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The People News

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— Wanna Borrow A Jack? —

The following was sent to The People News by a reader. The author is unknown.

One day I went to a lawyer friend for advice. "I'm in real trouble" I said. "My neighbors across the road are going on vacation for a month; and instead of boarding their dogs they are going to keep them locked up and a woman is coming to feed them, if she doesn't forget. Meanwhile they'll be lonely and bark all day and howl all night, and I won't be able to sleep. I'll either have to call the SPCA to haul them away or I'll go berserk and go over there and shoot them and then when my neighbors return, they'll go berserk and come over and shoot me.

My lawyer patted back a delicate yawn. "Let me tell you a story," he said. "And don't stop me if you've heard it because it will do you good to hear it again."

"A fellow was speeding down a country road late at night and BANG! went a tire. He got out and looked but he had no jack.

"Then he said to himself. 'Well, I'll just walk to the nearest farmhouse and borrow a jack.' He saw a light in the distance and said, 'Well, I'm in luck; the farmer's up. I'll just knock on the door and say I'm in trouble, would you please lend me a jack? And he'll say, why sure, neighbor, help yourself, but bring it back.'

"He walked on a little farther and the light went out so he said to himself, 'Now he's gone to bed, and he'll be annoyed because I'm bothering him so he'll probably want some money for his jack. And I'll say, all right, it isn't very neighborly but I'll give you a quarter.

And he'll say, do you think you can get me out of bed in the middle of the night and then offer me a quarter? Give me a dollar or get yourself a jack somewhere else.'

"By the time he got to the farmhouse the fellow had

worked himself into a lather. He turned into the gate and muttered. 'A dollar! All right, I'll give you a dollar. But not a cent more! A poor devil has an accident and all he needs is a jack. You probably won't let me have one no matter what I give you. That's the kind of guy you are.'

"Which brought him to the door and he knocked angrily, loudly. The farmer stuck his head out the window above the door and hollered down, 'Who's there? What do you want?' The fellow stopped pounding on the door and yelled up, 'You and your stupid jack! You know what you can do with it!'"

When I stopped laughing, I started thinking, and I said, "Is that what I've been doing?"

"Right," he said, "and you'd be surprised how many people come to a lawyer for advice, and instead of calmly stating the facts, start building up a big imaginary fight; what he'll say to his partner, what she'll say to her husband, or how they'll tell the old man off about his will. So, I tell them the story about the jack and they cool off.

"The next time I hear from them, one tells me that the partner was glad to meet him halfway; the gal says she can't understand it, her husband was so reasonable she thought she must have gotten somebody else on the phone; the relatives found out the old man had

already been asking a lawyer how he could give everything to them before he died, to save them inheritance tax."

I thought, "How true! Most of us go through life bumping into obstacles we could easily bypass; spoiling for a fight and lashing out in blind rages at fancied wrongs and imaginary foes. "And we don't even realize what we are doing until someone startles us one day with a vivid word like a lightning flash on a dark night."

Well, the other night I was driving home from the city. I was late for dinner and I hadn't phoned my wife. As I crawled along in a line of cars, I became more and more frustrated and angry. I'll tell her I was caught in the heavy weekend traffic and she'll say, "Why didn't you phone me before you left town?"

Then I'll say, "What dif-

ference does it make anyway, I'm here!" And she'll say, "Yes, and I'm here, too, and I've been here all day waiting to hear from you!" And I'll say, "I suppose I haven't anything else to do but call you up every hour on the hour and make like a lovebird!" And she'll say, "You mean like a wolf, but you wouldn't be calling me!"

By this time I am turning into the drive and I am plenty steamed up.

As I jumped out and slammed the car door, my wife flung open the window upstairs. "All right!" I shouted up to her, "Say it!"

"I will," she cooed softly. "Wanna borrow a jack?"

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