

The Annotated Jack

Length: 38.48

SYNOPSIS:

This radio feature marries two "Jacks": one mythical and one real.

In Newfoundland, "Jack Tales" are traditional folktales passed down by word of mouth through the generations as entertaining parables of life. The mythical Jack is the youngest of three brothers who sets off to find his fortune. On the way, he slays giants, outwits witches, befriends every creature he meets, carries out magical feats by applying simple common sense and an innate naiveté, finds his Fortune and marries The Princess to ultimately live happily ever after.

The other Jack in this documentary is not mythical at all, but a very real retired fisherman living by the harbour in St. John's city: Jack Wells. This Jack and his friends spend each day together sharing memories and telling stories in his twinstore - a fisherman's shed crammed with old nets and fishing gear. Telling stories "makes the time go quicker" they say, remembering their own impossible tasks and incredible adventures.

The stories told in Jack's twinstore are tales of fish, of falling overboard, of coiling more rope or splitting more fish than anyone, of days when the wind came up suddenly, of when the motor froze or the cod were scarce, tales of doing battle with the giants of weather and outwitting the witches of officialdom, and always in the end winning the Princess of Fish in the Kingdom of Memory. Adventures no more or less unlikely than those of the other told-about Jack who eventually finds his fortune, too.

The documentary weaves together the real and the mythical Jack, and considers the role that stories play in accompanying us through life and into retirement. Overall, our intention was to celebrate how senior citizens integrated within a community (instead of warehoused in seniors' complexes) enjoy a quality of life. In the end, as the story goes: "if they don't live happily ever after, then may all of ye"

SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS:

The feature was originally commissioned at 42 minutes for Irish broadcast by RTE Dublin in late 2009. However, three months after the Irish broadcast, the twinstore featured in the program was seriously damaged by a storm in February 2010, and neighbours mounted an emergency fund drive for repairs. (http://web.me.com/coastalcottageseast/Save_Jacks_Twine_Store/Outer_Battery.html)

CBC Nfld & Labrador responded to the disaster by broadcasting re-edited (38 & 15-minute serial) versions of the feature on its regional afternoon show ON THE GO and in its Saturday Performance slot, drawing attention to the fund drive. Listener response was very positive and the program even reached the floor of the provincial legislature (<http://www.assembly.nl.ca/business/hansard/ga46session3/10-03-25.htm>).

After an excerpt of the documentary later aired nationally on CBC, donations arrived from across the

country. The neighbourhood fund drive successfully raised over \$6000 for repairs.

Jack Wells and his fishing stage reappeared in the news in July 2010, when a protest by neighbourhood residents stopped City demolition crews from demolishing the wharf connected with the structure. The issue garnered national press, radio, and television coverage

(<http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/article/841531--women-win-battle-but-st-john-s-wharf-war-continues>)

Resisting continued City pressure to vacate the premises and demolish his wharf, Jack Wells' and his two buddies still spend every weekday swapping yarns in his twinestore. The media exposure has so far deterred the City from following through with legal action.

Voices:

Mary Fearon
Jack Wells
Ches Sweetapple
Mike Walsh
Charlie Riall
Chris Brookes (*narrator*)

Music:

The Dardanelles
Graham Wells
Daniel Payne
Christina Smith

Production:

Written & recorded by Chris Brookes
RTE version produced at Battery Radio, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada (*with studios across the road from Mr. Wells' fishing premises*) September 2009.
CBC Radio version produced by Battery Radio March 2010.

VOICE: Once upon a Time...

MUSIC: *guitar – Meech Lake Breakdown (Daniel Payne)*

MARY FEARON: Once upon a Time, not in my time or in your time, but in a time long before, there were three brothers: Tom, Bill, and Jack.

VOICES: Jack and Alec and Otto...
Jack and his brothers...
Jack was the skipper...
The three brothers, when they fished there, they were great fishermen....
Jack was a fisherman...

SOUND: *seagulls.*

BROOKES: Half past seven in the morning. Smell of wood smoke wafting through the bedroom window.

VOICE: Once upon a time...

BROOKES: Look out. A crab boat steaming through the narrows into St. John's Harbour. Seven ducks paddling out from the near shore. Soft purr of noises from the other end of the harbor: the city, waking. Seagulls preening on the roof of the small shed by the wharf -- the one with the sign announcing it as "Jack Wells's twine store", which confuses the tourists on the walking trail. They think it's a shop, instead of the place where a retired fisherman once stored his nets. The gulls have a nest there, close by the chimney. Three fluffy chicks noisily demanding breakfast. Beside them, a cough of smoke: the stove, clearing its throat before telling today's story to the chimney. Jack's smoke is up. I turn to my wife: "Jack's smoke is up" I say. All is well with the world. My neighbor has walked down the road to his twine store kingdom. The day may begin.

SOUND: *door opening, clatter.*

JACK: Ooof! Not a bad sort of morning!

BROOKES: Of course, this is the romantic view. You could just as well describe it as another ordinary day in an insignificant neighborhood in an insignificant small city on an insignificant island off the east coast of Canada, an insignificant nation. Just another turn of Time's screw, and the man lighting the fire with yesterday's newspapers and scrap splits just a nondescript 76-year-old human being, with just a few stories and a few bottles of beer to get him through the day. Nothing special. You could see it that way.

MARY: Once there was a fellow, and his name was Jack...

SOUND: *water running into saucepan.*

JACK: Well, I promised the boys that I'd cook a bit of dinner for them today. So I don't want to disappoint them. So that's what I'm doing this morning now, I've got the mincemeat in the oven, and now I'm getting the potatoes ready. So by the time they come around at 12 o'clock, I'll have it all cooked for them. Something to do to pass away the time, that's all. I like cooking.

SOUND: *cutting up carrots*

JACK: I was going to go and saw up some wood, but I think it's too hot today. No, I think today I'm going to take it easy. Have a beer, you know...

BROOKES: For a change.

JACK: For a change, yeah. *[Laughs]* Yeah, I like a drop of beer, boy. One day last week I had chunky chips, homemade chips, and a roast of pork on. It was only me and Mike and Charlie. Sat down, we cleaned off all of that. Mike loves pork, he said "that was a great bit of pork, Jack!" I said, it

wasn't the pork, boy. It was the fellow who cooked it! *[Laughs]*

SOUND: *pub atmosphere, voices*

HOST: Good evening everyone, and welcome to the Crow's Nest for our monthly meeting of the Storytelling Circle. Who is here for the first time?...

MARY: The Storytelling Circle is a group that meets once a month, and we come together and we're in an old pub in St. John's. I tell all kinds of folk tales, but my favorite stories to tell our traditional Newfoundland Jack stories. And my name is Mary Fearon.

Mary (*on stage*): This is about Jack and a game of cards. It's called the Head Card Player of the World. So... Once upon a time, not in my time or your time of course, but in a time long before...

MARY: The first Jack Story I ever heard was when I was in Placentia Bay visiting my uncle, who was a fisherman in Paradise Sound. And I heard the men telling stories of Jack. I mean, that was 1971 when I went to Paradise Sound. There was no power in the place I went to visit. You couldn't just flip on your lights or turn on the television. You couldn't even read a book because it would be too dark to read by the candlelight. So sitting around telling stories was the thing to do. So I guess that's why, I guess for me, these stories weren't ever told to be written down. They were just told to be what they were. So the stories are as old as -- certainly -- Newfoundland, and beyond that, back to the old traditional tales of England and Ireland. And of course, the stories of Jack in Newfoundland, he might be building a boat, he might be facing a giant, he might be facing a mermaid. And he comes across fairy folks and all kinds of characters on his journey. He always comes out on top.

MUSIC: *accordion – Rakish Paddy Set (The Dardanelles)*

MARY: Once upon a time, there were three brothers: Tom, Bill, and Jack. And Jack loved nothing more than to have a game of cards. Now, one day the Head Cardplayer of the World just happened to be passing through the town where Jack lived. And Jack found himself sitting at the table with the Head Cardplayer of the World. And so the first game came up, and Jack bid a thousand dollars. And he won. The Head Cardplayer of the World looked at Jack, and he said "I'll tell you what, Jack. Double or nothing." Jack said okay. And Jack played again, and he won. Now, the Head Cardplayer of the World looked at Jack, and he said "Tell you what, Jack. I'll play all of my money and all of my land against your life." Jack was feeling rather lucky, so he agreed. Well, they played that hand of cards, and Jack lost.

Now, the Head Cardplayer of the World stood up over Jack, and he said "Now, Jack!" He said, "I'm going to give you a year and a day to find me, and if you can find me -- well, Jack, I *might* spare your life." And with that, the Head Cardplayer of the World disappeared. And Jack thought to himself "What am I going to do now?"

SOUND: *washing potatoes.*

JACK: There don't be much clay on the potatoes now. I think they be washed now... good enough.

MARY: A Jack tale -- to me -- is a story of any Newfoundlander, in my mind. His character is someone who can face anything, no matter what the challenges.

JACK: *[in background]* Well, that's that part of it, anyway.

MARY: He can outwit the Devil. He can face the seas, and ward off any evils that might be facing him.

JACK: *[in background]* now, sir!

MARY: He is one of these people that's really open to the world, and whatever comes his way it doesn't slow him down one bit. He's big hearted.

JACK: Well, I'm a happy fellow, boy. I had a good life, boy.

MUSIC: *accordion – Charlie Hutchings Tune (Daniel Payne)*

MARY: In traditional Newfoundland stories of Jack, he had two brothers, Tom and Bill.

JACK: Two brothers, Alec and Ott. I fished with them 30 years.

MARY: Once upon a time...

JACK: Well, when we were at it, first when we were at it, myself and the brothers, we used to salt a lot of fish. We had 450 quintals down here one year. Besides what we sold fresh. But you got no money for it, see?

MARY: Two brothers, Tom and Bill. Jack was the youngest of course.

JACK: I was the youngest, anyway, the smallest.

MARY: Now, Tom and Bill were the oldest, and Jack was the youngest, and poor old Jack -- he was always getting put to the dirty work.

JACK: And then boy, in the spring of the year when you'd get the pickled fish, pickled in the big, big rum puncheons, it was. Big puncheons, boy,...

MARY: So Jack would have to clean out the fish puncheons. So they would pick Jack up and they would drop them down into the puncheon with a scrub brush and a bucket of water. And they'd leave him down there until it was all cleaned out.

JACK: When they'd get the fish out of that then, they'd put me down in the puncheon. Heave in so much water, and give me a scrubbing brush. And I'd scrub out the puncheons for them....

MARY: ... and then they'd just turn the puncheon up...

JACK: ... then they tipped down the puncheon, and I'd walk out. *[Laughs]* Water and all would come out, me and the water and all. Come out...

MARY: ...and Jack would slide out onto the grass, with the dirty old fish water coming behind him. But Jack never minded that, because he was just one of those souls that got along with everybody.

JACK: That don't bother me. I didn't mind, boy. Go on and do your work, that was it. I done what I wanted to do!

MUSIC: *[ends]*

MARY: Often the two brothers, Tom and Bill, will lead Jack on his journeys. They'll start off on a journey, but fail to come back with whatever they've gone out to seek: their fortune. They can't quite seem to get it together because they are too selfish. Whereas Jack goes off into the world and is an open heart ed soul, so good luck and happiness come to him.

MUSIC: *accordion – Rakish Paddy Set (Dardanelles)*

MARY: Now, when it came to the time when these boys were ready to set out into the world, Tom and Bill – who were hard-working fellows -- set off. They said to her mother "Roast me some hens, and bake me some buns, for tomorrow were going off into the world to seek our fortune." So the mother gladly got up, and roasted some beautiful hens and baked some nice buns, and sent them off on their way.

JACK: Oh, Alec and Ott were always... When they grew up, Dad built two motorboats that was in the old stage that was down there. He built one for Alec and Ott, one for himself. And Alec and Ott went

together. Oh, Alec and Ott, two of them were fishing a long while before I went with them.

MARY: Now, Jack looked around and he thought to himself "Sure, maybe I'm ready to go off into the world to seek my fortune." So he got up the next day and he said "Mother, roast me a hen and bake me a bun, for I'm going off to seek my fortune." And she said, "I'm not roasting any hens or baking any buns for you, you old beggar boy. You're not getting nothing. You just stay where you're to." Jack said "No, I'm going off into the world and seeking my fortune." So he packed up his bags, took a few old scraps of bread, and went on his way.

JACK: Golly, I suppose when I went with them, I started at 14 when I went out in the boat with them. But we only had one skipper, and that was Ally. Well, he was the oldest, Alec was the oldest, and Alec, boy, was good. If we went out in the morning, and the wind was down Southwest, he'd say "Now, 'tis up to ye, but I'd say every boat out of St. John's is going to be over to the Cape today or up the shore. They're not going down with the Southwest or southerly wind down to Torbay ground." We'd say "No, they're not." Go on down and run the wind, will have a punch coming home, we'll take it on the chin. Come back with a great catch of fish, boy! But we used to take lots of water over us coming home. Guarantee you that. But we didn't mind that. Alec and Ott, oh I fished for 30 years with them. Yes, we never stopped!

MUSIC: *[ends]*

MARY: Now Jack walked, and he walked and he walked. And I don't know where he went or what he did, but he was almost at the end of his year and a day, and he found himself standing at the edge of the woods. And he was thinking "What's going to become of me?" he said. And he looked out, and all of a sudden he saw a little light out in the distance. And Jack started to make his way towards that light. And as he got closer he realized that it was the light of the house. So he went up and he banged on the door. And who should answer but the Head Cardplayer of the World! "Good evening to you, Jack" he said. "I was just thinking about coming and finding you" he said. "You're a lucky soul to find me before your time was up. Now come in Jack, and have some supper." So Jack went in and had some supper.

And when he was finished his supper, the man said "Now Jack, I got a couple of jobs for you, and if you can do them well, we'll see about you.. So Jack said "Fine". And the next day Jack got up, and the man took Jack out into a barn. And the barn was 7 miles wide, and 7 miles long. It hadn't been cleaned out in 100 years. And he said to Jack "My wife lost her ring about 100 years ago in here, and I want you to find it for me today. Now I'm going off, and when I gets back if you don't have the ring, well that'll be it for you, Jack." "Well" Jack said, "okay".

JACK: I went in to Standard Manufacturing one spring. They said "Jack, there's a months work in to Standard." I had a month in there. I couldn't work the way they work in there. First thing they done, they had me putting handles on gallon cans. That's supposed to do you for hours. Geez, I'd have them done, and then they'd give me a broom and I'd sweep the floor then. Very good. I had the months work, boy, I give 'em up. Foreman come and he said "Jack, I'm going upstairs now. I'm going up" he said, "and get you a steady job." So I said "Don't you waste your time." He said "Why?" I said "You're not getting me to stay indoors working. I'm going on the water, I'm going fishing." I said "Give Jimmy the job." And the young fellow that was there, he got the job. I didn't want... indoors! I'd never be able to do it. So I went out and went fishing then. I was fishing ever since. And in '96 I gave it up. I mean, I went where I wanted to go: on the water. No, I got no regrets about going fishing, boy."

MUSIC: *mandolin: Craigie Hills (Dardanelles)*

MARY: And the Head Cardplayer of the World came home. He said "Did you find my ring, Jack?" "Yes" said Jack, "I did. Here is your ring!" So the Head Cardplayer of the World took the ring and said to Jack that he was a clever fellow. "Yes" said Jack, "I am." He said "Now, come in and have your supper, Jack, because I've got another job for you tomorrow."

SOUND: *[in the twine store, rattling about the stove]*

JACK: Ooooh! They burned dry on me....

SOUND: *[pouring water, putting the lid back on the saucepan]*

JACK: Well, the boys will be around by and by now. We'll have a chat, and tell a few jokes and tell a few lies I suppose, and everything else. It all goes together anyway.

BROOKES: Yes, what do you talk about, all of ye?

JACK: Oh, some of it is what ever they brings up. Well, when they were growing up, old times, you know. Charlie will talk about when he was up on the Lakes, fishing. Then we'll bring up something then and he can't remember it, and probably I'll remember and I'll tell him. They're losing their memory anyway *[laughs]* Charlie can't walk much -- you knows that. Mike picks him up and brings him down over that hill everyday. Takes him back in the evening. So they get along good together, boy. Then Ches comes over. And Ches and Mike! Oh they're good. Two of them gets into an argument. Mike be saying something, and Ches will butt in. Mike will say "Ches, shut up! 50 years talking to meself! *[Laughs]* That's the way Mike takes criticism, eh? I get a great kick out of them. Yes. I don't mind them coming around, boy. I loves them coming around.

CHES: I'm Ches Sweetapple. I live just up the road two houses. I've went in a lot of mornings a little after eight o'clock, he doesn't... he is a little hard of hearing, so I'll walk in. He's over and he's got his breakfast set up on the table over there, and he could have anything. He could have salt fish, he could have moose sausages cooked... He has his breakfast, every morning he comes down over the hill. And then he'll cook something for Mike and his brother-in-law Charlie. They'll have something to eat there, lunchtime. All day he'll just sit in there, and he'll have a beer and usually we have a friendly argument with Mike Walsh, a lot of ribbing going on.

MIKE: I'm Mike Walsh. And I comes down to Jack now because of my age. I have nothing to do, and I'm trying to keep a little bit in the mind especially. Physically, the body is not that good! *[Laughs]* But I still like to come down. Well, I'm half and half. I jokes with the boys, right? If we're talking about religion or something. I'll say "I'm not prejudiced because I'm half-and-half. I'm a Protestant and Catholic." And the boys say "Roman Catholic." I say "No, just Catholic. It's good enough for me *[laughs]*" Yeah, that's true too. Because Mom is salvation, and I'm a Catholic, right?

CHARLIE: I'm Charlie Riall *[coughs]* and my wife finds a big difference in me now since I'm going down there. Because I was here in the house trying to do stuff, and doing stuff I'm not supposed to be doing, lifting this or that or the other thing, right? Then she'd come home, and she'd say "Why don't you go down with Jack and them for a while?" *[Coughs]* Because it's hard on their nerves, Chris! Even you, if you're stuck around the house all the time, do you think the wife is going to put up with you? Right? You'd have bumps on your head too, guaranteed! So I started going down there, and now... well, it helps me relax. And bug people.

BROOKES: And what?

CHARLIE: Bug 'em. Like, if I knew you better, I might be saying things to you that you knows it's not an insult. Like I'll say to Mike and Jack, I says to Mike sometimes "Mike, tell Jack to go *[he won't say the word]* himself. "Oh, I can't do that, I can't do that!" I say "Tell him!" I say "I will!" *[Laughs]* He'll tell you the same thing back! Because that's the way we are, right? Relaxed!

SOUND: *hammering*

JACK: What is he up to now?

CHARLIE: Watch your fingers! *[Laughs]*

MIKE: *[outside]* Hello!

CHES: Well, Charlie is Jack's brother in law, and Mike Walsh -- Mike is 82 or 83. 82 I think it is. Yeah Mike is the... what would you call him... not a handyman, but he likes to be busy. For his age.

MIKE: I say, work fascinates me. I can stand and watch it all day.

JACK: Now place us a tune on the saw! Play us a tune on the saw now, come on!

SOUND: *tapping on a handsaw.*

MIKE: This is...

JACK: I knows you can play a tune on them, you know. *[Makes noises with his mouth]*

MIKE: No, it's not the...

SOUND: *coiling sound from the saw*

JACK: Eeyuueep! Hear that!

SOUND: *trying again to make the saw musical, but mostly failing.*

MIKE: *[laughs]* Oh, everything comes up! Every day there is something comes up different, right? And I don't even know where it comes from! Get a few beers, you know -- I'll stop right there, right? *[Laughs]* I don't know what I'm going to say then, right?

JACK: Mike, you're a man of many trades, boy!

SOUND: *trying with the saw again*

MIKE: No, the ring is not going through, it haven't got the...

JACK: No, the ring is not going through, see...

MIKE: It's not good steel!

SOUND: *the saw sounds a tiny bit musical*

MIKE: It makes the day go faster. For me, it do. I think if we... Personally, I think if I came down here at 10 or 11 and we're there and we're not saying anything, the day is really long. Really long, boring, dead. So you got to get into something.

SOUND: *Jack and Charlie laughing*

MIKE: Ccould you catch a fly? A housefly. How to do it? If there is a housefly on the table there...

CHARLIE: I knows how to do...

MIKE: ...make sure his head is, the fly's... I know they're only small, now. Put your hand there...

CHARLIE: In front...

MIKE: ...okay, if it's that way... do like that. The fly runs into your hand. You gets it, but it also hits your hand.

CHARLIE: You got to put it down by the head of the fly.

MIKE: It makes sense.

CHARLIE: And a moth? A moth will fly around in your lightbulb? Call your hand up in the air, look, like that, look! Up by the bulb. They will land on your hand. If you're quick enough for them, you can catch 'em.

[pause]

JACK: These fellas make soup out of everything, see?

[General laughter]

JACK: You got to be quick!

MIKE: You got that too... Jesus...

CHARLIE: And like the old one, buddy said "Come down to the house" he said, "We've got some bull-bird soup!" So they all went down to the house, and the old woman was there cooking. Buddy was there, and he had a couple of bowls of soup and he said "Missus! Is this supposed to be bull-bird soup?" He said "I never seen ne'er bull-bird yet!" She said "My son" she said, "There was only two in the pot, and when I dipped up your bowl I think one of them dove!"

MUSIC: *accordion and mandolin: Solomon Bar (Dardanelles)*

MARY: And with that, there was the most beautiful boat Jack had ever seen standing before him. He said "This boat will take you anywhere you want to go, Jack! Just tell her to fly." And Jack was so pleased. So he hopped up in the boat, and the old man said to him "Now Jack" he said, "you're going to need a crew to take that boat where he wants her to go." "Yes" said Jack, "I will." So he said "You pick up the first four men you meet, and you'll be happy with them." Okay, says Jack. So Jack set off...

JACK: And I went with Frank on the boat, and I had a great time with Frank. The long liner. Now, meself and him had a few arguments over different things that I didn't like. Now not... just arguing, now. Different things that fellows done. We were down one time, we took rope down to Tobin's Point. Now, Frank is a very particular man. His rope has got to be coiled a certain size and tied on both sides like that, look [*he thumps the table*]. Two ends, right fair across from each other. But you could lift that and heave it anywhere, and it'll never tangle up or nothing. So we were down on Tobin's Point, and the boys were taking back the moorings. We had an extra one, coming home. And I used to cut all the fish -- I never, never picked no... I used to cut all the fish aboard. Will Dawe was with him, and I went over there and Will was there. I says "Will, God boy" I says, "You knows you're not doing that rope right" I said. "Skipper will go off the head, sure." "No odds" he said. I said "good enough. It's no odds to me" I said, "I'm cutting fish, I'm not coiling no rope."

And very good, we come in, we got in early in the morning. Not early, around 10 o'clock I suppose. So I was out on the deck trying to straighten up one of the moorings, they had it there in a tangle and I was trying to straighten it up. Boy, he come down from the wheelhouse. "Now" he said, "That's some way to coil rope!" "Oooh!" I said, "Don't go bawling at me!" I said "I didn't coil the rope, I was cutting fish." I said "I went over and told him about that rope, and Will said it was no odds. "Oh" he said, "it was no odds?" I said "yes". "Get every bit of it up on the wharf then, every bit of it, and straighten it down the wharf and coil it right and tie it up!" We got out of it at six o'clock in the evening, and we could gone home -- if we had done it right -- 10 o'clock in the morning. "No odds" he said. I said "yes." He wouldn't let nobody coil rope, only me.

We had pots out, we put out 10 miles of rope. And when we come to take those pots back, to come home, I coiled that 10 mile of rope. Every bit of it, on deck. And we only had to heave it onshore. Something on the arms, boy, I'll tell you that! I didn't mind it then, I was young anyway. Yup. A lot of work to it, boy. But you got to enjoy it. If you don't enjoy it, there's no sense being there.

MUSIC: [*ends*]

MIKE: Now this is my opinion on Jack, I don't know if I'm right or what I'm talking about really. Jack would be lost, he'd be a lost person if he never had that stage. If he couldn't come down here and talk to the boys. It's a different world! You know, that's Jack's Castle!

CHES: Yup. If he didn't have that shed, that twine store -- that's his life. Right today until he passes on, hopefully another 20 or 30 years if he can get it. But that's his life. It's Jack's store, and I call it a social club. A lot of people come in and look around and they see the gas range in there, and three refrigerators, and a lot of people think "This poor old gentleman. Is he living here alone?" People come in, and I make sure, I say "No, he doesn't live here. But he has his house up the road." So you have to straighten a lot of people "No-no, this is just a social club."

SOUND: *a big sneeze*

CHARLIE: Mike, you're getting Alzheimer's, Mike.

MIKE: Well, if it pleases you, I got it, yes. I'm not getting it.

MARY: Once upon a time...

CHARLIE: Jack! Remember the dog with the radar nose?

JACK: Yup.

CHARLIE: I can remember him coming up the road with about a 15 pound turkey in his mouth!

JACK: And the drumsticks and everything on it!

MIKE: Every day there's something comes up different, right? *[Laughs]* Conversations about really whatever comes to someone's mind, like aaahh... Well it's not made up! It's all facts, but...

MARY: Once upon a time...

MIKE: ...they're just... A little attitude, put it that way, okay? A little teensy bit of a fib.

JACK: *[still telling story]* ...and that was all little steaks! And boy, they weren't hurt, you could eat them yourself!

MIKE: I mean, if Jack went out there, and he said "I've been out there x amount of years" I'll say "Jack, don't you forget it. I've been up there before you!" And that starts a little bit of a thing, you know, and then I'll say...

MARY: Now I'll tell you, Jack...

MIKE: Jack, you remember Rich Dinn?

MARY: Yes, said Jack, I do...

JACK: Yes...

MIKE: He used to jump off one of them boats when they were unloading, every now and then when they had an American boat to unload or something?

JACK: Yup...

MARY: Yes...

MIKE: He was such a good swimmer...

JACK: Old Rich, yes...

MIKE: ...they'd throw a bottle of rum. And he'd dive down off the boat and go down and get the bottle of rum. Did you ever hear about that, Charlie? He could swim across there for... couldn't he? Across

the harbor and stuff like that, eh?

CHARLIE: He lived there at the foot of, uh... Hipditch Hill.

MIKE: Yeah...

JACK: Yeah...

CHARLIE: Yup.

MIKE: Rich Dinn.

MUSIC: *accordion & guitar: The Cribbies (Graham Wells)*

MARY: Well, it was many years after that Jack went out working with his brothers, fishing. And he worked out at the sea for a long time...

JACK: Love the water! Don't know how to swim, now...

MARY: ...and one day he was out on that boat, and he slipped on a tiny bit of bait. And didn't he go head first right into the water!

JACK: Oh God, yes. I was shooting away crab pots. I was on the Miss Jacqueline, the long liner. We were off about 70 or 80 miles I guess. It was in the spring of the year, see? Well, icebergs were on the go! The water wasn't that warm, you know! I was standing at the side door. And I used to shove out through the side door, where you set the pots...

MARY: ...slipped on a bit of bait...

JACK: ...and I must have slipped on a piece of bait. And when I shoved the pot out, I went on headfirst...

MARY: ...slid headfirst...

JACK: ...right out through the door...

MARY: ...right into the water!

JACK: ...and...

MARY: ...and he went down once...

JACK: ...when I come up, I grabbed the line that the pots were going down on. And I hove that clear of me. I said to meself, I said in me mind, I said "I'm not going down with the pots!" And I see the boat so far away... and he was shooting away, he was going to come home... his automatic pilot give out. We were on manual steering, eh? So the boys bawled out "Man overboard!". Jesus, he had to get around me with the manual steering, right? And I had all me oil clothes on. Rubber boots, bands on me boots and everything. So I went down, I come up, I see her and...

MARY: And he went down twice...

JACK: I went down again, and I come up. He was turning then, again, coming...

MARY: ...and the third time Jack went under...

JACK: ...went down the third time, and I seen me family. Seen me whole family in front of me! As true as I'm here, all my family was there! And it's in your mind then that you're not going to see them anymore anyway, you know...

MARY: And in that very moment, Jack remembered all about the Head Cardplayer of the World, and he

remembered about his true love, his wife...

JACK: ...and what I done to come up again, I don't know...

MARY: Jack thought to himself "There's no way I'm dying here!"

JACK: ...whether I worked my feet and me hands or... I said "give me self another push"... now what push... whatever was in my mind...

MARY: ...and just like that, Jack gave himself a big push...

JACK: ...I don't know what I did with me hands or what, I, I... I don't know, I can't remember that, you know...

MARY: ...and just as he was thinking about all those things, the great hand of his brother reached down into the water and pulled Jack up on deck...

JACK: ...and when I come up again, I put me hands up like that... the bow of the boat was right... I put me hands on the bow of the boat... They come right back on top of me when they come back. The boys hooked me up with the boathook. They got me aboard, they said I was blue when they pumped me out on deck. Pumped me, the water started to come out of me... Somebody said "He's coming to!" [*chuckles*]

MUSIC: *stops*

JACK: Heh, heh... It was a good experience! Ha, ha, ha. I said to the boys, I said "Davey Jones didn't want me, boy. He sent me back up again! Ha, ha, ha..."

MUSIC: *ends*

MARY: Now when Jack got back on land, he walked, and he walked, and he walked, all day and all night and all the next day until at last he found himself sitting beside a river. And he was thinking to himself "I'm not doing very good at finding my fortune." And he was feeling a little bit sorry for himself. And didn't he look up the river and he saw the strangest sight coming toward him, for there was a cat riding down the river in a boat!

JACK: Oh, Dart! We were here one night, about twelve of us I suppose, having a game of darts. And this little kitten come in, she ran in, she come over around the table...

MARY: "Good Evening to you, Jack" she said.

JACK: Sure I never thought nothing of it.

MARY: "Good evening to you too, Puss" said Jack.

JACK: As soon as she hopped up, the boys said "Oh, look at Dart!" They named her Dart right away, 'cause she come around on dart night. We were playing darts, right?

MARY: She said "What are you doing here sitting beside the river, Jack?" And Jack said "I'm out seeking my fortune, and as soon as I finds a master to hire me, that's what I'm going to do." And she said "Well, Jack, I'm looking for a man. Would you come and work for me?" "Yes" said Jack, "I would!" "But" she said, "if you're going to work for me Jack, you got to stay for a year and a day. And at the end of the day and a year, well, I'll give you a bag of gold." "Okay" said Jack. That sounded perfect, for then he'd have his fortune. So Jack got in the boat with the cat.

JACK: So I took her in, sure, everybody around here knows that. Every morning I come down then, she'd be here. Gee, I fell in love with her!

MUSIC: *fiddle: Waltz in the House (Christina Smith)*

JACK: I couldn't get clear of her anyway. Oh, she used to get up in me arms and everything. I'd sit in the chair and she'd get up, lie upon me chest. Yeah, she was, she was some cat, boy. Everybody loved her, sure.

MARY: And after a year, well, there they found themselves on that same river bank that Jack found himself on that year before. And she said "Well Jack, your year and a day is up, now here's your bag of money." And Jack took the bag of money and was feeling pretty happy. And just as he turned his head and looked on the other side of the river, who should he see but Tom and Bill. And they each had a bag of money over their arm, but they had a beautiful woman they were holding hands with, walking down towards home. And Jack started feeling right sorry for himself, for he had a bag of money but he didn't have any beautiful woman. And the cat looked at Jack and said "What's wrong with you, Jack?" And Jack said "I got no beautiful woman!" She said "Well, I might be able to help you out, Jack." And she pulled from her jacket half a ring. "Now" she said, "Jack I'm going to give you this half a ring, and I'm going to tell you that if you can find the woman who owns the other half of this ring, well, you'll find a woman for you. And it shouldn't take you long. But first," she said, "You got to do me a favour, Jack, before I gives you this ring." "Well, what is it?" She said "You got to light a great big fire, Jack, and then you got to throw me in the fire." "What!" said Jack, "I'm not going to throw you in the fire, sure. I really likes you!" "No" she said, "Jack you got to throw me in the fire." Well Jack said "I can't throw you in the fire." And she said "You've got to throw me in that fire, Jack, and I'm not taking another word for it. I'm your master!"

Jack knew she was right. So Jack took the ring from her,, and he lit a great big fire, and he picked up the cat and threw her in the fire. And just like that, in a puff of smoke, she was gone.

CHES: Missing cat. Name: Dart. Description: Large orange tabby with slightly matted hair. Very friendly and affectionate. No tags, no collar. Lives in the Outer Battery and belongs to Jack Wells. Dart is horribly missed. If you have any information, please call the following numbers... This is a poster that we put up around July 7th or 8th, and so far we've heard nothing. A lot of people calling, but it wasn't Dart.

MARY: Jack was feeling awful bad. He was sitting by the river's edge and thinking about that.

JACK: Yup. Ever morning I comes down, I comes in and I expects she'll be there. There on the floor, you know. You'd think something... or if she went off to perish there's no... If she got well enough she'd come back, I think she would anyway, you know. She might be frightened, but I think she would have come back, you know. I don't know, boy...

MIKE: Oh, he loves the cat. That's what he do.

JACK: Everybody's after looking for her, anyway.

MIKE: Really, with a passion he loved that cat.

JACK: So somebody definitely had to take her, I think. You know. She's gone, anyway. Somebody got her, boy.

CHES: We don't know if she wandered away -- which I doubt -- but, well, we had a dog incident too. The dog was dog-napped. Kid... dog-napping, and maybe a cat-napping too. There's a lot of theories, but you can't say too much about it.

MIKE: But when you think about it, the cat is so friendly and all the people that are walking back and forth here. So Jack thinks, well, we all think that she just went on the trail and followed the people and got lost up there, right?

CHES: Jack really misses her, yeah.

MIKE: Oh yeah. Loved that cat, he did.

CHES: But we won't give up yet, if we can just do a little further checking.

MUSIC: *fiddle: I'll Hang My Harp! (Christina Smth)*

JACK: Yeah. Too bad, boy. Somebody asked me the other day did I want one. I said "no. She comes back," I said, "I'll take her in, but I don't want another cat." She was special, yeah. She was. She was special to me, you know.

MARY: Well Jack was sitting there thinking about that, and who should come round the corner but the beautiful princess. And she saw Jack, and she said "What's wrong with you, Jack?" And Jack told the story of the cat. She said "Jack, did that cat give you anything before you threw her in the fire?" "Yes" said Jack, "she gave me half a ring." And Jack pulled the half a ring out, and the princess said "Look, Jack!" And she pulled the other half out, and they put them together and they fit together just perfect. "Well" said Jack, "I guess we were meant to be!"

JACK: I think she's coming back. I don't now. A woman was in the other day and she told me a woman lost her cat. I don't know but what she was gone two or three years, she said. The cat come home. I said "What?" "Yes" she said, "Jack, the cat come back. That's an old saying," she said, "the cat came back." Yeah. Oh, I hope she do. I misses her shocking, boy, I do. In the mornings I comes down, that's when I looks for her, right?

[pause]

Now I got to have a little swallow. That goes with my day anyway, that does.

SOUND: *Beer bottle opening, pouring into glass*

MARY: He said "I feels awful bad about that cat." She said "Jack, you don't have to feel awful bad about that cat, because that cat is me." "What?" said Jack. And then the princess told how she had a spell put on her by a wicked witch one long time ago, and the only way she wouldn't live as a cat was if she could find someone to serve under her for a year and a day, and then that person had to throw her in a fire and burn her up. "And Jack, you did that for me." And Jack was so happy he had a beautiful woman on his arm and a great big bag of money, so he made his way for home.

JACK: Well Mike, I suppose we'll go home now, will we?

MIKE: I guess I'm waiting for you.

SOUND: *locking door*

JACK: I'm the happiest man in the world. I had a great crowd here today, Chris. Had a good chat, had a good argument. And what is life all about? You know, I mean, I love the boys. Me? I'm getting old, but not too old, you know. Thank you Chris!

BROOKES: Thank you, Jack.

SOUND: *Mike begins singing "I love you, as I never loved before..."*

JACK: Jesus, where'd he get that?

... "when first I met you on the village green. Come to me just... (breaks off)... That's enough now!

JACK: Mike, you're a wonder, you are, boy!

SOUND: *(laughter and joking)*

BROOKES: All hands pile into Mike's little blue car -- the one with the disabled sticker on the windshield. And then up the hill, to home. It'll be more or less the same tomorrow. Unless tomorrow, the cat

comes back.

MUSIC: *guitar – Meech Lake Breakdown (Daniel Payne)*

MARY: And at the end of the day, they all sat down to a tin table. But the tin table bended, so my story is ended.

SOUND: *car starting*

MARY: If the tin table had been stronger, well, my story would have been longer. And if they didn't live happily ever after, then may all of ye.

Music, car drives off, seagulls cry

end.