

**JACK,
THE BRAVE
FEARBUSTER**





Jack lay very still and very quiet in his bed. It was a dark night. The moon was just a tiny slither in the sky and Jack's room was full of shadows. This was just the sort of night that Master Fear would show up.

Sure enough, before long, Jack saw something nasty crouching on the end of his bed. It was Master Fear. Now, Master Fear was really a rather ugly fellow. If the lights were on full and you had the company of a few friends, you wouldn't be afraid of Master Fear at all. You would think him rather silly, and quite ridiculous in his dark cape and with his mean pulling of faces, not to mention the awful pong that hangs over him - like rotten eggs and cooked cabbage. Yeugh!!

But, in the dark with no friends to joke with, it was a different matter. Jack began to shiver. "Go away," he mumbled. Master Fear chuckled. He liked it when children were afraid of him. "Please," Jack begged weakly, "leave me alone." Master Fear laughed even harder. Jack's heart began to beat very fast, till he found it hard to breath - so hard that he couldn't even tell Master Fear to go away anymore. So Master Fear stayed put. He crouched on the end of Jack's bed for a very long time, and all the while Jack lay still, eyes wide open, heart pounding.

In the morning Jack was so tired that when his alarm sounded BRRRRRINGG!!!!!!!, he slept right through it. "Jack, you'll be late for school again!" shouted his Mum. Jack's Mum was very cross as she rushed him out of the house. She shoved a slice of cold toast into his hands to eat in the car before driving him and his big sister, Jenny, to school. "Now, I'll be late for work too," Mum grumbled as she dropped them off at the school gates.

Jack was exhausted all morning at school. He completely forgot about Master Fear as he quietly dozed through most of his lessons. At lunchtime, Jack didn't feel like playing football with his friends, so he took his sandwiches into an empty classroom and do you know what? There was Master Fear, in broad daylight - pulling silly faces and chanting rudely. "Jack's got no friends!" he sang with glee. "Nobody likes Jack! Everybody laughs at him behind his back! Ha! Ha! Ha!" cried Master Fear and he danced around until the bell went. It was not a good day for Jack.

BRRRRRINGG!!!



That afternoon, Jack was so sure that none of his friends liked him; he refused to join in any of the lessons. "Come on, Jack, " said his teacher, Miss Blane. "You usually love painting. You can help to paint the sky on our giant picture of the planet." But, instead of helping, Jack picked up the tin of paint and tipped it all over the paper. Everyone gasped! The painting was ruined.

Miss Blane sent Jack to the headteacher with a note. "Oh, dear," sighed Jack's headteacher. "This is the third time you have been sent to me with a note this week. I shall have to inform your parents."

"You mean 'PARENT'!" yelled Jack. He was very cross. Jack's Dad had got very sick last year, so sick that he didn't get better. And now it was just him, Jenny and his Mum - only one parent. He glared at his headteacher and then did quite the silliest thing he had done in a long time. He ran out of the headteacher's office, out of the school gates, down the road, across another road, along the lane, through his back garden gate and straight into his garden shed. And, can you guess who was waiting for him there? That's right, Master Fear.



Master Fear looked even bigger than usual. He was perched insolently on the lawn mower. Jack's Dad's lawnmower. It hadn't been used all summer and was beginning to look a bit rusty. Suddenly, Master Fear spoke. "I make bad things happen," sniggered Master Fear. Jack shivered. "And, I'll make bad things happen to YOU again." Jack buried his face in his hands. Maybe, if he couldn't see Master Fear, he would go away. But the voice just carried on, louder than ever in his head, "Bad things," it snarled over and over.

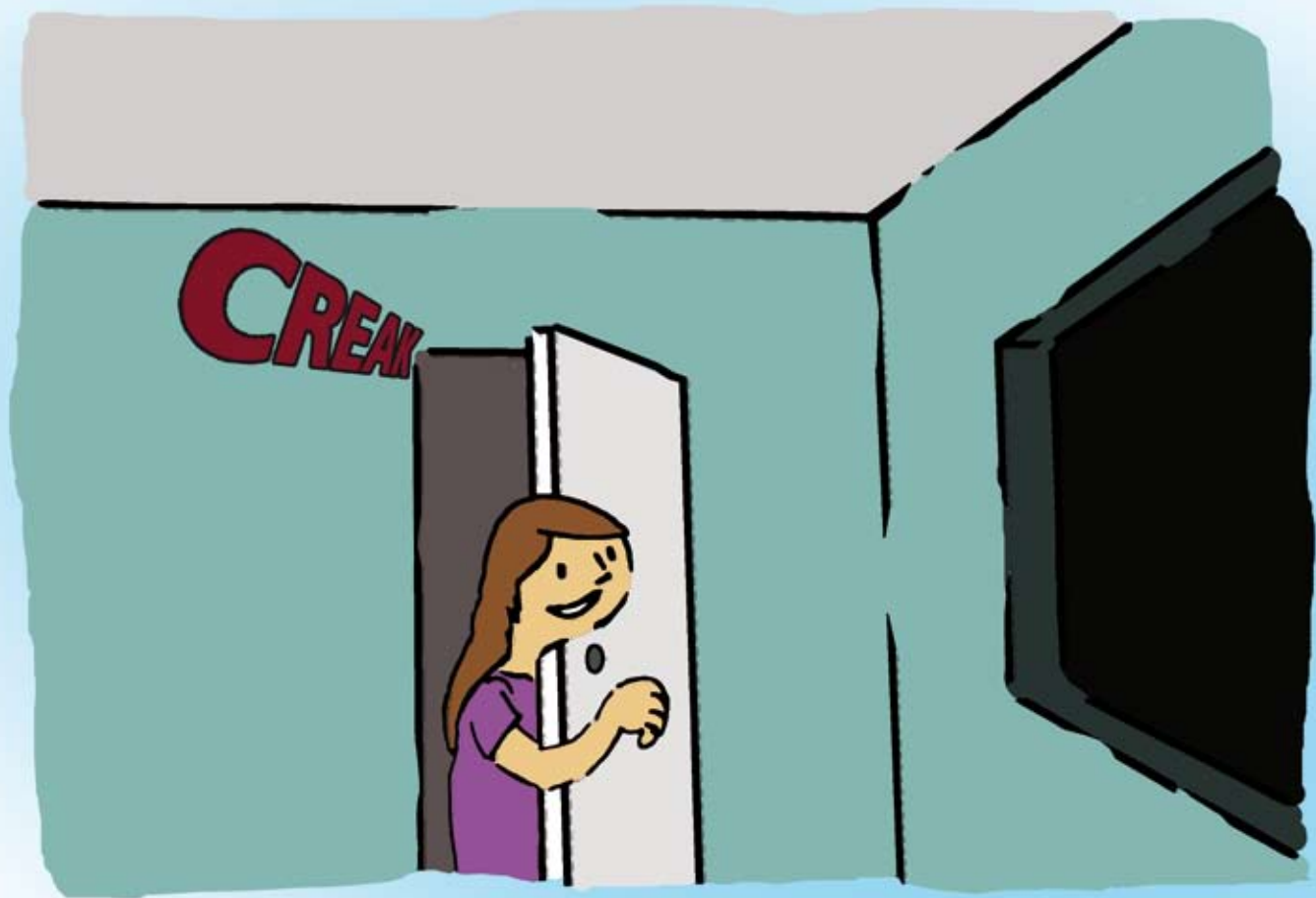
It was nearly bedtime when Jack felt himself being shaken awake. His sister, Jenny, was standing over him. "Jack, we've been searching for you everywhere. Mum's really upset. She thought you were lost forever. Better come inside, quick." Jack's Mum was so relieved to see him that she gave him a big tight hug, like she would never let him go. "What's wrong, Jack?" she asked as she stroked his hair. "Are you being bullied at school?" Jack shook his head. How could he tell her about Master Fear - the nastiest bully of them all?



It was very late when Jack's Mum sent him to bed. But Jack didn't want to go to bed. Bed was where Master Fear would come. Besides, after his nap in the shed, he didn't feel tired anymore. So Jack lay on his bed, very wide-awake and waited. Before long, he heard his door creak in the dark. That's odd, he thought, Master Fear doesn't usually use the door.

CREAK....

"Jack," whispered a voice. That's odd, thought Jack, Master Fear doesn't usually whisper. Jack sat up. "It's me, Jenny. I thought I could hear you crying." Jenny's friendly face peeked around the door. "I wasn't crying," said Jack quickly, but even as he spoke he could feel that his face was wet with tears.



Jenny came into the room and sat on the end of Jack's bed - not far from where Master Fear usually perched, but that rascal was nowhere to be seen now. "You look like you're waiting for someone," she said.

"If I told you, you wouldn't believe me," said Jack quietly.

"Try me," said Jenny as she snuggled under the duvet, rubbing her cold feet against Jack's warm legs.

"Well, there's this horrible creature, and I call him Master Fear, and he's huge and ugly and he knows where I am all the time and he always gets me and I'll never escape and he will always be there. Forever." Jack gasped. He had never told anyone about Master Fear before because he didn't think anyone would believe him.

“Oh, him!” said Jenny knowingly. “I know that old rascal. Does he call you names and tell you that no one likes you?”

“Yes, yes he does,” said Jack, “and he says that more bad things will happen to me.”

“Well, he’s lying,” said Jenny. “Master Fear doesn’t know what will happen any more than you or I do. But he wants you to be afraid of what might happen. And he’s lying about something else too. He won’t be around forever, because I know a secret.”

Jenny leaned close to Jack and whispered. “I know how to make him go away...”

Jenny smiled and her smile made Jack feel warm inside.

"I have a bag of tricks," she said, "and whenever I think I catch a glimpse of Master Fear or a whiff of his horrible stench, I reach into my bag and pull out a trick."

"Wow!" said Jack, amazed.

"Would you like me to tell you what some of my tricks are?" asked Jenny. Jack nodded enthusiastically. "Well, my favourite is to think of a happy memory, like when Dad took me fishing and we caught nothing but a boot. Or, I take out my paints and make a picture of my most special place - that beach where we saw a starfish. Remember?" Jack nodded. "Or, I pick up the cat and bury my nose in her fur. Sometimes, I ask Mum if she'll let me bake a cake with her because that seems to cheer her up too."

"But what about at night, you know, when there's nothing to do and no one around?" asked Jack miserably.



“Oh, that’s easy,” said Jenny. “ I creep out of bed and sneak past Master Fear. I have to be very brave because he’s watching me all the time. Then I come into your room.”

“You what?” Jack was shocked.

“I sit close beside you and watch you while you sleep. You look so sweet and peaceful. Sometimes, I smell your hair and it reminds me of the leaves and grass in the garden. I don’t know why, but it makes me feel a lot better. And it always works. Master Fear is never in my room when I go back.”

“Do you think that would work for me?” asked Jack, hardly daring to hope.

Jenny opened out her arms. “Here’s a magic bag. What are you going to fill it up with?” At first, Jack couldn’t think of anything, but soon he remembered all sorts of things that made him feel good; jumping in puddles, sausage and mash, playing football, and lots of other stuff that he hadn’t done in a long time.

Jenny yawned. "It's late, Jack. I'd best get back to my bed now." But, when Jenny bent over Jack, she could see that he was already fast asleep and dreaming of his magic bag of tricks.

The next day, Jack's Mum took him to school. This time she walked him all the way through the gates, down the hallway and straight into the headteacher's office where she made sure that Jack said he was very, very sorry for throwing a tin of paint and running away. And, to Jack's surprise, the headteacher said he was sorry too! "I've been meaning to say for some time... I'm very, very sorry, Jack, that you and your family don't have Dad with you anymore. I think that you are a very brave and strong boy. And, the next time you feel frightened or sad in school you can come and raid my office." The headteacher winked at Jack. "Do you like cherry bakewell tarts? They always make me feel better. I've got loads in my cupboard. Help yourself, any time," he said pointing to his cupboard and winking again.

After a few cherry bakewells, Jack was sent back to his class and, on the way, he thought he caught a glimpse of Master Fear hiding round a corner - waiting to trip him up, no doubt. Jack could feel his heart beating faster, but then remembered he knew a trick or two - in fact, he knew a whole bag of tricks. Quickly, he pulled out of his bag a trick he used to play on his big sister. "BOOOOOO!" he yelled, just as he rounded the corner. Master Fear wasn't used to Jack giving HIM a fright. With a shocked gasp, he disappeared in a puff of green smoke. And that was the last Jack saw of him for a few weeks. But when he came back - and Master Fear does have a nasty habit of coming back - Jack knew what to do.

"BOOOOOOOOOO!"

THE END



For carers and children; some questions for you to chat about together:

- What sort of things does Master Fear do to Jack to frighten him?
 - Why do you think Jack tipped the paint over the picture?
 - Something very sad happened to Jack and his family last year - what happened?
 - Master Fear scares Jack by saying more bad things will happen to him. What bad things might Jack imagine will happen?
 - What does Jenny keep in her bag of tricks?
 - What does the headteacher have in his bag of tricks?
 - Do you think anyone else in the story needs a bag of tricks?
 - I wonder... what would you put in your bag of tricks?
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