

Jack Sleeps by Louis Cox (01.12.16 – 002b)

Hi, my name is Jack, and I'm the most terrific liar you'll ever meet. When I was seven years old my father took me to my first psychiatry appointment. My first paying job was at my mother's catering company: she put me to work sharpening her knives. I love me a good sharp knife. And I know how to touch the edge without cutting myself. Trust me, I know my knives.

Anyway, when I was about thirteen my older sister decided it was a good idea to give me an eight ball of cocaine and a copy of the book *American Psycho*. She left me alone to enjoy the book while she went upstairs and fucked her boyfriend in my room.

Well, to be precise, it was *our* room. We shared a tiny bunk-bed that our father never saw fit to replace with a larger one. Fuck me, I wish I hadn't grown so tall so quickly.

Anyway, one night I was sleeping soundly in my bed when I woke up to the strange creaking sound of moving wood. At first, I wasn't sure where it was coming from. Was there an intruder? Were we being burglarized?

Better safe than sorry, I always say.

I pretended to be asleep, assuming that burglars were here to steal my possessions downstairs, not creep into my bedroom to rape and/or stab me in my sleep. But, just in case, I pretended to roll over in the manner that I imagined real sleeping people do, and I slowly slid my hand up the bed sheet and underneath my pillow where I grasped the handy hammer I liked to keep there, just in case.

I always figured that a predator expected their prey to scream, or freeze up, or call for help. Maybe they would fight back or try to defend themselves. But would anyone expect their sleeping prey to jump up and swing a big honking hammer right into their god-dammed temple?

I certainly didn't think so.

A moment later, I heard the creaking noise again, this time accompanied by a wedge of light leaking from the direction of the bedroom door. Growing ever wider, with every breath I took.

"Everything alright in there, Jack?" The voice sounded oddly parental.

"Yeah! Everything's fine!" My sister shouted from the bunk above me in a seemingly apprehensive tone.

I did my best imitation of someone who was still sleeping: let out a loud gruffing yawn, smacked my lips together, and rolled over, away from the door, in the direction of the westerly wall.

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The noise I imagined to be a burglar must have simply been my mother wandering off to the kitchen for a late night snack: she did love her cocktail shrimp.

The sound of my mother's voice accompanied by the realization that the sound I had heard was in fact, not a burglar, was like a warm wave of water washing over me. So I pulled the covers up to my shoulders, and drifted off to sleep.

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I found myself awaking to the same noise again, but this time I dismissed it as my mom returning to the fridge for another snack. I drifted off: back into my deep slumber.

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Suddenly I was shaken. I was moving. The creaking sound was back, but this time it was coming from the bunk bed itself. I didn't know what the hell was going on. But whatever it was, it was right on top of me. Something was trying to get at me through the bunk-bed's guardrail; I knew it, a burglar.

I squeezed the handle of the hammer as tight as I could, and in one smooth motion, I leapt up and swung it at my attacker.

THWACK!

And a crack later, I had planted it through the layers of what had to have been someone's skull. Cracked it open like a peanut shell, I think.

As the blood began to pour over the head, down the hilt, and up my arm: I heard a loud, shrill scream:

"Jack! What have you done!!!" my sister screamed in horror.

Oh crap I realized, I think I'd just killed her boyfriend.