

Episode 6 – Jack’s Last Gasp

Ding Dong Dell, Jack’s in the Well. Who Put Him In? Big Windy Flynn. Who Pulled Him Out? Little Ernie Stout

The towering grey clouds looked ominous as big gusts of wind slammed into the barn and tugged at the roof. I ran with the cows and sheep to the barn, heads down against the wind and rain spitting in our eyes. With all the animals tucked away, I returned to the house expecting to find Jack, our yellow lab, lounging on the couch in royal style, but the house was strangely empty, devoid of his wagging welcome and friendly grin. I instantly knew something was wrong. Figuring he was stuck somewhere outside, I searched for him through the battering wind, but he had disappeared without a trace. The knot of anxiety in my gut crept unbidden into every bone, as I drove along roads and through fields well into the storm filled night calling his name. No sign.

Morning broke calm after the storm, but I was unsettled and anxious. “I have to find his body, just to have some peace” I stated, my matter of fact manner belying tears held back and a swelling pain in my heart at losing my wonderful buddy. I had come to the conclusion that the valiant Jack had taken on one fight too many, but I wanted to make sure that he wasn’t injured and bleeding slowly to death. Ernest and I went on foot deep into the neighbour’s woods, his favorite coyote chasing grounds. Giving up was unthinkable, and as I struggled through thorns and brush ripping at my clothes, I prayed for a sign, asking the forest to show me where his body lay.

Our neighbours felt our sadness and joined the search. “We heard a huge coyote howling ruckus over by the pond last night about 6:30.” they explained. I grasped at the clue and we rushed over to search the pond area. “Jack, where are you buddy?” I kept calling, knowing if he had the power in him, he would answer me. Suddenly, Ernest yelled “I hear a sound!” I redoubled my efforts, pleading with Jack to speak to us again. Another faint, keening sigh reached our ears. He was here, somewhere, waiting for us to rescue him! Ernest went crashing through the undergrowth “I’ve found him!” His words changed the world! But we could see nothing but bush, neither Jack nor Ernest were visible. Now they had both disappeared! An explosion of sound and activity came from literally right under our feet, and a wet, shaking yellow lab was thrown up and out from below the ground. Jack had fallen into the perfect trap for anything or anybody. The old wooden lid had long since rotted away and Jack had been held prisoner in a ground level, 20 foot deep well. He had held onto life for 23 hours, keeping his head just above the surface by treading water, ripping out his claws in his attempts to cling onto the sides. Without waiting for backup, Ernest had used previously undiscovered spider man skills to climb down inside the well, grab the dog’s head which was the only thing showing above the water, and literally throw him up and out onto the ground above.

Jack had used his last gasp to call us, being too weak and hypothermic to bark. Even thinking about it now, my blood runs cold at the thought of how close we came to losing him. With his

strength gone, he wouldn't have lasted many more minutes before the black water had closed over his head forever. But now there was celebration, as Jack was enveloped in the loving warmth of family and friends!

I am left with a great appreciation for the caring and support of neighbours (we would bring peace into the world if we all looked after each other so well), and a new understanding that time is of the essence in missing cases. Don't wait, look now and keep going, whether it's your cat stuck up a tree, or grandma who took the wrong turn out for a walk.

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