

Enrique Hernandez

The Tale of Jack

Characters: Mr. Creeper, an agent of death. Jack Evergreen, a dying young man. Dr. Kavorkian, Jack's doctor.

Setting: Jack's hospital room, around midnight.

At Rise: Jack is sleeping in bed, peacefully.

## Scene 1

Dr. Kavorkian

*(Enters)* Uh, Mr. Evergreen? You awake?

Jack

*(Stirs and yawns)* I am now. Are you my doctor?

Dr. Kavorkian

Uh, yeah, my name is Dr. Kavorkian.

Jack

*(Gasps)* Kevorkian?

Dr. Kavorkian

*(Sighs)* No, Kavorkian with an 'a.'

Jack

*(Puts his arm on his chest, trying to calm down)* Oh, thank God. *(Collects himself)* So what's up, Doc?

Dr. Kavorkian

Nothing good I'm afraid. *(Takes a deep breath and looks Jack in the eye)* Mr. Evergreen you have a very rare disease. *Heartus explodus*. It causes the heart to explode. Unfortunately, it is so rare a disease that it has no cure.

Jack

Wow. *(Looks down, sadly)* Um, how much time do I have left?

Dr. Kavorkian

I give you no more than a week. I am very sorry. *(Hesitates)* Would you like me to tell your family? I'm sure this would be a difficult-

Jack

*(Interrupts him)* No, I'll tell them. I think I should be the one to deliver the news. Can you bring them in tomorrow?

Dr. Kavorkian

Sure. *(Pats him on the shoulder, and turns to leave, then turns)* You're a brave man, Mr. Evergreen.

Jack

Please, call me Jack. *(Dr. Kavorkian leaves. Jack looks around the room and sighs. Massages his temples before lying down and goes back to sleep)*

Mr. Creeper

*(Comes out of the dark corner, as if out of nowhere. He is dressed in a fine, black business suit, and grinning widely)* Jack. Hey, Jack wake up!

Jack

*(Sits up annoyed)* Now what? More bad news? Is my *brain* going to explode? *(Looks at Mr. Creeper)* Who the...

Mr. Creeper

Hey, watch the language! *(Still grinning)* I am Mr. Creeper, agent of the Grim Reaper, and *your* escort to the Afterlife. Now come along, it's time to go.

Jack

Um, excuse me? *(Disbelieving)* My doctor told me I had a week, not a minute. Is this some kind of prank? *(Lights up)* Am I being Punk'd?

Mr. Creeper

*(Pulls out a pocket watch and studies it for awhile)* Let's see, Jack Evergreen, Jack Evergreen... huh, you're right! I'm a whole week early. According to my watch, you are not scheduled to die until 9:32 a.m. on Monday morning. *(Pulls out a chair and sits down, still grinning, while Jack stares at him oddly)*

Jack

Okay, this is weird. *Really* weird.

Mr. Creeper

I must admit this is awkward, with me coming in here early to take your soul away. Just go back to sleep and pretend I'm not here.

Jack

*(Stares at him, before shaking his head and stands up)* Okay, listen you weirdo. If you are still here in the morning I swear to God, I am going to call the doctors so they can take you away to some asylum. I kid you not. *(Lies down and stares at Mr. Creeper until he closes his eyes to sleep)*

Mr. Creeper

*(Waits for a moment)* You aren't sleeping, are you?

Jack

No. (*Sits up*)

Mr. Creeper

Dying isn't so bad, Jack. Hell, it's a pretty easy thing to do. (*Reminiscing*) I remember when I died . . . A few moments of pain, and then a feeling of peace. (*Sighs*) Good times.

Jack

Thanks, but it isn't dying that worries me. It's going to sleep with a psycho like you in the room. But hey, why should I worry about you killing me? I am about to die in a week.

Mr. Creeper

(*Looks at his pocket watch, then stands up. Still grinning*) I'll prove that I really am an agent of Death in the morning. Right now, I need to collect the soul of the mass murderer Aaron White, and the soul of the old man next door, Robert Murray. I'll see *you* in the morning. (*Leaves*)

Jack

(*Stares after him*) Freak.

## Scene 2

Characters: Jack Evergreen, a dying young man. Mr. Creeper, an agent of death. Alice Evergreen, Jack's wife. Dr. Kavorkian, Jack's doctor.

Setting: Lobby

At Rise: Alice is sitting alone in the lobby.

Dr. Kavorkian

I'm assuming you are Mrs. Evergreen, right?

Alice

(*Stands up and shakes his hand*) Yeah, that's right.

Dr. Kavorkian

I am Dr. Kavorkian. (*Pauses as Alice gasps*) Kavorkian with an 'a.' (*Looks at her sadly*) I'm sorry to say Jack is (*Pauses*) in a better place.

Alice

What? (*Sits back down, and begins to cry, Jack enters*)

Jack

Alice, why are you crying?

Alice

*(Looks up, and hugs him)* The doctor told me you had died, Jack! He said you'd moved on to a better place!

Dr. Kavorkian

He's *going* to a better place. Desert Hill Hospital. They have a hot tub, steak dinners and more advanced technology. *(Shakes his head)* Man I wished I worked there! *(Looks at his watch)* Well, I have to go. Robert Murray died last night and I have to fill out his paperwork.

Jack

*(Stares off after him)* Coincidence . . . it *has* to be a coincidence!

Alice

Jack, what are you talking about?

Jack

*(Looks at her, considering whether to tell her or not)* Huh? Oh, nothing, nothing. Um, Alice, the reason I called you over here *(Takes her hand)* the doctors say I'm going to die in seven days.

Alice

Oh, Jack. *(Hugs him sadly)* I'm so sorry! Is there anything the doctors can do?

Mr. Creeper

*(Appears out of nowhere, right behind Alice, smiling and checking his watch)* Actually its six days, 13 hours, and 32 minutes before you croak, Jack.

Jack

Leave me alone, Creeper. This isn't a good moment.

Alice

*(Looks behind her, then at Jack, not seeing anyone)* Who are you talking to, Jack?

Jack

Don't you see him Alice? He's right here! *(Points at Mr. Creeper)*

Alice

Jack, you are sick and dying. You are obviously going through some stress here. I'll ask and see if we could get you some anti-depressants. *(Leaves)*

Jack

*(Watches her leave then looks at Mr. Creeper)* Who . . . *what* are you?

Mr. Creeper

I told you already, Jack. I am an agent of death and your escort to the Afterlife. If you don't believe me, check the news. Aaron White is dead, and your neighbor Robert Murray is dead.

Gone to the Afterlife, both of them.

Jack

But you can't be death! He's supposed to wear a black robe and be nothing more than a sack of bones! Besides, millions of people die per minute. How could you spare enough time to hang out with me?

Mr. Creeper

First of all, skeletons can't walk or talk by themselves, Jack. They need muscles and organs to function. Second, we stopped using robes in the 1800's. People would try to run away from us reapers, and let's just say robes aren't good for casual sportswear. Eventually, we switched to business suits and running shoes. *(Leans toward Jack as if to share a secret)* Not only are they good for catching runners, but they are also comfortably slimming. Lastly, the reason I can spare time for you is easy. Back in the old days, only a few hundred people would die per day. Today, mortals have cold hearts, greedy souls, and a ravenous appetite for power. Not to mention guns. Humans talk about peace, but what do they actually do about it *(Pauses before quietly saying)*. Nothing. Because of mortals' twisted minds, the death toll has amounted to millions per minute! The Grim Reaper realized he could not be in a million places at once, so he sought a solution. He would give human souls an option. Go to the Afterlife, or stay on Earth for 100 more years and escort souls to the Afterlife. I chose the second option,

Jack

So what happens after 100 years?

Mr. Creeper

We get reincarnated. I still have 72 years, 6 months, 2 weeks, and 4 days.

Alice

*(Walks in)* Sorry Jack. The line was really long, and by the time I got to the clerk, all they really had was Tylenol. *(Hands him the pills)*

Jack

*(Looks at the Creeper, then at Alice)* Alice, are you sure you can't see him? He's an annoying, short man with bad hair, a gap tooth, and a big zit on his neck!

Mr. Creeper

*(Annoyed)* The annoying short man has ears and feelings you know! *(Covers zit with hands)* Is it really that noticeable?

Alice

*(Shakes her head in pity and disbelief)* Listen Jack, I'm going to the 7-11, so we'll talk about your . . . predicament later. *(Leaves)*

Jack

*(Sighs, then sits down)* Mr. Creeper? *(Looks at him)*

Mr. Creeper

Yes, Jack?

Jack

Take me to the Afterlife.

Mr. Creeper

*(Stares at him, and for once stops grinning)* Excuse me?

Jack

You heard me. *(Pauses as Creeper looks away)* Six days isn't enough, Creeper! Either kill me now *(Hesitates)* or give me more time.

Mr. Creeper

*(Looks at the ground nervously, without answering)*

Jack

ANSWER ME, CREEPER!

Mr. Creeper

*(Looks at Jack angrily and yells)* FINE! *(Snaps his fingers three times, sharply)* Your appointment with me has been rescheduled. *(Looks at his pocket watch)* Be warned, you have brought upon yourself the consequences of illegally extended life. I hope your happy Mr. Evergreen. *(Lights flicker off, and when they come back on Jack is alone in the lobby)*

Jack

I hope I am, too.

## Scene 3

Characters: Jack Evergreen, a dying young man. Alice Evergreen, Jack's wife. Dr. Kavorkian Jack's doctor. Nurse Sally, Dr. Kavorkian's intern.

At Rise: Jack is sitting on an examining table waiting patiently

Dr. Kavorkian

*(Enters, and looks at Jack with his eyebrows furrowed)* Um, Jack? *(Double checks his chart)* I . . . I don't know why, but all the traces of the disease are gone! It's as if you never had it to begin with!

Jack

*(Pretends to act surprised)* Really? It's like a Christmas miracle, except of course it's July.

Dr. Kavorkian

I don't understand! A disease like this can't disappear just like that. The most doctors have been able to do is slow it down. *(Walks up to Jack)* Please tell me, did you take any medication this week?

Jack

*(Shrugs)* Wait! I did take something . . . *(Scratches his chin as if to remember)* Oh, I remember! My wife gave me some Tylenol. Does that count?

Nurse Sally

*(Enters)* There you are, Dr. Kavorkian! We need your help.

Dr. Kavorkian

What's the matter?

Nurse Sally

You have a new patient. *(Checks her chart)* She is a 29-year-old female that is currently in a critical condition. She was caught in the middle of a Liquor Store robbery, and apparently took three bullets to the chest. *(Looks down sadly)* We don't have much hope for her. She's slipping away and *fast*.

Dr. Kavorkian

What's her name?

Nurse Sally

Her name is *(Checks her chart)* Mrs. Alice Evergreen.

Jack

*(Looks at her in shock)* That's my wife.

## Scene 4

Characters: Jack Evergreen, a dying young man. Mr. Creeper, an agent of Death. Alice Evergreen, Jack's wife.

Setting: Alice's deathbed.

At Rise: Jack is at Alice's side, crying silently. A heart monitor beeps steadily and slowly in the corner.

Mr. Creeper

*(Lights flicker off and when they come on Mr. Creeper is sitting at the corner staring at Jack. After a short pause he looks at Jack before quietly saying)* You wanted extra life, Jack. Your wife was the only person in the whole world that was willing to give her life for yours.

Jack

*(Looks at Mr. Creeper)* This isn't what I wanted, Creeper. I just wanted to live so I could get to enjoy time with my wife. But now I can't. I never will.

Mr. Creeper

*(Smiling right from ear to ear)* This is what you wanted, isn't it? You honestly didn't think your wish would be granted without consequences did you? Did I not warn you that you had brought upon yourself the consequences of illegally extended life? If you want to live, your wife has to die. *(Pauses as Jack hesitates on the decision)* I honestly thought you were different from the others, Jack. But in the end, you proved no better than the other selfish humans. *(Shakes his head)* You let yourself down, you let me down, and most importantly you let your wife down. *(Shakes his head once more)* Pathetic. Now move over, Jack. I have an appointment I can't afford to miss. *(Takes a seat next to Alice)*

Jack

*(Hangs his head shamefully, and then smiles as if he thought of something)* What happens if you miss Alice's appointment?

Mr. Creeper

*(Suspicious)* Why?

Jack

*(Inconspicuously)* No reason, I'm just curious.

Mr. Creeper

*(Looks at Jack seriously)* Bad things. If I am not there to extract the soul from the body at the time of death, the soul can't leave, causing the body to continue living. If I am late to an appointment, I am forced to take another's life for the sake of the Fabric of Time. Last time I was forced to take the life of a young boy named Alexander Nightstar. He was a good person but I accidently sent him to Hell, instead of Heaven. Man, Death was really pissed off that I did that. But hey, I was an intern!

Jack

So you're saying that if you're late, my wife gets to live?

Mr. Creeper

Yes, but there is no way I'm late for this one. *(Checks his watch)* She's going in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 . . . *(The heart monitor flat lines and Alice shakes before lying still)* Now to extract the soul . . . *(Reaches for Alice, but is thrown back by Jack)* What the Hell, Jack!?

Jack

*(Raise his arms as if to shield Alice)* I won't let you take her, Creeper.

Mr. Creeper

What are going to do? Are going to stab me? Shoot me? Run me over with a car? Burn me with cigarette butts? *(Moves closer)* In case, you haven't noticed, I'm already dead, Jack. Now, move before I get pissed.

Jack

*(Hesitates before pushing Creeper)* I'm not moving, Creeper.

Mr. Creeper



Damn it Jack, I warned you! *(Raises his hand to strike, but before he can, a clock strikes midnight, just as the monitor beeps with life. Alice's chest rises and falls slowly)* You made me miss my appointment, Jack. Now the Fabric of Time is going to do a serious backlash.

Jack

Unless, of course, you take someone else's life. Someone who was already supposed to die . . .

Mr. Creeper

*(Looks at Jack)* Are you willing to go, Jack?

Jack

*(Sighs)* I am now.

Mr. Creeper

*(Stands up and is face-to-face with Jack)* Good. *(Looks at his watch then at Jack)* Mr. Jack Evergreen, beloved husband, reliable friend, and Cheater of Death, your time has come.

Jack

*(Pauses and looks around the room as if taking in one last picture)* I acknowledge the fact, and am ready to go. But before I go, I was wondering... Can I make that deal you made?

Mr. Creeper

*(Looks at him disbelievingly)* Sure. *(Extends his hand to shake Jack's. Lights flicker off, and when they come on, Jack is lying on the floor dead)* Good-bye, Jack. I'll be seeing you soon. *(Walks away humming a funeral dirge, while swinging his watch back and forth)*

## Scene 5

Characters: Mr. Creeper, an agent of Death. Virginia Hunter, a dying woman.

At Rise: Mr. Creeper is watching Virginia right as the clock strikes midnight.

Mr. Creeper

*(Checks his watch as Virginia shutters before lying still)* Miss Virginia Hunter, beloved wife, devoted mother, and cherished author, your time has come.

Virginia

*(Opens her eyes)* What? *(Gets out of bed)* I can't be dead! Please, you have to give me more time!

Mr. Creeper

*(Sits back down, grinning)* Let me tell you a story. I call it The Tale of Jack. I think you need to hear it before I grant you your wish.

Virginia

*(Annoyed)* Listen, can you give me more time or not? I don't want to bother with your useless stories.

Mr. Creeper

*(Looks at her annoyed)* Fine then. *(Raises his hand to snap his fingers, and then grins at her slyly)* I hope you're happy, Virginia. *(Snaps his fingers three times and the stage goes black)*