

# Entertainment

HAPPY HALLOWEEN



Jack had been into the sauce, sure, but the last pint had been pilfered - the bartender hadn't noticed Jack pulling it while he wasn't looking, and, well, free beer is free beer. Stumbling out of the pub, going just slightly out of his way to step on the old cat crouched on the stairs (who, upon impact, made the most delightful screeching sound and skittered off into the shadows). Jack spat on a bicycle seat and stepped onto the dimly lit street, crossing over to the park. "That bastard," muttered Jack.

About halfway across the park, Jack cut through the old graveyard, crunching through the frost-laden leaves scattered on the gravel path. He stopped next to a stone marked "Edna St. James - 1893-1947" and turned against the crisp breeze to cup his hands and light a smoke. "Stupid cow," said Jack.

The first draw made him a bit nauseous, and he sat for a moment on the gravestone to stop the spinning in his head. "Cold night." The voice came from above in the trees. Jack snapped his head up, and tossing the glowing cigarette to the ground, stood up. "Who's that?!" Said Jack. "It's Satan, Jack." Came the reply.

Now, Jack was drunk, but had a few of his wits about him. "How do I know it's really Satan?" he asked, still peering vainly into the pitch black branches above his head. After an eerie silence, while the wind rustled the dead leaves along the path, the voice wafted down through the trees again. "When you were fifteen, you crazy-glued Mrs. Benoit's french poodle to the engine block of your dad's tractor and he cooked to death." Said Satan. A little taken aback, Jack said "You could have found that out from someone - that's no proof!" "Alright" Said Satan. "When you were nine, on Thanksgiving, you urinated in the mashed potatoes." Now Jack knew that he had never told anyone this, and was sure no one had seen him (largely because everyone had told his mother how tasty the mashed potatoes were that year and could they have her recipe). "So what are you doing in the trees?" Said Jack, awkwardly attempting to make conversation. "Waiting for you, Jack." The voice had become icy cold and deathly quiet and level. Jack heard the leaves rustling above his head and realized that the devil himself was coming to get him. "Think, Jack, think!" Jack thought to himself. Stooping, Jack picked up the only weapon he could find, a rather small but sharp rock on the gravel path. Then, through the haze of his malt-sodden thoughts, Jack did something that saved him from eternal damnation. For a man who had never been to church in his life except on

Halloween to soap the stained glass windows and break into the sacrificial wine cupboard, he was surprisingly quick to scratch a cross into the bark of the old tree with Satan in it. Jack stood back, and through the branches came the devil, scrabbling down the trunk of the old tree using his claws and the point on his scaly tail. Satan's foot touched the scratched cross and the sparks flew so that Jack had to turn his eyes away. The devil roared. The devil screamed. The smell of burnt beelzebub was enough to make

a strong man's eyes water. Jack laughed and lit another cigarette. "How about that, Devil? Not so bad anymore, huh?" "LET ME DOWN YOU IGNORANT FOOL!!!!" Roared the devil. "I'LL HAVE YOU PERCOLATED!!! I'LL MAKE WON TONS OUT OF YOUR TESTICLES!!!" But Jack stood his ground and laughed.

"Okay," Said the Satan, and his voice had become seductive and sweet.

"What do you want? I can give you anything - anything, you hear? What do you most want?" Now Jack sat down on the gravestone again and thought.

Having been so close to death made him remarkably introspective, and he thought harder than he ever had before. "I think" Said Jack, "That I would like to be free from sinning." "What?" Said Satan. "Yeah" Said Jack. "I want you to never tempt me into sinning ever again - I know you're in charge of these things - and that way when my time comes I can go to heaven." There was, again, a long and awkward silence. "Alright" Said Satan, and Jack scratched out the cross on the tree trunk. The Devil climbed down and stomped off into the night, leaving Jack to stumble home.

There is really no point in relating any high points in the rest of Jack's unproductive life, but it is true that he never sinned again until the day he died peacefully in his bed.

Jack walked carefully up to the Pearly gates and rang the doorbell. "Hang on a sec-" Said St. Peter. "Yeah?" "I'm Jack" Said Jack. "Let me in. I haven't sinned in over thirty-five years." St. Peter leafed through his book for a minute and then looked up. "Sorry, Pal," Said St. Peter. "You're that little bugger that whizzed in your mom's mashed potatoes - there's just no forgiving you." The door slammed, and Jack was left to take the escalator down to hell.

"Get away from me!!!" said Satan. "I don't want your kind in here!!" Jack was very distressed. "But what do I do?" he whined. "I'm dead and I've no place to go!" Jack sat on the ground and snivelled. But the Devil slammed the gates of Hell on him and sent him to wander the earth aimlessly in the dark for all eternity.

It's not so much that Jack was bored, but he kept banging his shins on things and falling down, because ghosts can't see any better at night than the average guy. Imagine stumbling around forever. Finally, Jack could take no more and went back to the gates of Hell. Banging on the door, he roused the Devil. "Go away!!!" Said the Devil. "I told you, I don't want you here!!!" Jack pleaded. "I realize that we don't get along very well, and I fully understand your position, but all I ask is for a few glowing coals from your hellfire so that at least I can see where I'm going!!" Surprisingly, the Devil consented, and threw out a coal to him. Jack went to pick it up and found out the hard way that ghosts not only can't see in the dark, but are also highly susceptible to third degree burns from hot coals from hell. "OWWW!!!" Yelled Jack, dropping the coal and sucking his burned fingers. "Hey! Devil!! How am I supposed to carry this thing around!!? Ow!!!"

It's still very unclear why the Devil threw him a hollowed out turnip (although it has been widely suggested that turnips are from hell), but if you're coming out of a pub on Halloween, and you smell something like barbecued horseradish, watch your step and get out of the shadows. Jack is coming and he's carrying his lantern.