

The last man on Earth

(Jack Beat part 2)

When the devil gives you lemons...

Jack Beat found himself pulled back from Hell, gasping for breath as reality snapped back around him.

Having had the actual devil promise him his own personal hell, Jack had no notion of what was in store for him. His world turned out to be an absurd bedlam. At first, his life spiraled into a seemingly never-ending chain of misfortune. He was fired from his job, his investments tanked, he lost his apartment, and his wife left him.

Yet, amidst the surreal chaos, an unsettling realization began to dawn on Jack. The devil's promise of a personal hell wasn't confined to mere inconveniences; it was a masterstroke of malevolence that eclipsed the terror of even his worst nightmares.

As Jack traversed the streets, he noticed a profound absence—the sudden and inexplicable disappearance of people. Vanishing without a trace, they left behind empty spaces where vibrant lives once existed. Panic and desolation gripped the remnants of humanity.

Was this the Rapture, he wondered, and had he been deemed unworthy of ascension? The once-unbelievable notion now taunted him, as he grappled with the unbearable weight of being left behind in a desolate world. No, it wasn't the rapture he realized; it was something much more sinister!

After a mere week, Jack Beat fell asleep in a city with raging and rioting in the streets, to wake up to a world where silence echoed louder than the busy streets had just hours ago. There were no crowded subways, no busy intersections—just an eerie quiet that stretched as far as the horizon. In the span of the night, Jack had become the last human on Earth.

In the eerie quiet that followed, Jack roamed through deserted cities, a solitary figure wandering the remnants of a world now devoid of its beating heart. He was the last human left on Earth—a fact that twisted the knife of emptiness into the deepest recesses of his psyche.

Notwithstanding, he soon found a strange solace, a sense of empowerment born from the realization that even in the face of diabolical designs, the human spirit endured, resilient and unbroken.

He started to revel in the newfound freedom. He raided the finest restaurants, drove sports cars down deserted highways, and explored forbidden places with a curiosity and eagerness that had he hadn't felt for years. The world was his playground, and he was the one and only player.

Days turned into weeks, and the solitude that had once felt liberating began to weigh on him like an unspoken burden. The novelty of frivolous freedom started to wane, replaced

by an unsettling loneliness that seeped into the very marrow of his bones.

But desperation fueled innovation. Jack, armed with the infinite resources of an abandoned world, taught himself the art of genetic engineering. Late nights were spent in University laboratories, poring over textbooks, and experimenting with the delicate details of DNA.

In his seclusion, he mastered the art of cloning. The sterile rooms of his newfound labs echoed with the rhythmic hum of genetic manipulation as he crafted his own companions from strands of his hair.

Soon, there stood by his side another Jack, an exact replica—right down to the freckles around the nose and the slight crook in his smile. Two Jacks embarked on a profusion of adventures, laughter echoed through empty skyscrapers and desolate streets.

Yet, as the days and weeks drifted by, the two Jacks found themselves staring into the same abyss of isolation. It was a paradoxical loneliness—the kind that only a clone could truly understand. The laughter became hollow, the adventures monotonous.

Undeterred, Jack the First delved deeper into his genetic repertoire. He refined his techniques, honed his skills, and soon, a whole deck of Jacks populated his self-made utopia. The once barren streets teemed with life, as identical faces frolicked in their shared existence.

This Jack Society, as it came to be known, crafted a civilization of identical minds, a collective consciousness that mirrored the desires and quirks of its creator. They played sports, formed orchestras, and built structures that defied the lonely vastness of their world.

Yet, once again, the monotony of their shared existence crept in. The Jacks, now numbering in the thousands, found themselves yearning for diversity, for something beyond the mirrored reflections of their own personalities.

With renewed determination, Jack the First, in a twist of irony, expanded his genetic repertoire once more. He introduced variations, allowed for the emergence of individuality—his *magnus opus* being the technique he used to replace a Y chromosome with an X one. He observed the once homogenous society being transformed into a kaleidoscope of unique personalities.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting long shadows over the bustling New Jack Society, a harmonious racket of laughter, conversations, and the rustle of existence filled the air. Jack the First, surrounded by the vibrant mosaic of his creation, marveled at the unpredictable symphony of life that had emerged from the solitude of an abandoned world.

In the end, the loneliness that had once gripped him was replaced by the hum of a society that embraced both the shared and the diverse, a testament to the ingenuity of a man who, in his quest to escape solitude, inadvertently birthed a world that echoed with the uniqueness of a thousand lives.

Years unraveled like the threads of time, yet Jack the First remained untouched by the relentless grasp of age. An enigma in the river of temporal currents, he discovered a peculiar truth—he was immune to the march of time. Not just that, for fate had woven an even stranger tapestry: death eluded him like a phantom slipping through the shadows.

In the solitude of unending days, he reflected on the paradox of immortality. A life without end, he discovered, was not the gift he once perceived—the very thing he once yearned for had become the instrument of his torment.

As he pondered, Jack Beat finally realized the true meaning of living in your own personal hell.



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