

The Golden Bird
or
You Remind Me of Me

by Joseph Sanders

Adapted from the Brothers Grimm Fairy Tale

FADE IN:

EXT. DANSBURY CASTLE -- PLEASURE GARDEN -- EVENING

KING HOLLANDER (50's), is scrupulously counting the apples on his Golden Tree with his servant, DEMETRI (60's). Demetri is making his way up and down the ladder, at once to help count and to pacify the king.

HOLLANDER
Darn it! Did you count that branch, Demetri?

DEMETRI
Sir, I told you I've got it.

HOLLANDER
Well, how are you keeping track?

DEMETRI
Do you see the red tape on that branch?

HOLLANDER
Where?

DEMETRI
It's right here.

HOLLANDER
Oh okay.

DEMETRI
That's counted. The red tape on the branch has five apples. See, I have it written down.

He hands him his tally sheet.

HOLLANDER
How many did it have yesterday?

Demetri points at the clipboard showing the King.

DEMETRI
Five.

HOLLANDER
Okay.

DEMETRI
See the blue tape?

HOLLANDER
Yes.

DEMETRI

Now, how many is the blue supposed to have?

HOLLANDER

Seven.

DEMETRI

Okay, and it looks like seven to me.

HOLLANDER

So then they're all there?

DEMETRI

Well, that's only two branches. We have orange, yellow, green, and black to look at—not to mention the branches that have negligible fruit.

HOLLANDER

Well, how did you mark them?

DEMETRI

Well, other than in my memory, I didn't, because we ran out of tape colors.

HOLLANDER

What do you mean, you haven't been counting all the apples?

DEMETRI

I have a pretty good memory.

HOLLANDER

Demetri, I'm sorry if I'm questioning your adeptness at accounting for stolen things, but this is a big stolen thing! These are my golden apples, come on.

DEMETRI

I know sir, but how else am I going to keep track of them?

HOLLANDER

You count them.

DEMETRI

I did. There's thirty apples in that tree. You just deduct from the total of the colored branches and you look for the remaining, which should be eight or so.

HOLLANDER

Or so?!

DEMETRI

I'm sorry, sir.

HOLLANDER

No, it's not your fault. You're not the thief. If you were I suspect your teeth and lips would be colored with the gold the apples are made from.

DEMETRI

I don't even think I could bite into gold, if it was real.

HOLLANDER

Well, some damn animal or beast is, and he's got a hell of a sweet tooth, and it's costing me a fortune! Do you know how much those bright orbs are worth?

DEMETRI

A lot?

HOLLANDER

Oh yeah, more than you're salary and my kingdom, put together.

DEMETRI

Well, I wouldn't imagine the former adds as much as the latter. Speaking of which, I'm coming down this ladder.

He climbs down.

HOLLANDER

So what's up?

DEMETRI

You mean?

HOLLANDER

What's the damage?

DEMETRI

You're missing an apple.

Hollander throws the tally sheet down, and with tears mounting he bites his shirt sleeve, a brief mummification.

HOLLANDER

Okay, okay, you know what, it's not that bad. Really, you know why? I'll tell you. This tree is my most precious possession, right?

DEMETRI

I guess.

HOLLANDER

No, it's not. Not by a long shot.
 My sons, my sons are my progeny—not
 some golden tree. My family tree is
 richer in lineage than this in soil.
 I wear a crown, and my sons shall do
 the same. What does this tree have?
 Hanging fruit, which can be ripped
 from it like a cesarean section?
 Well, I will deliver this culprit
 like an abortion! I will mount his
 head on a spit, and just for fun
 stick the apple in his mouth. How
 do you like that?

DEMETRI

If you wish, sir.

HOLLANDER

Yeah, yeah. I mean...!

Beat.

HOLLANDER (CONT'D)

All right, let's get some dinner.
 I'll tell my sons what's to be done.
 We'll have a feast fit for a king!

INT. DANSBURY CASTLE -- GREAT HALL -- NIGHT

Hollander walks into the dining room and sits among his sons.
 One is a tiny little kid, JACOB (10). There are his two
 older brothers, a melancholy young man, PARSNIPITY (18), and
 an evil maniacal one, MALROY (20).

HOLLANDER

Well, my sons you eat heartily. And
 I imagine if your bowls would start
 biting back you'd be quite surprised.
 Wouldn't you?

MALROY

What's that father?

HOLLANDER

Just a joke, with an allusion to
 something greater, Malroy.

MALROY

Well, you are great, my father.

HOLLANDER

Yes, but what I allude to is not. I
 will not mince words, my sons. We
 have a thief in the Pleasure Garden,
 and it kills me! It literally does.
 Malroy, you may succeed the kingdom
 far before you are ready to do so.

MALROY

I am always ready, my father.

PARSNIPITY

Though, I'm sure he will be sad to see you go, father.

MALROY

Of course I would! You know what I mean, father.

HOLLANDER

Of course I do, sons. Please don't fight with one another. Life is hard enough facing your enemies, and hopefully they are not as close as across the dinner table. Though for my golden apple thief, I wish he was. Because I would grab him by his greasy lapels, and I would tear his heart out just so I could show him how black it is before he dies!

PARSNIPITY

Great image, father. You would have ruined my appetite, if I ever was hungry. As it is I am always full on life.

HOLLANDER

Well, my sons, I love you dearly, and it was a wish of your mother's that you should all grow up to be very affectionate to one another, and let nothing come between you. It wasn't however her **last** wish, which I shall divulge to you another time—the sentiment of such being so beautiful... I don't know if I can give mouth to the words, but it will be in my will and will be executed and you will all be the happier for it. God holds her now in an ever-omnipotent hug that I could scarcely have contended with. Anyway, a day never held so many regrets as this one, my children. Jacob, what are you doing, playing with your food?

Jacob looks terrified of the dish in front of him.

MALROY

He's not playing with it, Father.
He's pretending to eat it.

He leans over whispering in his father's ear.

MALROY (CONT'D)

I think he's scared of it.

HOLLANDER

Jacob, eat! This is good food. If you don't eat you'll wither up and die. Or you'll be like the vines that try to cling onto the castle wall that have no girth, nor the stamina to ever get in, nor let a man climb on it. Your body must be the ladder that your soul stands on. Otherwise, how is he able to see God, and get His wisdom, strength, and insight? You cannot depend on your mother to send everything from heaven to you. She already gave you a striking resemblance to her. I don't know if it is because you are still a child and therefore more cherubic, if you will, but you do look just like our mother, Jacob. My boys here resemble their father, and I don't know if that's a good thing. Malroy, you have always desired the crown.

MALROY

Father, I...

HOLLANDER

Please, I don't blame you. You are the first born, and so the pressure and expectation has always been there. But it has molded you unfavorably in many lights.

MALROY

Father!

HOLLANDER

It's not a warning, nor a rebuke. I love you, that is a father's weakness, whomever the son. But just remember, Malroy, when I am gone I am still your father, and my domain reaches to another kingdom as well.

MALROY

Of course, my father, I would never do anything to displease you.

He looks at him warily.

HOLLANDER

And Parsnipity, you are almost just as bad.

(MORE)

HOLLANDER (CONT'D)

No, not in the literal since, but you seem to take too literal the Bard's immortal words that "nothing is good or bad, but thinking makes it so." Well, you have decided to choose just to think, choosing neither good or bad, leaving you with a melancholy that resembles that ill-fated heir to the throne that spoke such prophetic nonsense. Well, what can I do? God makes better men than I. I am just his medium for a time. But back to a riper subject, shall I say. The Golden Apple Tree has a thief with golden intentions. For one apple a day, that which is prescribed by the doctor, the thief has stolen. And he or she must be caught. I don't discount women from such heinous acts. They do have the abhorrent task of loving us awful men, so perhaps we have driven them to it—and their babies are as bright and coveted as that which my tree bears. But this cannot go on. Therefore, Malroy, my oldest and wisest son, you will stand guard at the tree tonight, and catch the apple thief!

MALROY

The apple thief?

HOLLANDER

Yes.

MALROY

And how shall I do that, father?

HOLLANDER

Geez, well, I imagine with your wits and your strength. Do you find yourself in scarce supply of either?

MALROY

No, no of course not.

He leers over his son reading him.

HOLLANDER

Good. I didn't think so. I suspect we will have our apple thief by this time tomorrow, and he will accompany us to Easter mass; for the savior will be reborn and another villain sent to that bourn from whence he shall not return.

He looks at Malroy, giving him the nod to get going.

EXT. PLEASURE GARDEN -- NIGHT

Malroy is walking in the dark with a candle and a pistol. He trips on a root.

MALROY

Jesus. Old bastard!

Birds are heard about, making noise that only give an ill effect to Malroy.

MALROY (CONT'D)

I hate nature! Ugh... I couldn't even bring out my tent. "No, the thief will see it!" Well, what am I supposed to sleep on, father? "You're not supposed to sleep. Think of yourself as a soldier. Your whole regimen depends on your alertness, your adeptness..." God, he uses more synonyms than a whore has holes—and they all go in one and out the other. I hate him. Just die already! I only serve his purpose to serve my own. You think it's easy being a prince with these two young little monsters nipping at my heels? They're like constipated elves the way they creep and squat about me, waiting for me to screw up so they can rise from their cranberry bush they hide under, and become this very golden tree I am here to protect.

He yawns wearily.

MALROY (CONT'D)

Ah, all this complaining has taken the wind out of me. Or maybe it's just impossible for lungs to contain much when you're fighting to stay awake. Even the simple act of breathing becomes tedious, and now I'm much too conscious of it. I can't even breathe correctly now.

He starts gulping air, then hyperventilating.

MALROY (CONT'D)

I couldn't even eat a full meal, he upset me so. Calling me evil or bad, or whatever stupid synonym he used. There were plenty more he didn't. I'm sure he's got a whole thesaurus on me, he hates me so.

(MORE)

MALROY (CONT'D)

Well, they couldn't even publish a book big enough, nor man could dream of the words, that would cover my hate for you. The stars in other galaxies hide from my fire. If they got closer they know they'd fall into the black pit that is reserved for you, father. Love cannot exist in a vacuum, though you tried to incubate me in it since I was born. Oh, I want to be a fetus again, at least to assume its position.

He lies down at the trunk of the tree, and in the fetal position, holds onto it. He falls asleep.

The Golden Bird flies up to the tree and grabs a golden apple and flies away.

INT. GREAT HALL -- MORNING

The four of them back at the dining table, this time with Malroy hanging his head in dejection.

HOLLANDER

Well, my son, you needn't get in your sleep now. Raise your head, boy. You did enough of that last night, didn't you?

MALROY

I'm sorry, my father. I thought I was up the whole night. Maybe the thief came just as I went in.

HOLLANDER

Right, in the bright of day, sure! If he were that dumb he wouldn't have gotten away with this for as long as he has. Well, I'm not going to beat it to death. It's okay my son. You got tired. A man has a right to sleep. It is a natural function. Albeit, a king has to prove that he is bigger than most men, but you still have time to prove yourself, and I will not let you jeopardize your opportunity on one night. If men can get lucky at night I will not leave you out of the draw. Now Parsnipity, a little aloof, but perhaps a little alertness accompanies that. What do you think about catching an apple thief?

PARSNIPITY

It's of little consequence to me father, we have enough money--we are nobility. Yet that has never made me happy, but in serving you, perhaps I can allow a little pride to creep in.

HOLLANDER

Well my creepy son, don't grab the reins of the horse too tightly. He may pull back his head and raise his hooves and fall backwards right on top of you, crushing your ebullient enthusiasm.

PARSNIPITY

I wouldn't call it ebullient.

HOLLANDER

I wouldn't call it enthusiasm.

PARSNIPITY

Well, then I guess we see eye to eye.

HOLLANDER

Within a different chromo-scale, entirely: Mine bright, yours black.

PARSNIPITY

Well, father what can I say?

HOLLANDER

Nothing, Parsnipity. You see young Jacob, a man--and when you are old enough to consider yourself one you will appreciate this sage advice--a man does not say anything. It is what he does that says it for him. And just as you may close one eye, and see with different depth, or from a different vantage point than with the other, well, it is in that difference that men show their true adeptness at judging things and an alertness in its approach. It took God a long time to make man. He failed many times before and even since, but our family will prove to be the example and not be made one. You understand son, or are you still playing with your food?

JACOB

What is this father?

HOLLANDER

It is the toes of a pig, and I believe that one is ingrown.

He backs up from the dish.

HOLLANDER (CONT'D)

I'm just kidding. It's nothing so appalling as your expression would make it. Eat, my son. You'll grow to be a great man if you follow your father's advice.

With this Malroy looks at his father with a vengeance.

HOLLANDER (CONT'D)

Parsnipity, tonight: Fail me not.

PARSNIPITY

Never, good father.

HOLLANDER

I don't doubt it.

EXT. PLEASURE GARDEN -- NIGHT

Parsnipity walks out to the Golden Tree.

PARSNIPITY

Well, look at the sky. Is it overcast? At night you can't tell. I'm now cloaked in its fabric, and the little atoms or molecules that it's made from enshroud me like a cheap coat offering some cover, but mostly revolt. For I have never felt comfortable in clothing, and since it's night and no one can see me, I will take it off.

He strips.

PARSNIPITY (CONT'D)

There. If that won't keep me awake, not to mention the thief scared, and depending on his or her gender, attracted--but nonetheless I am in the true form intended, but still feel as a hoax soul. The hell with it, and I say, "the hell with it," not for the mere reckless abandon the phrase implies, but just for the abandonment of me. I feel as though they were the creator's words when I was just a poke-a-dot in the gleam of his eye; a strange figment that has gotten stranger.

(MORE)

PARSNIPITY (CONT'D)

And now I sit under the most glorious of pigments that ever lent to the golden hue: The Golden Apple Tree with its orbs like Christmas decorations. If I lit a fire maybe I would see that red reflected in it just like a Perry Como Christmas album, but old songs only evoke old feelings, and I wish to feel them no longer. Well, the hell with it!

He laughs.

PARSNIPITY (CONT'D)

I tell you the grass is greener, not on the other side, but on the underside of your clothes. Who knows, maybe I'll get a deer tick and be constricted with some kind of madness. That's what I want engraved on my tombstone, that phrase I just coined for myself and my dilemma: "Some kind of madness." Perhaps I should assume the corpse I soon shall be, and be exhumed by only the day that will set me free.

He lies like a corpse and then falls asleep. After a moment The Golden Bird swoops atop the tree and snatches an apple, flying off.

INT. GREAT HALL -- MORNING

Back at the dining table. Malroy sneers at Parsnipity who remains unaffected.

HOLLANDER

Well, my son, I should have expected as much.

PARSNIPITY

I concur father.

HOLLANDER

Well, you are in compliance as always, but your allegiance always sways like the passing wind, be it pleasant or tempestuous.

PARSNIPITY

It is the wind's way and so it is mine.

HOLLANDER

How good of you to adopt the wind.
(MORE)

HOLLANDER (CONT'D)

It needed a flag, but Dansbury needs a king to pledge his allegiance to, and I have my doubts whether that will be you.

PARSNIPITY

Well, at least you rhymed. Better than my friends.

HOLLANDER

Jacob, my son, youngest and perhaps bravest branch on a tree that seems to be falling, or dry at its roots. I wonder if it's the ground or the tree. We soon shall see. Tonight, my son, you will show your father what you're made of and stop questioning what your meals are made of.

JACOB

Yes, father.

He is still playing with his food and holds up something odd for inspection, tilting his head like a bewildered dog.

EXT. PLEASURE GARDEN -- NIGHT

Jacob walks out to the tree in pitch darkness carrying a bow and arrow that equals the size of him. He trots over to the tree without a care or concern and sits down and stares up at the sky.

Hours pass and he is wide awake, unmovable; still staring up in that passive wonderment that kids have, looking into nothing with such relevance and reverence.

Suddenly, the bird swoops down on the tree. Jacob's mouth goes agape, and he picks up his bow and arrow, sets the arrow, but he can barely pull it back.

After some good maneuvering, he pulls it back with all his might, nearly being swallowed up by the bow, and releases the arrow as the bird lets out a squawk, and gets away just in time--not before losing one of its golden feathers.

Jacob picks it up in sheer wonderment and runs off.

INT. GREAT HALL -- MORNING

The dining table. The king in full pride.

HOLLANDER

Well my sons, there have been many wondrous things that have happened at the bottom of an apple tree:

(MORE)

HOLLANDER (CONT'D)

Gravity was conceived, and the fall of man before that, but now this! Our young son has given us a golden feather, and I have shared this with my council. And the worth of the bird it derived from is worth more than the castle in which we dwell! This has driven me to the conclusion that I should drive my boys out of it to find the bird. And Malroy, here is your second chance. Let there not be a third.

Malroy looks over at his father stoically.

EXT. WOODS -- DAY

Malroy trudges on with a satchel thrown over his shoulder.

MALROY

Ooh, if my blood that coursed through my veins should erupt from my body, Vesuvius would be too small, and our kingdom too weak to withstand it.

He suddenly stops. There is a fox that has stopped mid-munching on a cranberry bush and is staring directly at Malroy.

MALROY (CONT'D)

Well, what are you looking at, fox?

He raises his pistol at him.

JACKIE

Please, don't shoot me.

MALROY

Oh my! Oh!

He steps back in amazement.

MALROY (CONT'D)

I thought I knew the world and every creature in it. There is one who confounds the ornithological world, and now that possessed by the fox. My God!

JACKIE

I'll tell you a secret.

MALROY

More than what you've already shared with the realization of speech? How do you talk so?

JACKIE

Well, I don't think you care to know. But there are two Inns in which your judgment will be tested. They stand at opposite ends of each other, and such is the way with the full spectrum-- what lacks in one, has the other's color. Go to the bland of the two, devoid of that hue that would bring the red to other men's cheeks. Do not sell yourself so cheap.

MALROY

Whatever!

He shoots at the fox and Jackie runs off.

MALROY (CONT'D)

First a bird, then a fox! The wild kingdom is ganging up on me. Scat! Idiots, them all!

He walks on.

EXT. PROVINCIAL TOWN -- EVENING

Malroy approaches the two Inns. He sees the party revelers at the one Inn, while the opposite one across the street in quiet solitude.

He of course chooses the former and joins in the revelry and good cheer.

EXT. GREAT HALL -- DAY

The dining table with just the King and his two sons.

HOLLANDER

Well, my boys--and I say that with the exclusion of one of you. It has been three weeks and your brother is yet to have returned. Furthermore, there is no distance on this earth beyond my rule, and my messengers have found him, but he refuses to come home. He's having too much fun. Imagine that. I had no idea Malroy had the capacity to have fun. Well, I should say that would shock me more in you Parsnipity.

PARSNIPITY

Me too.

HOLLANDER

Well, if you can abstain from it it would only serve you better.

(MORE)

HOLLANDER (CONT'D)

You are my second to the throne.
Understand son, I never made
preferment go by any singular trait.
All my boys mean the most to me
individually. But God has made you
different, and that I cannot overlook.
The world is made of differences,
but I think we can all agree on the
qualities that are most worthy, and
I hope you posses the capacity for
good as your brother does for evil.

PARSNIPITY

My problem is, father, I posses them
both.

HOLLANDER

Well, now is the time to decide
wherein your allegiance lies.

PARSNIPITY

Yes, my father.

HOLLANDER

Be safe my son, and as the great
Poet said, "The fault of man is not
in the stars but in himself."
Hopefully you will use the former to
give you direction and the latter
heart to be your guide.

EXT. WOODS -- DAY

Parsnipity walks with his satchel. He intermittently looks
for that overcast sky, but it is still clear.

PARSNIPITY

There is a certain syncopation from
my footsteps, and nature's harmony.
The animals scattering about; the
wildlife in full flux. Yes, I could
see how a man could live and be happy
for an eternity. But then if he has
to live for an eternity, then that
is much too long, and what he savored
sweet grows sour. You can't win,
because to do so means someone else
loses, and I feel too much for my
fellow man. That is to say, too
less of myself.

He stops, seeing the fox.

JACKIE

Hello.

He steps back in astonishment.

PARSNIPITY

Oh, but an eternity just shortened rapidly. For I have seen and heard that which I never thought would be-- in this world or the next.

JACKIE

I'm sorry I didn't mean to startle you.

PARSNIPITY

Are you kidding?! You're a fox, right?

JACKIE

Yes.

PARSNIPITY

Not a man in fox clothes?

JACKIE

I don't think a man is small enough to fit in me.

PARSNIPITY

He is in me.

JACKIE

I have a secret to tell you.

PARSNIPITY

I'm sure many.

JACKIE

At the next town you will come across two Inns. Do not go into the first one that attracts your eye, and all the lasciviousness that it implies. No, go to the second one that is much quieter, and harder to realize.

PARSNIPITY

Okay, fox. If I can recover from the shock of meeting you, I'll try to remember what you said.

The fox looks at him questioningly, and then runs off.

EXT. PROVINCIAL TOWN -- EVENING

Parsnipity approach the two Inns and Malroy pops his head out the window--and along with the noise and revelry--waves over his brother.

Of course Parsnipity concedes and follows.

INT. GREAT HALL -- DAY

Once again, with the King and his one son: the all-too-young Jacob.

HOLLANDER

Well Jacob, now that your brothers haven't been here to fill in the field of vision that usually congests my sight, I see why it is you can't eat your food. You observe it too much. It's just food, son.

JACOB

But it's from animals.

HOLLANDER

Of course.

JACOB

But I like animals.

HOLLANDER

Well, we have to eat.

JACOB

How come we don't eat fruit? Animals eat fruit.

HOLLANDER

Well, they eat other animals too.

JACOB

Yeah but they're animals, they can't think like us.

HOLLANDER

Well, my son they don't have the deep sentiments as you do. You're a good kid, and I'll fill your satchel with many wondrous fruits, none more so than the one you'll find upon finding our culprit who intended to steal our own--because I'm sending you out, my son. I once thought you too young, but really it is only our ignorance that feeds on our immaturity, and you have shown that you do not feed on it. So it is only right that you should lay your claim, and go out into the world--and seeing what you like and dislike, choosing the right from the wrong, your heart being the compass, your soul the song. I have no doubt my youngest and most loved son, you will find the Golden Bird and inherit the crown.

JACOB

Then I'll make all the people only
eat fruit.

HOLLANDER

Whatever you say. But go find that
sweet bird of youth; for I think in
his likeness he was attracted to
you.

EXT. WOODS -- DAY

Jacob walks, satchel in tow, cheerfully, like a sprite.

HOLLANDER (V.O.)

Jacob, your mother left something
for you. This is very special.
It's a conch shell. It has magical
powers. Your mother never unwrapped
it from its adoring papyrus. I think
you're old enough now to know how to
control it... I guess since I'm
making you do something that you
don't want to do, then I should at
least give you something for that
journey.

He starts skipping and comes across the cranberry bush and
starts to ravenously eat some. Smiling while the berries
stain his mouth and teeth.

JACKIE

Well, someone beat me to it.

Jacob turns around, and stands back in amazement.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

No, go ahead. There's plenty for
both of us.

He stares at him.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Unless you're already full.

Jackie runs over.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

What's the matter, cat got your
tongue?

Beat.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Perhaps, you've never met a talking
fox. Well, that's because I'm the
only one. I'm Jackie, nice to meet
you.

JACOB

I'm Jacob.

JACKIE

Hey, we both have the same first letter in our name. But I guess the rest of us isn't the same.

JACOB

No.

JACKIE

Well, don't look so shell shocked. I'll tell you a secret if you think you can keep it.

JACOB

What's that?

JACKIE

You're going to be a great man one day. Ask me how I know.

JACOB

How?

JACKIE

God told me so.

JACOB

You talk to God?

JACKIE

Well, what do you think He gave me this voice for, so I could talk to myself? None of you people will talk to me.

JACOB

Did He say anything about my mother?

JACKIE

Your mother is passed away?

He shakes his head.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Gee, I'm sorry. What's her name?

JACOB

Doris. Our last name is Hollander.

JACKIE

Doris Hollander, well that's a pretty name. I'll make sure to look for a pretty woman who belongs to it. She probably looks like you.

JACOB

That's what my Dad says.

JACKIE

Well, he's probably right. Trust me, I know ugly people and you're not from them. I ran into a few just recently.

JACOB

They were probably my brothers.

JACKIE

Really? They looked nothing like you.

JACOB

I don't know.

JACKIE

Are you looking for the Golden Bird?

JACOB

How did you know?

JACKIE

Hey, remember who you're talking to here.

JACOB

Sorry.

JACKIE

I know everything. I even know where he is. But first I have a little advice, and I wanna see how you follow it. Are you ready?

JACOB

Okay.

JACKIE

When you come to the next town there will be two Inns: One that's like a playground with lots of kids goofing off swinging by chandeliers, and riding banisters like slides; the other is as quiet and sanctified as a church on a Sunday morning. Which one do you think you should go to?

JACOB

The church?

JACKIE

There. That wasn't so hard. But let's see if you can follow it. And I'll be your guide. Hop on my tail!

JACOB

Okay!

The fox curls up his tail like a seat and Jacob jumps on and they're off.

EXT. PROVINCIAL TOWN -- EVENING

They approach the two Inns. Jackie lets him off and they see Jacob's brothers and a bunch of people in the Inn.

JACKIE

Now remember if you want to get the Golden Bird you have to wake up real early and I'll take you to the next town. We'll sneak into the castle. Everyone will be asleep, and we'll find the chamber with the Golden Bird. But remember take him in the birdcage that he's already in. It will be an old rickety cage that you would think otherwise about, because there's a bright immaculate gold cage next to it. But don't switch cages on the bird.

JACOB

Okay.

JACKIE

Have a good night, and I'll see you first thing.

JACOB

Thanks, Jackie.

Jacob trots into the quiet Inn and Jackie runs off.

INT. LICENTIOUS INN -- CONTINUOUS

Malroy has observed the two from a window.

MALROY

Did you see that Parsnipity?

PARSNIPITY

What's that?

MALROY

Our brother and that fox. If he finds the bird he will be king.

PARSNIPITY

Are you kidding? He's afraid of his own dinner. And our father is desperate to throw a boy his age out into the wilderness.

(MORE)

PARSNIPITY (CONT'D)

He'll be eaten by wolves. We'll be one brother short and your reach for the crown shorter. What are you worried about?

MALROY

You don't care about anything do you?

PARSNIPITY

The problem with you is that you do. I care about this moment and how to exploit it. Look around you. There are people here who are never this happy sober, and that's a sad thing. They have to hold their beer like a chalice for a king, and with every gulp their majesty returns.

He raises his beer mug provoking a toast.

MALROY

Here, here!

They drink.

EXT. BLANDARD CASTLE -- MORNING

Jacob and Jackie ride up to the castle.

JACKIE

Here we are. Now remember be quiet and don't forget what I told you.

JACOB

Aren't you coming?

JACKIE

I'll be out here when you get back.

JACOB

Thanks Jackie.

JACKIE

You'll do the right thing, don't you worry.

He smiles and runs off.

INT. BLANDARD CASTLE - HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Jacob tiptoes quietly. Suddenly he comes into a bedchamber where the blinding gold of the bird emanates and Jacob smiles.

He walks and steps on one of the golden apples and slips backwards, falling with a thud.

JACOB

Oh no!

He jumps up, concerned as to whether he's woken anyone up.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Dad's apples!

He gathers three of them in his hands and sees the empty gold cage and hurries over to it to put them in it. He is in a trance by its beatific luster.

Then, remembering what he's there for, he goes to the rickety cage with the Golden Bird in it.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Hello, Mr. Bird.

He puts his hand in the cage and pets the top of its head with his fingers.

JACOB (CONT'D)

You're a smart bird. Tricked all the grownups. Well, I guess that makes me smart too, 'cause I found you.

He opens the cage of the bird.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Come here.

He puts his finger out like a perch and takes him out.

JACOB (CONT'D)

You won't fly away will you? Who cares if you do, it would be your right. You don't deserve to be in a cage, especially an ugly one like that. You deserve this cage!

And as if he's still in the trance, he mechanically goes over to the golden cage and puts the Golden Bird into the golden cage. As he shuts the door the bird starts squawking.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Oh no, be quiet, please! I didn't mean to.

He goes to the other cage and opens it and tries to transport the bird back into it, but in his fumbling the cage smashes to the ground and he starts to cry, and he runs into a corner of the chamber, hiding.

Suddenly THREE GUARDS come running in with staffs in their hands.

GUARD 1
Awake the King! We have an intruder!

One of the guards runs off to retrieve him.

GUARD 2
Come out. Come out. Wherever you
are.

They hear Jacob's sniveling.

GUARD 1
It's okay.

He raises his staff.

GUARD 2
We won't hurt you.

KING BLANDARD struts in immediately, fastening the belt of his robe and looks at the guard.

KING BLANDARD
What's going on here? I heard a
crash.

GUARD 1
Someone was trying to steal the Golden
Bird, your majesty.

JACOB
He took our apples!

GUARD 2
Come out, you slime!

BLANDARD
Hold it!

He stretches his arm across the chest of the guard, refraining him.

BLANDARD (CONT'D)
He's just a child. Back away.

He does.

BLANDARD (CONT'D)
What was that, young man?

JACOB
He stole my father's golden apples.
See them on the ground?

BLANDARD
Why yes, you're right. Are you sure
they're your apples?

JACOB

Do you have a golden tree?

He laughs.

BLANDARD

Well I guess you're right. But now that I see them I'll have to get one. How did you find us, young man?

Silence.

BLANDARD (CONT'D)

Come out. I won't hurt you.

Jacob walks out of the shadows. He is drying his eyes.

BLANDARD (CONT'D)

You're a very brave boy to be sneaking into a king's castle. But I imagine your father is a king himself to possess a golden tree. Unless he's like the lying miller who had that dwarf Rumpelstiltskin spin all his gold. But these apples do look real. Who is your father?

JACOB

King Hollander of Dansbury.

BLANDARD

Sure I know him. He is our adversary.

JACOB

What's that mean?

BLANDARD

Well, in otherwise less mitigating circumstance, it means we would have you killed.

Jacob runs back into the corner of the chamber.

BLANDARD (CONT'D)

But wait. What's your name?

JACOB

Jacob.

BLANDARD

You really impress me, young man, and I won't hurt you. I said mitigating circumstance. Mitigating means to lessen.

(MORE)

BLANDARD (CONT'D)

And you have lessened my kingdom's animosity towards your father's by your bravery, and industriousness. How did you find the Golden Bird?

JACOB

A fox told me.

BLANDARD

These kids and their fairy tales. Well, look, I'll tell you what... I'll give you the Golden Bird, but you have to give me something in return.

JACOB

What's that?

BLANDARD

I want the Golden Horse. Have you heard of him?

JACOB

No.

BLANDARD

He rides like the wind, like you out of nowhere. He is quick in spirit, and his gold only emphasizes man's desire for him. There are few things more perfect than the Golden Horse, and though a golden bird is nice, I'd like to ride on my possessions than see them fly away at night. Go Jacob, go like the wind you rode in on, and find me the gold that I can ride again on!

EXT. BLANDARD CASTLE -- MOMENTS LATER

Jacob emerges from the castle, and unbeknownst to him, he has physically grown. He stands now close to six feet, and looks to be at the same age of his brothers.

When he gets to the gate of the castle where Jackie waits for him Jackie is taken aback.

JACKIE

Jacob, is that you?

JACOB

Yeah, I'm sorry I chose the wrong cage. It was stupid of me. I wasn't thinking.

JACKIE

Jacob, you've changed!

JACOB
What do you mean?

JACKIE
Come to this pond.

They run over to it.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
Look in it.

JACOB
I'm older.

He touches his face.

JACOB (CONT'D)
But how?

JACKIE
I guess some men grow by their
mistakes. You're just faster than
the rest.

He stares at the pond, the mature noble image stares at him
back.

JACOB
I'm a young man. My childhood is
gone.

JACKIE
You skipped over it.

JACOB
Was it all those meals I didn't eat?
Maybe I feasted on thoughts.

JACKIE
Maybe just God wants you to be this
age for right now. You've got
something to do, and it requires
your all, so let's go. I think I
overheard you need to find a Golden
Horse.

JACOB
How did you hear?

JACKIE
It's not only the wolf who's got big
ears you know. I don't need a little
red girl to tell me so.

JACOB
Then let's go!

Jacob jumps on Jackie's back as he curls up his tail just in time and crouches down, bracing from the impact of Jacob's weight.

JACKIE

We're going to need that horse. I can't carry you around like this for long.

JACOB

You want me to carry you?

JACKIE

Hey, I'm not that old yet.

And with that they're off.

EXT. HORSE STABLE -- NIGHT

They approach the stable.

JACKIE

Now remember what I told you, Jacob, and listen this time. There will be two saddles, one leather-worn, and one golden. Take the leather one like the shoes you're shod in.

JACOB

No problem, Jackie.

He smiles at him and runs in. He oversteps the stable boy who is fast asleep and he sees the golden horse and is completely mesmerized.

JACOB (CONT'D)

My God. What gold. You outshine my mind! Hey there, boy.

He pats his gold-laced mane. The horse neighs softly, greeting his new admirer.

JACOB (CONT'D)

You are special. You have to be the most amazing thing I've ever seen. I might just ride off with you on my own. Father would gladly take you over any bird, golden or otherwise. I might just take you over his kingdom. Just ride off to nowhere with you, you'd make nowhere worth something.

He looks around.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Which seat was it now?

(MORE)

JACOB (CONT'D)

One's a beggar to be saddled with.
The other sits on it like his throne.

He takes the golden saddle in his hands, his eyes almost emanating the same luster of gold, with a tinge of greediness.

JACOB (CONT'D)

My God. Angels and ministers of
grace defend me.

And with that he places the golden saddle on the horse, and the horse, taking his cue, neighs wildly, and Jacob quickly rebukes, trying to change saddles once again.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Oh no damnit, every time! I'm sorry.
Oh please stop, horse. I didn't
mean it, come on.

He tries to jump onto the horse without a saddle and falls right off, hitting his head, falling unconscious.

BLACK OUT

EXT. HORSE STABLE -- LATER

Jacob is tied to a chair, woozy. Two bumbling stable hands, MAYNARD (30's) and a PEASANT (30's), look over him and laugh as they throw some muddy water from a bucket on his face, waking him up.

MAYNARD

Wake up!

JACOB

Huh?

MAYNARD

You pig! Waddle around in your own
mud!

They laugh as he starts to come to, choking and spitting out the dirty water.

JACOB

Shit.

MAYNARD

Yeah, it's got a little of that in
it too.

They laugh.

JACOB

Where am I?

MAYNARD

Oh, he must have hit his head hard.
Are you an amnesiac?

PEASANT

Or maybe just anemic.

Maynard lays a punch right in his stomach. Jacob cries out with his deflating lungs, and falls to the ground, the chair still tied around him.

They pick him up and sit him upright.

PEASANT (CONT'D)

So what were you trying to do with
the King's horse?

JACOB

What do you care?

PEASANT

Oh, this ain't the time to play smart
with me. If I told the King, you're
head would be on a spit before you
would even of gained consciousness.

JACOB

I was trying to steal it.

PEASANT

Well, that's pretty obvious.

JACOB

Yeah, what can I say?

PEASANT

Who are you?

JACOB

I'm the King's son.

They laugh.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Not this King, whoever he is, the
King of Dansbury. King Hollander.

MAYNARD

You got some kind of identification
proving that?

JACOB

Only in my heart.

They laugh.

MAYNARD

In his heart? Well, let's say we have a look see.

He puts a dagger up to his chest.

JACOB

Fine, send me to heaven and get rid of all this bullshit in between.

PEASANT

What makes you think you're going to heaven? You're nothing but a thief.

JACOB

Yesterday I was just a boy. Then I grew up and now I'm a thief. Maybe you're right, but my childhood was stolen from me. So I guess all adults are thieves, trying to get back what they never will.

MAYNARD

Hey, that was kinda poetic. Maybe he is a king's son.

PEASANT

Are you stupid? Poets aren't from the nobility. Poets are peasants like you and me.

MAYNARD

Hey, what do you eat in that kingdom?

JACOB

For dinner?

MAYNARD

Yeah.

JACOB

I do not eat the tender side of gazelle, or veal. Nor do I touch the boar's head, which is served with a tinge of cherry sauce. However, when the weather abides we go out on the lawn, which provides a panorama of the kingdom of Dansbury. All the little cottages speckling the landscape. All the small lives adding up to one. All those times I never really cared about, suddenly I long for them and appreciate them more.

MAYNARD

I eat pig intestines if I'm lucky.

JACOB

Well, you're not missing anything. Everything goes through our intestines, and some would say we're as gluttonous as pigs. So it's only fitting.

MAYNARD

You watch your mouth!

PEASANT

No, he's right.

MAYNARD

Well, what do we do with him?

Peasant whispers in his ear. Maynard looks at Jacob, concurs.

PEASANT

Hey, me and my buddy was talking. And we we're thinking how we could steal the horse for ourselves. Seeing how you tried to take him, it put the thought in our heads—not that we haven't thought it before, but... I mean we coulda killed you, stolen the horse away. Say the horse freaked and ran off when we stopped you. Threw you off, snapped your neck. But seeing how we were having a tough time reenacting a horse-throwing death, 'cause I don't know how to crack a neck better than a horse does who throws you off 'em, and 'specially since maybe it would seem made up. Then we would lose our heads. Me and Maynard here, we got to thinking. The King of Goulander always had his admirations fixed on the Golden Princess.

MAYNARD

Yeah, yeah!

PEASANT

Shut up, Maynard, calm yourself. You ain't getting your hands on her, just the two shilling whores you can afford—and maybe more after we bring the Golden Princess to our master. See, I'm sure he would give you the Golden Horse for her. And seeing how we was the ones that bartered the trade, he would promote us to a new station in life. And see how we all win then?

JACOB
Yeah. Definitely.

PEASANT
But just to make sure you come back
here with her, we took your fox here.

Maynard pulls out Jackie in his cage.

JACOB
Jack!

PEASANT
Now calm down, unless you want to
draw the attention of the guards.
We already had to... How do you say
it?

MAYNARD
Calm them down.

PEASANT
No I heard a rich man say a word I
liked, you know, to soften the affect?

JACOB
Mitigate?

PEASANT
Yeah, that's right! Hey, maybe he
is telling the truth. Kings and
nobility know all the good words.
Well, anyway your fox here is safe.
I had no choice but to capture him.
He was biting at us. He doesn't
have anything like syphilis or the
such?

JACOB
No, but you have to let him go.

PEASANT
Now that's not part of the deal.

JACOB
I can't do it without him.

PEASANT
What, you two are a team?

JACOB
That's right. And he only listens
to me, so it's that or no deal. You
can take me to the King right now,
'cause I'm not worth a damn without
him.

PEASANT

Well, calm down man. No need to get so dramatic. You know those drama players were just here recently and they were quiet good. Who were they anyway?

MAYNARD

They were the King's troupe.

PEASANT

Well, which one?

MAYNARD

I don't know there's so many of them.

PEASANT

No. I think they were from the Queen?

MAYNARD

I don't know.

PEASANT

Anyway, they put up a production where the man's mother married her father's uncle. No. It was her father's brother, no...

MAYNARD

It was the son's uncle.

PEASANT

Right. There was a son in it too. Do you know that story?

JACOB

Maybe.

PEASANT

Anyway, it was quite good. Not sure where I was going with that.

JACOB

It doesn't matter. Let the fox go, and I'll find the princess, and I'll bring her back to you.

PEASANT

Now you don't tell us what to do. You hear?

JACOB

Well, make a decision.

PEASANT

You know, you're in no position to be ordering us around.

He looks at him earnestly.

PEASANT (CONT'D)

But I like your face. You look like
a good man. So I'll let you go.

MAYNARD.

What?

PEASANT

Loose him from his fetters.

MAYNARD

Well, why do I have to do it?

PEASANT

Just do it.

MAYNARD

Well, you just said you didn't like
to be bossed around.

PEASANT

But you do, okay?

MAYNARD

Okay.

PEASANT

Everybody's a prima donna.

Maynard cuts his ropes.

EXT. GOLDEN PRINCESS' CASTLE -- NIGHT

Jackie and Jacob approach the outskirts of the castle.

JACKIE

Well, here we are.

JACOB

You've been awfully quiet.

JACKIE

Well, we just escaped near death. I
think that calls for some reflection.

JACOB

True, true.

JACKIE

Anyway, I appreciate it.

JACOB

What?

JACKIE

You standing up for me.

JACOB

Are you kidding me, Jackie? I'm still confused as to why you're even doing all this for me. I mean... I don't know whether to thank you or hate you. But I guess you're helping me.

JACKIE

Of course I am.

JACOB

Yeah, but how do you know so much?

JACKIE

What do you mean?

JACOB

What do you mean what do I mean? Come on, you know where every golden creature is in this world. But it seems to go through some kind of hierarchy where you start off from the bottom and work your way up to the top.

JACKIE

Is there something wrong with that? Not everybody starts out at the top like you.

JACOB

What does that mean?

JACKIE

So you actually have to work for something now for once in your life.

JACOB

Hey look pal. I'm not talking about that. I can respect a hard days work, even a hard life's one. But I'm talking about the mysticism that's going on here. How do you know my next move, my next desire?

JACKIE

Some questions you shouldn't ask.

JACOB

Are you from God like you said?

JACKIE

I never said...

JACOB

You said you talked to him.

JACKIE

That was a figure of speech.

JACOB

Oh so what do you figuratively talk to him about? You said you know my mother.

JACKIE

That's your imagination working, pal.

JACOB

No. If you know so much... You know what? I don't care about all these gold farm animals. I want my mother. She was all the gold any man, or boy, or anybody could want.

He cries and puts his hand on a tree and leans on it.

Silence.

JACOB (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

JACKIE

No. You're right to be angry. If you don't question stuff...

JACOB

You can question it too much. Let's go.

He looks up at the castle. Jackie points to the window.

JACKIE

Okay. Now remember. The Golden Princess takes her bath at midnight when the rest of the castle is asleep. All you have to do is climb into her window and as soon as she disrobes, kiss her and she will go wherever you want with you. But do not let her take leave of her father. She can't talk to him. Whatever you do.

JACOB

You forgot one thing.

JACKIE

What's that?

JACOB

How the hell am I supposed to scale the palace wall and get to her window, if that's the one you pointed at?

JACKIE
 Hey some things are better left for
 the imagination.

He looks at him sardonically.

JACOB
 Wait, I think I've got something
 here.

He takes out the conch shell.

JACKIE
 What's that?

JACOB
 My father gave it to me. It's from
 my mother.

He blows on it. Just then SIX SWANS descend from the sky.
 They all land, and as they do they turn to human form.

SWAN
 Hello there.

JACOB
 Who are you?

SWAN
 These are my brothers. We're the
 Six Swans. We were turned into swans
 by the spell of a jealous witch.
 Our sister has taken a vow of silence
 and is knitting our shirts made out
 of dandelions. It will take her six
 years to knit from the weed that
 easily disintegrates. But just like
 it, we can easily float in the air.
 And for a half hour each day we can
 return to human form and go in
 between. I guess you could say you
 caught us at our lunch break. Need
 a ride somewhere?

JACOB
 You can say that again.

They sweep him up and carry him to the Golden Princess'
 window.

INT. GOLDEN PRINCESS' BEDCHAMBER -- MOMENTS LATER

They perch Jacob right on the windowsill.

JACOB
 Hey, thanks for the lift.

The Six Swans squawk and fly off.

He kneels slowly into her room, and sees her dipping one leg into the bath as she disrobes. She is covered in something even more immaculate than her heavenly feminine frame, but in pure gold.

He runs to her without making a sound, and as she lets out a little scream, muffles it with his kiss. After a moment they look at each other.

GOLDEN PRINCESS

Where did you come from?

JACOB

I don't know myself.

He looks at her.

JACOB (CONT'D)

You're beautiful, and I'm a fool. Come run off with me. We'll make jesters out of our people. They'll ridicule us for doting with too much love. We'll get lost in our eyes like the flakes of snow, each one not resembling the other, but part of the greater canopy of the sky. I don't know what the fuck I'm saying, but come on let's just fly!

He grabs her hand and she pulls her robe up covering herself.

GOLDEN PRINCESS

But I have to tell my father.

JACOB

Tell him later. We have no time.

GOLDEN PRINCESS

But I don't even know who you are.

JACOB

I am the prince, first in line to my father's throne of Dansbury. There are my two brothers who came before me, but no one will ever come before you in my affection. And when he sees you he will say the same of me. We will be King and Queen in the time it takes to seek your father's permission, so there's no time to waste.

GOLDEN PRINCESS

What's your name?

JACOB

My name is Jacob, and I almost forgot my whole identity when I looked at you. I shrunk down to the smallest morsel man is made of--for you are a woman. You engross my whole. You blow me apart and I need you to hold me together again. So you have to come.

GOLDEN PRINCESS

I can't.

JACOB

I understand it's crazy. It's stupid. I mean, you should have me arrested! But how about this, I just rode in on a half dozen doves, so I'm not going away that easy?! Can I woo you with a song?

GOLDEN PRINCESS

Do you have a good voice?

JACOB

The melody of any catastrophe, I assure you. The most inharmonious trumpets and all the crass of brass. I'm an awful singer. My voice changes everyday, but I've got a great story, and it's the stuff that dreams are made of. So will you please allow me this one last false note?

GOLDEN PRINCESS

Go ahead.

She tightens her robe and sits on her golden bed, awaiting like the Queen, her entertainment.

JACOB

You remind me of me,
 You remind me of me,
 Why can't you see?
 I was once a prince,
 And am now a king.
 You remind me of me.

You are my Golden Tree.
 The bird that stole your fruit is me.
 You remind me of me,
 You remind me of me.
 You're all I want to be.

And I hope you know
 When the feeling wanes and goes
 I'll still hold on like the undertow.
 You remind me of me,
 You remind me of me.

'Cause life's too long without you
 by my side,
 And life's shortened without you,
 I'd sooner die.

You remind me of me,
 You are my Golden Tree,
 The bird that stole your fruit is
 me!

He looks at her. She gets up, still with some noble reserve,
 takes his hand and pulls him off into the hall.

INT. KING LINDY'S PARLOUR -- MOMENTS LATER

Jacob is standing with her under scrutiny of her father,
 KING LINDY.

KING LINDY

I admire your skill, young man. I
 have no idea how you got into my
 castle. I have the grounds heavily
 guarded. And if you in fact did, as
 you say, scale the walls with your
 love for my daughter--well, that is
 what the amorous stuff is made of,
 as impractical as it does sound.
 But this then should not be hard for
 you to accomplish as well.

He goes to his window and indicates the mountainous hill
 that stands at a distance.

LINDY

You see that hill?

JACOB

Yes.

LINDY

Well, it's all I see. Not a morning
 goes by that it does not block the
 sun. And I refuse to change rooms
 in my palace. I do not move for
 mountains. They move for me. So
 you can have my daughter's hand if
 you with yours move that mountain.

Jacob nearly faints. The Princess holds him up.

LINDY (CONT'D)

No doubt you've exhausted yourself
from your leap.

JACOB

Up or down?

LINDY

Well, I'll give you eight days.
That's a few more than God got. And
since you profess to be one worthy
of my daughter, I'll give you that
little extension--and my coveted
bronze spade.

He hands it to him.

LINDY (CONT'D)

You didn't expect it to be gold did
you? We don't dig our graves with
the adornments we live with in our
lives.

JACOB

Of course. It's not the material I
care about really.

LINDY

Well, it's easy to say, but just
like that mountain--even the sun
can't get over it. Maybe you'll
fair better my future son.

Jacob looks aghast.

EXT. HILL -- EVENING

Jacob is exhausted, digging at the base of the huge hill.
He adds to the comparatively short pile of dirt he's accrued
with his bronze spade. He looks down, then up and drops to
the ground.

He lies there a moment and suddenly Jackie comes dashing
over.

JACKIE

Hey Jacob, Jacob!

Still lying there with no emotion.

JACOB

Jacob is dead, my friend.

JACKIE

What's going on?

JACOB

Where in the world have you been?
Wait. Maybe I should shorten the
parameters of that, because you've
probably been all over the world
knowing you.

JACKIE

Hey, even a fox needs a holiday. I
found this beautiful place. The sun
never goes down and the whole place
is covered with snow.

JACOB

You were at the North Pole?

JACKIE

Is that where I was?

JACOB

Why the hell was that so attractive?

JACKIE

I don't know. I liked the irony.
All that snow and all that sun, and
yet they coexisted peacefully.

JACOB

Yeah. Where no man can.

JACKIE

Ain't that the truth.

JACOB

Well, here's another one harder to
swallow. I'll be dead by sundown
tomorrow.

JACKIE

What?

JACOB

If I don't move this, which ain't
gonna happen. It's over. I thought
of calling the Swans. But swans
aren't known for moving large masses
of land. They can fly over it like
my soul soon will be. Hopefully as
white as their satin skin.

JACKIE

Well, why didn't you call me?

JACOB

How? You were at opposite end of
the world!

JACKIE

Well, no time like the present.

He starts digging with his paws, Jacob laughs.

JACOB

What are you doing?

JACKIE

I'm digging you out of this mess.
I'm used to it by now.

JACOB

Come on. You can't move this in a day.

JACKIE

Thee with little faith.

JACOB

Nobody can move it. The king and all his men can't. That's why he told me to. I'm the patsy.

JACKIE

Jacob, don't you get it?

JACOB

What?

JACKIE

You grew from a boy to a man in a matter of moments. Nature works her magic through you. Just because your mind can't conceive, just because you try to chronicle events and make movies out of wars; stories with your special effects, doesn't mean you know how to present the conflict, nor the harmony that brings it together. I am your friend and once you've said that there's nothing to say. You need this plot of dirt moved, to you it's a mountain, to me it's just a see-saw with a big kid. Decrease the distance of his pivot and the little one can now rise above.

Jackie starts rapidly shoveling with his paws and his tail swiping out the debris.

JACOB

Well, I don't see how you can do it. But I'll owe you more than I already do. You're bound to be King of Dansbury.

JACKIE

Please, who's going to listen to a fox, except nuts like you? Just get me a hot little fox and we'll call it even.

JACOB

Hey, all these golden relics, none in the form of a fox?

JACKIE

Hey man, I don't need anyone outdoing me, okay. I'm the talking fox. That's as good as it gets for this species.

JACOB

All right, Jackie.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE -- DAY

They are now walking on their journey with the Golden Princess.

JACOB

Long walk.

JACKIE

Hey, this fox wasn't made for two.

JACOB

Yeah, just wait till we get that horse.

Suddenly realizing.

JACOB (CONT'D)

But how? I'm not giving you up for anything.

JACKIE

Hey, the horse rides like the wind right?

JACOB

Yeah.

JACKIE

So when you go to give them the Princess you'll customarily shake everyone's hand to much fanfare. And the last one being the Princess', which you'll pull up beside you, and just take off. Just watch out for the paparazzi.

JACOB

Sounds too risky. I don't like it. We can go back to my father's and he'll be more than happy with all that I've accomplished. And if he's not then who needs him.

JACKIE

But you won't be King and your Princess won't be Queen.

JACOB

You don't care do you, darling? I can't risk losing you.

PRINCESS

No, of course not. Though once my father finds out he may take me back to Bavaria. He wants me to marry a king.

JACOB

God, these are the options? Unbelievable!

PRINCESS

The royal blood has to stay within royalty.

JACOB

So a blind man's blood is of less value? A bum on the street? Do you have gold in your blood too?

PRINCESS

No.

JACOB

What's your blood color?

He squeezes her finger to see the blood mount.

PRINCESS

Ow, stop it. You're hurting me!

JACOB

Doesn't everyone hurt the same? All these days we've been chasing gold in its favorite forms. The animals who adore it and are adorned by it. It's ridiculous!

JACKIE

Well, you can change how people perceive things, but you have to become King to do that.

JACOB

What if I renounce the crown, huh?
Won't my story be passed around in
folklore around campfires, around
taverns where old men are washed up
and drown their woes? They'll tell
my story and be in good company.
That will change how people think.
Like my father says, "Nothing's good
or bad but thinking makes it so."

JACKIE

That's Shakespeare.

JACOB

Is it?

JACKIE

He said everything.

JACOB

And he wasn't royal.

JACKIE

He was made a gentleman.

JACOB

For his poetry, right?

JACKIE

I guess.

JACOB

Well, I see nothing poetic about
accepting all the gold that is given
you.

JACKIE

But you're not, Jacob. You're
fighting for it.

JACOB

With all your help. Who are you?

JACKIE

I'm Jackie. I'm your friend.

JACOB

One day before this is over I want
to really know who you are.

JACKIE

You will.

JACOB

'Till then, we're approaching whatever
the hell kingdom this was or is.
Should we do what you planned?

JACKIE
It hasn't failed us so far.

JACOB
Just taken us far, way out of the
way with every inconvenience included.

EXT. HORSE STABLE -- EVENING

Jacob goes up to the stable, just himself and approaches the
two servants.

JACOB
Hey.

PEASANT
Well, I'm surprised you came back.

JACOB
Yeah.

MAYNARD
Without the Princess?

JACOB
She's here.

MAYNARD
Where?

JACOB
Where she's safe.

They grab him.

PEASANT
Guards!

JACOB
What are you doing?

PEASANT
If you don't give her to us, we'll
take you.

JACOB
I just want an even trade.

MAYNARD
You'll get it--for your life.

PEASANT
Guards!

They come running up.

PEASANT (CONT'D)

This man was trying to steal the Golden Horse! Get the King!

They run off.

PEASANT (CONT'D)

Now give her to us before they come back.

JACOB

Not like this. Take the horse out into the field.

MAYNARD

And you to the gallows.

They hold his arms behind his back.

JACOB

I just want to make sure she's safe.

MAYNARD

I knew he couldn't give her up once he saw her. No man could.

PEASANT

No bother, we'll get credit for him and her.

The guards come back with KING GOULANDER.

KING GOULANDER

What's this about?

MAYNARD

We told him to get the Golden Princess for you, your majesty...

PEASANT

Maynard! If your majesty would be so gracious as to hear what we have bartered by way of interest for your grace...

GOULANDER

Speak. Speak.

PEASANT

A few weeks ago this man came here tried to steal the Golden Horse. I of course was standing my guard, alert as usual. And I did not want to bother your Highness with such a heinous fellow. Seeing how he posed no threat.

(MORE)

PEASANT (CONT'D)

But I decided to humor him, as I am wont to do with those of the lower caste. You know an educated man tries to see by abduction.

JACOB

It's deduction, you idiot.

PEASANT

Shut up! I know my words! You are abducted aren't you? And you're being too free with your words. Perhaps, we should tie your tongue.

GOULANDER

Get on with it! What did you agree with this man?

PEASANT

Nothing but what your Majesty would approve. And more so, what his heart and kingdom most desires, but the Golden Princess.

GOULANDER

Does he have her?

MAYNARD

He says he does your Majesty, but he's a liar!

PEASANT

He claims to, sir. Whether he does or not, I don't know.

JACOB

They said they'd give me the Golden Horse for her.

GOULANDER

And who are you?

JACOB

I, your Lordship, can be considered a wayward traveler; a prophet with nothing so prophetic but a four legged creature to lead me to my next journey. And since man has dealt in husbandry for the better part of his inhabitation, it makes sense that the animals should lead him the rest of the way. Well, here I am at his good advice. Which, with my father, the King Hollander's hopes of Dansbury, have sought the Golden Horse.

(MORE)

JACOB (CONT'D)

And to forfeit the Princess of the same fragile yet coveted tincture.

GOULANDER

Well, where is she, young man? I will gladly give my horse for her, though I will be a bit remiss. I speak the truth, and having been on good terms with your father's kingdom, would not want to raise any ill will.

JACOB

Princess Lindy!

She comes out of the woods. She of course is radiant and every jaw drops like the leaves in autumn. They let go of Jacob and they approach her slowly like a timid fawn.

GOULANDER

She is more beautiful than words could ever paint. Monet would change from landscapes to portraiture to capture her wonders and depth.

PEASANT

She is most beautiful, sir.

MAYNARD

And she's all ours.

Maynard runs toward her.

PEASANT

Maynard!

The guards strike him down.

GUARD

What are you doing?!

PEASANT

He just wanted to touch her!

GUARD

You don't touch the King's property.

PEASANT

We bartered for her, in all due respect!

GOULANDER

With my horse! Is that yours to exchange with?

PEASANT

No, your Majesty. All the same you didn't have to hit him.

GOULANDER

You have a loose lip, which may evoke
the same kind of penalty.

PEASANT

Oh well, so you mean we're still
peasants after all this?

GOULANDER

You will be what you were born into.
I have no responsibility for that.

PEASANT

What about your people?

GOULANDER

Guards!

The Peasant grabs Maynard's dagger and stabs one of the
guards.

PEASANT

Take that! See how the weak strike!

The guard goes down. Maynard grabs the fallen guard's staff
and a fight ensues. The King goes for the Golden Princess
as Jacob runs to the stable, and just as fast runs out with
the Golden Horse and trollops over to them.

JACOB

Excuse me, sir. I thought I'd renege
on your offer.

He sweeps the Golden Princess up and they fly off, leaving
the mayhem and the King to fend for his own.

EXT. PRAIRIE -- MORNING

They are riding now. Jacob and the Golden Princess with the
fox by their side, as well as the Golden Bird in his wooden
cage held by Jacob.

JACOB

We didn't even need the horse to get
away from King Blandard.

JACKIE

No, when he saw how much you had
grown he thought you were sent by
Hecuba herself.

JACOB

Well, what can I say. I couldn't
have done it without you Jack. You
are indeed my best friend, and I am
forever indebted to you.

JACKIE

Well, there was that one thing I wanted from you.

JACOB

Anything.

JACKIE

Kill me.

He halts the horse.

JACOB

What?

JACKIE

Kill me.

JACOB

Jack, stop fooling around. I know you have a weird sense of humor, but maybe that trip to the North Pole fried your brain with radiation.

JACKIE

You said you'd do anything for me. I can't live as a fox anymore. I hate this body. I'm more than this. Chop off my head and then my paws. Get rid of everything that is wild about me.

JACOB

No Jack, you're talking crazy.

JACKIE

Aren't you my friend?

JACOB

Of course I am.

JACKIE

You don't love me. I'm a fox. No one can love or care for a fox. Look at me. I don't even have hooves. According to the bible I walk so low you wouldn't even desecrate yourself to eat me.

JACOB

Well, I'm not Jewish. I don't care about that.

JACKIE

But I do. Kill me, please.

He lies in front of the horse.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Run me over.

He backs the horse up as Jackie taunts the horse, walking in front of it.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Come on. Come on.

JACOB

Jack, it's been a long journey.
Come on. When we get to my kingdom
you can have anything, more than any
man could ever want!

JACKIE

I want to be a man.

JACOB

I can't kill you Jack.

JACKIE

You promised.

JACOB

Not that.

JACKIE

I see. You get so enamored.
Everything I tell you you go against.
I tell you, take the leather saddle,
the wooden cage, deny her father,
but never are you denying yourself.
Always mesmerized except with death.
It's the one thing you'll never be
ready for. Then goodbye.

He runs off. Jack stops suddenly and yells back to them.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

One more thing, friend! Don't ever
buy gallows' flesh, and stay away
from the river's edge!

He runs off.

JACOB

What a curious creature. I'll never
get him.

GOLDEN PRINCESS

He's so sad.

JACOB

But I couldn't do it.

GOLDEN PRINCESS

Of course not.

JACOB
 Goodbye Jack, you stupid fool.

They ride off.

EXT. PROVINCIAL TOWN -- DAY

There is raucous noise as the townspeople drag Jacob's elder brothers from the Inn of iniquity.

Jacob and his golden entourage are serendipitously passing through, and of course everyone stops and looks in awe.

JACOB
 What's going on here? Parsnipity?
 Malroy?

TOWNSFOLK
 You know them?

JACOB
 They're my brothers.

MALROY
 Jacob? My eyes must have grown old,
 because you look much older.

JACOB
 What's going on?

TOWNSFOLK
 These two owe us more than can be
 repaid. So we're taking it out on
 their heads.

JACOB
 My father will pay whatever it is.

TOWN FOLK
 That's what they said, but we got a
 message back from him, and he disowns
 them.

JACOB
 Nonsense, he couldn't.

TOWNSFOLK
 That's what he said.

JACOB
 Well, I'll pay the price how much is
 it?

TOWNSFOLK
 Five Hundred thousand shillings!

JACOB
 God, what were you guys up to?

MALROY

It's a lie. We owe them nothing!
Their girls loved us and we them.
That is nothing we should have to
pay for.

TOWNSFOLK

Those girls belong to Lady Hardswell.
And they don't work for free.

JACOB

I'll pay don't worry. I have more
than enough.

He goes through his purse.

JACOB (CONT'D)

There, that should do it.

TOWNSFOLK

Well, it's your loss. Frankly, I
don't think they're worth the price.

JACOB

They're my brothers.

TOWNSFOLK

I guess. Though I don't see the
resemblance.

The townspeople leave in disappointment, each one having
looked forward to a good beheading.

MALROY

Good brother, it looks like you've
had some good fortune on your journey.

JACOB

None of which outshadows my familial
ties. I can't believe our father.
What's gotten into him?

MALROY

You know how it is when you've got
the kingdom all to yourself. You
forget about everyone else.

PARSNIPITY

Frankly, I don't blame him. Though
I guess what he did was abhorrent,
but then again so was what we did.
Like father like sons.

MALROY

And what is your name, my lady?

JACOB

This is the Princess of Halberry.

Malroy kisses her hand.

MALROY

Yes.

Malroy inspects the Golden Horse.

MALROY (CONT'D)

And your horse?

JACOB

Yes, I guess you can never surround yourself with too much gold.

MALROY

Nor too much of a good thing.

(smiles menacingly)

By God, I'm hungry. What say you that we go to a little spring through the woods here? We have spent many days in cheerful joy by the brook. There's plenty of berries to eat and fresh water.

JACOB

Yes, I guess you're right. It is a day's travel ahead of us, brothers. And I suppose you are both hungry.

PARSNIPITY

We never lacked for appetite, Jacob.

JACOB

No. I guess you didn't.

MALROY

Come then.

Jacob trots on ahead of them.

EXT. BROOK -- MOMENTS LATER

They walk up to the brook and pick berries, an idyllic scene.

Then with sudden force, Malroy and Parsnipity grab Jacob and throw him into the river.

The Golden Princess screams, the Golden Horse neighs, and the Golden Bird squawks, as they are all grabbed by his brothers and pulled away.

EXT. BROOK -- LATER

Jackie come by sniffing around at the edge of the river.

There are moans from beneath.

Jackie cowers down and peers over the edge, and there is Jacob along the rocks by the river. He holds his head as if just coming out of unconsciousness.

JACOB

Jack!

JACKIE

I should say I'm glad to see you,
but I'm not--not like this anyway.

JACOB

Jack, I'm sorry.

JACKIE

Come on. Let's get you out of that
mess.

JACOB

As always. What would I do without
you?

JACKIE

Very little. Grab my tail. You're
not too big to do that.

He lowers his tail and Jacob grabs on as Jack pulls him out.

JACOB

My savior.

JACKIE

No, just a fox. As always.

JACOB

Jack, I couldn't.

JACKIE

I know. You're a good friend. It
was wrong of me to ask you.

JACOB

Jack, if you're so miserable...

JACKIE

Let's not talk about it. We have to
get you home. Your brothers have
told your father that they rescued
the Princess and caught the bird and
horse, and said you were killed along
the way.

JACOB

Those bastards!

JACKIE

They've also got these woods covered with their guards, who will shoot you on sight.

JACOB

Oh God!

JACKIE

Well, it's not time to get down on you now. I'd offer you my fox hide to conceal yourself in, but as you know you're too big a man for that now. But maybe if you can change clothes with someone, and get some makeup on you.

JACOB

Makeup?

JACKIE

Well, the brothel your brothers frequented isn't too far off. And I'm sure those girls wouldn't mind switching clothes with a prince.

JACOB

You're crazy.

JACKIE

Desperate times, my friend.

JACOB

All right. I was brought into the world by a woman, maybe one can keep me from a premature exit.

INT. BROTHEL -- NIGHT

The STRUMPETS fawn over him, dolling him up.

STRUMPET 1

My, what a big bosom you have!

JACOB

The better not to milk from--like this joke.

STRUMPET 2

Well, I think you look like a respectable young lady. You could work for us. You do have feminine features, except for the aquiline nose.

JACOB

It was my mother's, along with all her other good attributes.

STRUMPET 1

You wear them well.

JACOB

Thank you, ladies. I don't know how to repay you.

STRUMPET 2

You already did. We have five hundred thousand shillings.

JACOB

Right, of course. Thus am I a fool by my own purse.

STRUMPET 1

You look beautiful. You needn't worry about any guard recognizing you for who you are, but who you're not.

STRUMPET 2

I say. I know you're sworn to the young Golden Princess, but we are available for any bachelor parties at the royal palace. And if you don't think we're fair enough, or have such noble stuff, you can take up on that offer now.

JACOB

It is with great grief, and even more resistance, that I must decline. But in another life I would love you like mine.

They laugh.

STRUMPET 1

And a poet too!

JACOB

No. I just have the ramblings of one. I couldn't touch their gold.

They laugh.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Goodbye ladies, and spend your money wisely.

STRUMPET 2

We'll paint ourselves in gold like your bride.

JACOB

Yes.

(MORE)

JACOB (CONT'D)

I guess that's what everyone wants.
Too bad we have to waste our lives
chasing it to then realize we just
want the youth we spent on it. Fare
thee well, maidens!

STRUMPET 1

Of thine nether parts!

They laugh.

INT. DANSBURY CASTLE -- HALLWAY -- DAY

King Hollander is talking to Parsnipity.

HOLLANDER

I don't know, Parsnipity. She won't
come out of her room. And the horse
won't even let me approach it without
bowing it's head to me and kicking
up its legs. And the Golden Bird
that started my whole bloody pursuit,
wouldn't even so much as look at the
Golden Tree, let alone fly to it to
take my forbidden fruit.

PARSNIPITY

Well, it's been a hard journey for
us all, father.

HOLLANDER

I am going to meet with my council.
I don't like what's going on here,
but duty calls. There's some
questions concerning a tax for coal
and farming goods. The people are
clamoring about, and they need their
king. But if his household lacks
such a despotic body, how can his
kingdom expect one? They want their
new king. And this bride, as gold
as the sun, brings nothing but an
overcast of discontent.

PARSNIPITY

Well my father, if it weren't for
the rain...

HOLLANDER

I know, but you don't even see a
damn silver lining do you?

PARSNIPITY

The rain is silver.

HOLLANDER

So are my tears! You know one day, Parsnipity, you're going to have to make a choice, and it's going to split you in two. And whatever part is the stronger, that's going to win. And hopefully, that's who you will become.

PARSNIPITY

Yes, my father.

HOLLANDER

I disowned you once. Don't put it past me a second time.

PARSNIPITY

I don't. I expect it.

Hollander fumes and leaves.

Malroy comes over.

MALROY

What did he say?

PARSNIPITY

Words, words, words.

MALROY

I can't get them to cheer up.

PARSNIPITY

Well, I don't see why not. Your countenance would bring a newborn beyond his small capacity of love.

MALROY

They're going to give us away. I don't think Father believes us.

PARSNIPITY

Well, I can't say I blame him.

MALROY

I keep forgetting not to talk to you.

PARSNIPITY

I'm always here to remind you.

Malroy storms off.

INT. BEDCHAMBER -- CONTINUOUS

The Golden Princess sulks in the bed.

Malroy enters.

MALROY

My love, what makes your face so
gray?

GOLDEN PRINCESS

Only the clouds that will never clear
from my eyes.

MALROY

Jacob was a good man, but he was
weak. He was not even my father's
child. Our mother was a whore. She
cheated on him. And Jacob could
never become a king. You would have
to go back to your father nonetheless.

GOLDEN PRINCESS

Then take me back.

MALROY

You'll learn to like it here.

GOLDEN PRINCESS

You killed the only man for me.

MALROY

Listen to me!

He grabs her wrists.

MALROY (CONT'D)

There is nothing that cannot be
acclimated to by habit and use. You
will grow to love me. And you will
have the people's love. And they
will adore the King and Queen of
Dansbury. Do you think that love
comes with everything? No one gets
it for long. They have to repay it
with hate. Look around you. Do you
see things that equal that hate?
There are things tantamount to more.
There is brutality. There is unending
pain. I could crush your collarbone
and make your sternum touch the nape
of your neck and sever your head.
Nothing is too much, in the offsetting
touch, than my power!

He grabs her neck.

Just then Jacob flies to the window with the Six Swans--and
with his prostitute's disguise, makes the Golden Princess
laugh with surprise.

MALROY (CONT'D)

(relaxing his grasp)

Now that's it. See how quick you've come accustomed to me?

GOLDEN PRINCESS

No, lord, never. But there's someone who is always out of your touch, and he makes me laugh yet again.

He turns around and, seeing Jacob, immediately pulls his gun and fires, striking one of the Swans. The Swans cry and they careen toward the ground.

PRINCESS

No!

Malroy runs to look out the window. And then runs through the room, exiting the door, intent on confronting Jacob

EXT. DANSBURY CASTLE -- CONTINUOUS

They've all landed safely, except for the Swan struck, who has converted to a man, dying.

JACOB

You son of a bitch!

MALROY

And you're dressed like one. I was aiming at you.

JACOB

Well, here's your chance, brother!

JACKIE

Jacob, no!

Jackie runs over.

JACOB

Jack, get away from here. This is my business.

MALROY

Sure, can't do anything without your friend the fox. You told us how he led the way to every treasure you could ever find. Go ahead. Have him fight your fights too.

JACOB

You'll have to kill me before you touch him.

JACKIE

No, Jacob.

JACOB

No, this isn't about you. This is my family.

MALROY

Family? I could tell you something that would kill with words, but we've spared you the indecency that only your birth brought to our family.

JACOB

What are you saying?

MALROY

You're not our father's son. And you're not our brother.

JACOB

You lie.

MALROY

You don't look like us. You look like our mother, and whatever peasant she had a fling with.

JACOB

I'll kill you.

MALROY

That still won't erase the blotch of your birth.

Jacob grabs him by the lapels forcefully, but Malroy puts the barrel of his gun to his head.

JACOB

You're gonna kill me on the doorstep of your kingdom?

Malroy lets him go.

MALROY

Fine. You want to fight fair for once? Guards, give me your swords-- for me and my brother.

They stare at each other. The guards hand them their swords.

JACOB

Okay.

They begin to joust. The fight goes back and forth, at one time Jacob seizing the upper hand, then Malroy.

Finally, Malroy has him just where he wants, as Jacob has fallen and is slow to get up. He raises his sword to strike.

JACKIE

No!

Jackie runs and jumps in the way of the sword and is struck down.

JACOB

Jackie!

Malroy laughs maniacally and then is struck down by Jacob. He collapses, dead.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Jack, no!

He grabs onto Jack, lying there with faint breath.

JACKIE

Jacob, Jacob...

JACOB

Jack, you didn't have to...

JACKIE

I wanted to... That's what friends are for.

JACOB

You're my best friend, Jack. You came straight from God and you're going back.

JACKIE

No not yet, Jacob. Please, kill me the way I asked of you.

He looks at him.

JACOB

Why?

JACKIE

It's the way I do things. You can respect that can't you?

JACOB

Of course. I always will.

He raises his sword and closing his eyes, strikes off Jack's head.

Then with quick succession, strikes off his paws.

Suddenly, a light emanates from Jack and with a flash a man stands there. He is the same age as Jacob, and looks the same as well.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Jack!

JACK

Jacob, my brother!

They embrace.

JACOB

How did you know?

JACK

Blood may not be made of gold, but
the heart is. And when I looked
inside I saw the same engravings as
yours.

THE END