his closet. They sat for a while when suddenly Jack's eyes lit up and he reached for his bag.

"I just remembered, I brought my Glock 17!" Helen wasn't sure what this was, but it seemed to excite Jack so she became excited as well. They decided that Jack would surprise his target in the morning before breakfast. They were quite delighted with themselves and told each other so. Jack playfully prodded Helen and when she returned the gesture, she knocked him off the hay and onto his back. They both found this incredibly funny and were in tears before long. Helen helped Jack back to a sitting position and as he came up, he fell against her and they held an embrace. Jack craned his neck way back and their eyes met and locked. Helen lifted Jack to her face and they kissed. Her lips almost engulfed his entire head, but it was good for both of them. Jack said later that it was like being back in the womb and Helen had never had those parts of her palette massaged before. As illogical and physically impossible as it

seems, Helen and Jack had an old fashioned roll in the hay. The details of this event will be edited out of this fairy tale. Most probably to the disappointment of sick little monkeys like you!

14.

The next morning, Jack awoke to frantic banging near his head from the sheep who was violently passing another brick. Helen was nowhere to be found. Jack thought it better that she were not present for the deeds that needed doing. An extra large Helen shape was left indented in the hay next to the boy recently become man. He sat up, pocketed the newly dropped brick, and checked his handgun. It was loaded with a full clip of 15 rounds and an extra shot in the chamber. Jack slipped his backpack on and started towards the house.

The front door had been left open a crack and Jack squeezed through easily. Helen was nowhere to be seen inside the house either, but finding her husband proved to be a simple task. The snores emanating from across the house could be none other than said ogre. Jack followed the hollow sounds of sawing wood to what appeared to be the den. A giant man was asleep in an over-over-stuffed brown leather chair in front of an enormous television set. The set was on, but the volume had been turned off. Giant red letters spelled M-U-T-E on the screen, obscuring Suzanne Somers' face pouting for John Ritter in a rerun of Three's Company.

Jack positioned himself in front of the sleeping giant and assumed the over the cash register style of pointing a handgun that has become akin to hoodlums of all shapes and sizes. He stood for a moment then got up on the hassock for a better angle of attack. The giant lay sleeping unaware that a creature one-sixth his size was about to put a cap in his ass, or more literally his forehead. His head was slumped into his exposed left shoulder, showing his red plaid shirt. His brow furrowed and unfurrowed as he drew breath in and let it escape. The corner of his giant mouth stuck to the chair by a small pool of saliva. A crocheted blanket of green and white honeycomb shapes was tucked under his chin and around his body.

Jack drew in a breath of his own and took aim at the giant's giant head. His hands and underarms began to liquefy. He had to shoot now or else the gun would go flying when it reported the shot. He closed his eyes and squeezed the trigger. The glock leapt out of Jack's hand and hit him in the forehead sending him sprawling onto the floor. A howl of pain erupted from the easy chair that would have frightened most dinosaurs had they been around to hear it. Jack rolled out of the way just in time to avoid becoming an unsightly stain on the carpet. He scrambled to his feet and surveyed the scene. The bullet had missed its target and scathed the giant's right shoulder. The giant too had stood up and was still yelling, but was now looking at Jack. Jack wasn't looking back though; he was fixated on the

high caliber weapon just out of reach beyond the overturned hassock he had been standing on. The giant lunged forward, holding his wounded shoulder, and grabbed Jack by the leg. He lofted him upside down and screamed at him “WHY YOU DO THAT?!” Even in Jack’s peculiar state, he had to choke back a snigger; the sight of an upside down mouth is always a prize winner on America’s Funniest home videos, especially when accompanied by chin riding sunglasses.

Jack could tell that the giant was a bit miffed about the whole situation. The giant began to show Jack exactly how he felt by violently shaking the boy. All of Jack’s things cascaded out of his knapsack, which was still on his back. It formed a sort of Stonehenge of crap on the floor beneath them. The giant, who had been rudely awakened, and was always grumpy before breakfast, was starving. He came to the decision that he could literally kill two birds with one fell swoop by eating Jack. The giant opened his mouth wide and started to lower his meal into the gaping cavity. Jack was appalled at the giant’s morning breath and could see pieces of last night’s dinner and late night snack still lodged between the back molars. As Jack neared his certain end, he thought his life flashed before his eyes, but in reality it was just the glint of light off of one of the giant’s fillings. The giant was so famished that he dropped all of Jack into his mouth, figuring he could crunch him up in several bone munching bites. Unfortunately, for him but not for our hero, that plan went awry and instead of getting Jack, he got a mouthful of L.L. Bean’s finest quality backpack instead.

Jack, seeing his opportunity to escape, wriggled free of the pack and leapt to the floor. Expecting to be chased, he scurried under the table, but there was no more yelling, just a queer sort of gurgling hacking sound followed by a curious whacking noise. It reminded Jack of a cat he once had that ran into walls to free its hairballs. He peeped out from under the table and saw the giant, looking very off color, contorting his face and whacking himself on the back, obviously trying to dislodge something from his throat. Jack couldn’t take his eyes off the dying giant as he repeatedly tried to give himself the Giant equivalent of the Heimlich maneuver.

When the giant finally died and surely went to giant hell, he slipped off of the chair he was thrusting himself on and fell face first onto the carpet. When he hit the floor, a tiny object flew out of his mouth and came to rest near Jack. It was a bit slimy, but he recognized it immediately; it was his Gameboy. Jack crawled out from under the table and called for Helen. She emerged from a hall closet, dark streaks down her cheeks showed that she had been crying in the dark. But now it was over. They rushed toward each other and embraced quickly. A plan to dispose of the body was decided upon. Together they managed to drag the giant’s corpse to the edge of the cloud and pushed him over. As

they were cutting the beanstalk, a loud crashing splintering sound, that could only be Jack's house being destroyed by the falling giant, erupted from down below. The beanstalk fell away and if they had been listening, Jack and Helen might have been able to hear the terrified screams of people in Jack's neighborhood. But, instead, Helen and Jack were deeply engaged in each other, holding hands, making their way to the house and the master bedroom.

AND THEY LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.

THE END