

## **Jack and the Tiny Kittens**

**By Daniel Euphrat**

Jack sat in his recliner, watching TV.

On TV, a bald fat man was trying to eat a snow cone. He looked very happy.

"Finally!" he said. "Finally, something that makes me happy. Thank god!"

The audience laughed.

"I think," said the bald fat man, "that things are finally starting to turn around for me. Finally, I think I can be happy!" He gestured grandiosely with his hand and dropped the snow cone.

The audience went wild, laughing and applauding.

"Woo," said Jack. He took a sip of beer.

"Time for work," said his parrot, Mr. Chirpy.

"Shitty," said Jack.

The bald fat man was sobbing into his hands while the audience laughed.

Jack turned off the TV and left for work.

#

He was at work now.

His desk was full of ants. After several painful ant bites, Jack decided he needed a drink. He went to the water cooler that was unfortunately filled with water rather than whiskey.

A tiny man with a necklace made of tiny skulls danced atop the water cooler. He had a mask that look vaguely like a screaming clown face.

"Hey," said Jack to the little dancing man. "You new around here?"

"I will eat your children," said the little dancing man with a giggle. He shook a rattle filled with teeth.

"Huh," said Jack. "Did you watch the bald fat man show today?"

"I will eat your children," said the little dancing man, "and your pets."

Jack imagined Mr. Chirpy squawking in pain. He felt a bit upset. "I think that could be construed as harassment," he said, and headed back to his cubicle.

"Three beans!" the little dancing man called after him. "Three thousand men died

this day!”

Jack paid no heed and watched the ants crawl up and down his arms.

#

He got home and turned on the TV.

Something felt wrong. He didn't like the feeling.

The fat bald man was trying to talk to a woman.

“Hi,” he said, looking slightly shy. The audience giggled.

“You know,” said the woman, “you're ugly. And fat, and bald. And you have a small penis too, don't you? I bet you do.”

“What?” said the bald fat man.

“Hey, Jim, Eddie, hold this guy down. Let's rip off his pants!”

The audience cheered as two burly men subdued the squirming, struggling bald fat man and the woman yanked down his pants and boxers.

“My god,” she said, half laughing, “it's even tinier than I... I mean, I didn't think they even got that small!”

The audience laughed and clapped wildly.

"Wow," said Jack. "That is a tiny penis. Isn't it, Mr. Chirpy?"

Mr. Chirpy said nothing.

Jim and Eddie were now laughing so hard they couldn't hold on to the bald fat man any longer. He ran off with his pants around his ankles as the crowd cheered.

Jack smiled. He felt a little better now.

"Time for work," said Mr. Chirpy.

"Damn it, already?" said Jack, then he thought for a moment. "Look, don't think I'm angry at you, Mr. Chirpy. I'm just angry about going to work, OK? I really appreciate what you do for me. And I appreciate you too."

Mr. Chirpy stared and said nothing.

"Just... remember that," said Jack, and looked away quickly.

He turned off the TV and left for work.

#

He sat at his desk.

No ants today, only snails. Jack was satisfied, as snails do nothing painful. Sure, they're slimy, but that's better than a million tiny bites.

"I like snails," said Jack to no one in particular.

The snails made him happy, crawling all over his arms and cooling his ant bites with their refreshing mucus. But still, Jack felt a certain foreboding. It hung over him like a dead moose held by a crane.

Jack was getting thirstier and thirstier.

Finally, he had to face the truth.

"I'm afraid," he said to himself. "I'm afraid of the little dancing man. I'm so afraid of him that I won't even go get a drink. How pathetic is that? I must turn this situation around and be a man!"

He said this, and felt a little better.

He continued to sit at his desk. He was thirsty all day.

#

Jack got home, leapt into his recliner and turned on the TV.

The bald fat man was cowering under his bed.

"Something horrible is happening," he was saying over and over.

There was an occasional titter from the audience, but Jack was not amused.

He switched off the TV and called up Melissa, the receptionist. He invited her over, and she agreed to come.

This made Jack feel better. Melissa was cute. The dead, dangling moose of his problems seemed farther and farther away. He put on some nice clothes and waited for Melissa's arrival.

The doorbell rang.

"Hi Jack!" said Melissa. "This is my boyfriend Edward."

Edward was wearing a teal polo shirt.

"Hey!" said Jack. "Nice meeting you, Edward! Come on in!"

Melissa smiled and came inside. Edward raised his eyebrows at Jack.

"Want to watch the bald fat guy show?" said Edward. Jack was vaguely annoyed that this jackass watched it too.

"Nah, it's not a very good episode. Why don't we just go to my bedroom? I have lots of cool stuff in there... to do..."

They went in to Jack's bedroom.

"Where's the cool stuff?" asked Edward.

Jack pointed at Edward and concentrated very hard. He was pretty sure he could knock people out with his mind.

"Um," said Edward.

"Bzzzt!" said Jack.

"Huh?" said Edward.

"BZZZT!" said Jack.

The world flashed yellow for a moment. Edward's eyes rolled back into his head, and he crumpled to the floor.

Jack was happy.

"What's going on?" said Melissa.

"I just knocked your boyfriend out with my mind," said Jack, "and now I'm going to have sex with you."

"I see," said Melissa, edging for the door.

"Nope," said Jack. He closed the door and picked up Melissa, tossing her to the bed.

"We're going to have sex, and that's final."

Melissa seemed vaguely amused. This annoyed Jack, but he figured she'd understand soon enough.

"Now I'm going to take off your clothes," said Jack.

"Really?" said Melissa. She rolled over on the bed, and pulled the sheet over her eyes. Her mouth smiled out from underneath it.

*Damn tease,* thought Jack.

He walked over and made a grab for her jeans. She rolled out of the way with a giggle, and wriggled her way into the sheets.

"Goddamn it, stop!" said Jack, yanking the sheets off the bed.

But it was too late, she was gone. And her boyfriend was gone too.

"Time for work," said Mr. Chirpy from the other room.

"Fucking hell, it's always fucking time for work!" yelled Jack and stormed out of the house, slamming the door.

Mr. Chirpy watched him go and said nothing.



#

Jack sat at his desk, feeling angrier and angrier with each passing second.

The main drawer of his desk was filled with baby birds, always chirping away, and demanding food. Jack really didn't feel like regurgitating anything right now. He'd just ignore the problem until it went away, he decided.

"That's what's wrong with you!" he snapped at himself. "You can't just ignore your problems! You have to face them. Be a man! Be a fucking man already!"

He grabbed the stapler off his desk and strutted over to the water cooler.

"You!" he said to the little dancing man with a screaming clown mask.

"Gastronomy!" it said, dancing. "I will eat your children!"

"I don't have any kids, and I probably never will," said Jack, pointing the stapling end of the stapler at the little dancing man in a threatening manner. "I don't care about that, but you leave Mr. Chirpy alone! I swear to God, if anything happens to Mr. Chirpy, I will make you pay. I will make you pay with your pathetic, dancing little life, do you understand me?!"

"Three thousand ends, three thousand ice cubes," said the little dancing man. "They all died today, three thousand of them."

Jack glared at it.

"Limberly?" it said in a quizzical tone.

"Don't... fuck... with... Mr. Chirpy," said Jack and turned and left.

"Three eels," said the dancing man behind him.

#

On his way out, Jack stopped by Melissa's desk.

"Hey, about earlier today..." he said.

"What about it?" asked Melissa.

"Wait, did you come over? And did I like... try to have sex with you?"

"No..." said Melissa.

"Oh." Jack chuckled. "Probably a different Melissa. Hey, do you have a boyfriend?"

"You mean Edward?"

Jack wrinkled his forehead. "Yeah... Hey, I'm going home. My head hurts."

"Bye, Jack!" Melissa smiled after him.

#

Jack got home, turned on the TV, and relaxed back into his recliner.

"I'm sorry, sir," a receptionist was telling the bald fat man. "What you're looking for is on the *third* floor."

"I was just on the third floor," said the bald fat man. "And they send me down here. And before that, you sent me up there. And before that they sent me down here. And before that..."

The receptionist yawned dramatically. The audience tittered.

"I'm very sorry, sir," she said. "Please, just take it up with the people on the third floor. And by the way, I'm shutting down the elevator so you have to take the stairs. Because you need the exercise, you fat worthless fuck."

The audience laughed. There was some sporadic clapping.

Jack was feeling better. The show was funny again.

The bald fat man cocked his head to one side. "I think," he said, "there are people laughing at me." The audience tittered. "Yes. There are people laughing at me, I can hear it." His eyes widened. "My God," he said, "I think I understand. I think I understand now. My God!"

Jack turned off the TV. He felt cold inside.

"That's stupid," he said. "That was stupid Mr. Chirpy. That episode was stupid. Mr. Chirpy?"

He looked up. The cage was a mess of blood and scattered feathers. He thought he could make out Mr. Chirpy's tiny spleen amongst the gore.

"Mr. Chirpy?" he whimpered. "Where did you go? Mr. Chirpy, come out now. I was never mad at you. I told you that. I fucking *told* you that, Mr. Chirpy!" Jack was sobbing now. "I'm sorry! I'm sorry I yelled. Please come back. Please come home, Mr. Chirpy, I have no one without you. I'm so alone. Oh God, why? Why God?"

Jack cried and vomited for hours.

When he was done, he went out to the shed and got a shovel.

"Time for work," he said.

#

"Everyone's got a bad tongue in their head, bad tongue in their head, bad tongue in their head!" sang the little dancing man cheerfully, his tiny skulls rattling around his neck. "Everyone's got a bad tongue in their head, I will eat your—"

With a primal bellow, Jack brought the flat side of the shovel down on the dancing man. It screamed a tiny scream, and Jack lifted the shovel back up. He swung it down again on the crushed little man, this time with the shovel's edge and cut it in

half. Black liquid poured out of it and down the sides of the water cooler.

Breathing hard, Jack went back to his desk. It was swarming with a million tiny kittens, all furry and playfully crawling up and down his arms. He felt at peace. He felt very good.

#

"Jack," his boss Jim came in a few hours later. "We're done for the day. Water's been poisoned. We lost twelve people already, and we're closing the office down before anyone important gets hurt."

"Alright," said Jack. He took his shovel and left.

When he got home, he tossed his shovel to the floor, where it lay in a pool of black liquid. He went over Mr. Chirpy's cage and dipped three fingers in the blood. Then he brought them down his cheek and made three bloody lines under his right eye. The blood was still warm, and sticky.

Then he sat down and turned on the TV.

The bald fat man was slapping himself in the face over and over again. His cheek was already bright red.

"This isn't funny!" he sobbed, still slapping. "Why are you laughing? God, why can't I stop this?"

The audience cheered and guffawed.

"Who would do this? Who would force such suffering on anyone? And why do they laugh so at my misery? I can't stop my hand, I can't do anything. Oh God oh God oh—"

Jack switched off the TV.

"Time for work," he said in an attempt at Mr. Chirpy's squawky voice.

#

He went back to work, only to discover it was closed... something about poison.

"I guess I get the afternoon off," he said.

He went down to the park and got a snow cone. It was bright red.

He sat on a bench under the orange sun and watched a little girl in a royal blue dress toss a purple ball across the green field where her three-headed dog ran to catch it. Two of the heads fought over possession of the ball while the little girl giggled.

Jack smiled at her.

The little girl caught Jack's eye and stopped giggling. Her eyes widened in fear and she turned and ran. She ran and ran, but she never got any further away. Jack

thought he could hear her crying. This bothered him.

"It's ok!" he said, but his voice reverberated like he was in a tin can.

He suddenly wanted very much to be back home.

#

Jack opened the front door, red snow cone liquid dribbling down from the corners of his mouth. He froze in place.

A man with a teal polo shirt and the head of a goat sat on his recliner.

The bald fat man on the was still on the screen, slapping his bleeding cheek, sobbing and babbling mindlessly.

The man with the goat head bleated in amusement.

"Edward?" said Jack.

The man with the goat head turned to look at him.

"Hi Jack," it said. "Did you like Mr. Chirpy? I liked Mr. Chirpy. He was just tasty-licious! Mmm-mm, tastes just like talking chicken!"

"Edward," said Jack, heart racing, "why did you eat Mr. Chirpy?"

"Did you think you got away with what you did this afternoon? Did you think no one remembered?"

"What'd I do?" asked Jack.

"You knocked me out with your mind," said the goat man, "and then you tried to rape Melissa? You remember, don't you?"

"But," said Jack. "You didn't have a goat head."

The goat man bleated a laugh. "Not then, no."

"And Melissa didn't remember..."

"She doesn't remember bad things," said the goat man. "She's too innocent, her brain can't hold them. You want to do horrible ugly things to her, don't you Jack? Well guess what: you can't. But I can, Jack. She's mine, and I can do any disgusting, ungodly thing to her I want. Over and over again. And she won't even remember."

Jack screamed with rage and charged at the goat man.

The goat man laughed, grabbed Jack's testicles, and threw him over the chair.

Jack smashed through a window and landed on his kitchen table. He had no idea why there was a window between his living room and kitchen.



Lying in a pile of broken glass, Jack could only feel the throbbing pain between his legs. He heard the TV. He heard the bald fat man crying and the audience laughing. And the goat man laughing on top of that.

Panting and wanting to vomit, Jack raised a shaky arm and pointed his finger at the goat man.

"Bzzt?" he said.

The goat man smiled with big square teeth.

"BZZT!" said Jack.

The goat man stood up and went to pick up Jack's shovel from where he'd discarded it on the floor.

"Bzzt," said Jack without much enthusiasm.

The goat man was smiling, walking towards the kitchen, towards the door rather than the window, holding Jack's dripping black shovel.

"I'm going to cut you in half with this shovel," said the goat man. "It may take a while... but I'm a patient man."

He was walking through the door now. Walking so damn slow. He stared at Jack with eyes bugging out of his skull. Bald fat man was screaming now.

Jack crawled back on the table, feeling glass bite into his arms. His table seemed to go on forever. The TV audience just kept laughing.

Just then, there was a horrible squishing noise and bald fat man's screams suddenly went silent. The audience's laughter trailed off.

The goat man stopped, casting a sideways glance at the TV.

There was a moment of quiet. Even Jack stopped crawling.

"Um," said a TV announcer, "I'm afraid this may be it, folks."

The audience gasped.

"That's right, I believe this may be the final episode of the *Bald Fat Man* show."

The goat man turned to look at the TV. "What?"

The audience made a disappointed "awwww."

"Well, I'm sorry, folks, but it looks like his head just caved in. Well, we had a good run, didn't we?"

There was a smattering of applause.

"I've been with the show for its entire thirty-five year run, ever since it was the *Bald Fat Baby* show, and let me just tell you: it's been great experience. I just want to

thank everyone here, and all the viewers at home..."

The audience began to cheer and clap more enthusiastically now.

"What?" said the goat man. "This can't be! I love this show... I mean, what... what am I going to watch now? Right Jack? What are we going to—"

The goat man's sentence degenerated into a shrieking bleat of pain as Jack drove a shard of glass into its bulbous eyeball.

The goat man staggered backwards, dropping the shovel and clawing at its furry, bloodied face.

Jack picked up the shovel and slammed it once into the goat man's knee, then once to its bleating face, then again to its face and it fell to the floor, twitching and frothing at the mouth, one eye rolling wildly around in its head, the other in two pieces.

Jack brought the shovel up over his head, and brought it back down with all of his strength onto the goat man's skull.

"Goodnight everybody!" said the announcer and the crowd went wild.

#

Jack got a frying pan and set it on his stove. He scraped what was left of the black slime off his shovel and onto the pan, then added some goat's blood, and finally Mr.

Chripy's tiny spleen. Then he set his stove to sixty-six million degrees.

After a couple minutes of sizzling, the pan exploded in a blue-green fire ball, revealing a tiny man with a necklace of tiny skulls and a mask like a screaming clown, coughing in a cloud of black smoke.

"Kibble-blitz!" it choked. "Rapscallion!"

"Remember me?" said Jack.

The tiny man squinted up through the clearing smoke. "I will eat your children?" it inquired.

"That's right," said Jack. "I killed you, remember?"

"Yeast!" said the tiny man.

"And now I've brought you back to life again, but I still have my shovel, and I can take you out again anytime, got it?"

"Fiscal," muttered the little man.

"Right. Ok. But I won't, if you do one thing for me."

"Quail?"

Jack took the little dancing man and headed over to Melissa's house.

He rang the doorbell.

Melissa answered the door with a smile on her face. "Hi Jack!" she said. "Weird about the poisoning thing, huh?"

"Yeah," said Jack. "Listen: there's something we need to do."

Melissa raised her eyebrows.

"I brought this little dancing man, and well... I think he knows how to do magic or something."

"Squeegee," the little dancing man said in greeting.

"How cute!" said Melissa. "What magic can he do?"

"Well," said Jack, "I'm hoping he can teleport you somewhere. Somewhere other than here. Because you may not realize it, Melissa, but this is a bad place. This place is evil and rotten, and quite frankly it makes no damn sense at all. You don't belong here."

"I don't?" said Melissa.

"Remember that stuff I said about me trying to have sex with you and all?"

"Yeah?"

"Well, you might not remember it, but it actually happened. And I saw your boyfriend just now..."

"Edward?"

"Yeah. And he said that you don't remember anything bad that happens. He said that he does all kinds of horrible things to you, and you just don't remember, you see? I mean, I could do the same right now even, and God knows I want to, but I've just seen too many horrible things already. I'm done. I'm done with all that."

"Jack..."

"Come on, Melissa, you have to believe me. I'm telling you, I tried to rape you just this afternoon! I don't see why you don't remember..."

"I do remember," said Melissa. "Jack, I remember everything. And nothing horrible happens to me, ok Jack? Edward tries, everyone tries, but I can slip away every time. I just pretend to forget the bad things, and then life seems ok. You see Jack?"

Jack took a moment to absorb this. "But... don't you want to leave?"

"Maybe," said Melissa, "but this little dancing man, though he's cute, he can't do anything but dance and speak gibberish."

"Damn it!" said Jack.

"Melba crust," said the little dancing man.

"No one can take me anywhere else, Jack. Maybe there's nowhere else to go. I mean, I can go wherever I want, like when I went through your sheet. But I can't leave this *place*. This place is everywhere, it's everything. There's no escaping it."

"Hmm..." said Jack.

"But there are nice things here, Jack. They're just really small, like those tiny kittens on your desk sometimes. We just have to find them."

"I guess that makes sense," said Jack. "Um... by the way, I kind of killed your boyfriend... but in my defense, he ate my parrot."

Melissa sighed. "It's alright," she said. "As you pointed out, Edward was evil. He wasn't my boyfriend anyway, I just kept him around to divert people who wanted to have sex with me."

"Like me?"

Melissa smiled, a trifle sadly.

"Huh," said Jack. "So you're ok then? Like, everything's going to be alright?"

Melissa nodded. "Everything will be the same for me, but it'll be alright; it's been

alright. Don't worry Jack."

"Alright," said Jack. He turned to the little dancing man, who was currently doing something vaguely similar to the moon-walk. "You," he said. "Beat it. And find somewhere to dance other than our water cooler."

"Scribble!" said the little dancing man, and scurried off with a drawn out parting cry of: "I will eat your children!"

"Yeah, yeah," said Jack. He turned back to Melissa. "So... I guess I'll see you at work then? You know, whenever they get rid of the poison and all."

Melissa nodded. "Sure. Glad you stopped by Jack."

"Yeah."

#

On his way home, Jack swung by the park.

The little girl was still there, running in place forever, only now she was about 3 inches tall. Her three-headed dog stood over her, sniffing and whimpering.

Jack came up and patted the dog's three heads in turn. Their tail wagged.

"Come on," he said. "You're coming home with me, Mr. Cerberus. I have a treat for you, if you like goat meat."



He picked up its leash and led it on down the path to home.

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