

Spring Heeled Jack

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This is a story I just wrote based on one of London's folk legends about a guy named Spring Heeled Jack. He was a prankster with odd abilities spotted many times from 1840 up until 1970 in various locations.

For information about "Spring He

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1 - Origins of Old Spring Heel

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I felt sorry for him. He was completely misunderstood. Well, not completely: he had been making a habit of terrorizing people for over 150 years. He would jump around, harassing women and beating men, all night long. He had been hunted down on many occasions in many towns, but fortunately for him the bullets had no effect. The point is, I could see why people would find him a villain... a troublemaker in the least. But, I have to say that I didn't really blame him for striking back at humanity for their sins against him.

He was born quite different in appearance from regular humans, he was a mutant. One of the very first, one of the very oldest. His ears, to start with, were oddly pointed and elf-like. His eyes were of a red coloration, bright and almost glowing. His fingers and toes, claw like in appearance had startled his parents. But these things, enough to set him apart already, were forgotten by his loving family. They could see right through the defects to the charming little boy within.

The real issue began after his 13th birthday. Way back then, around 1820, he was an alter boy at the local church. It was a small town, and the townspeople (though slightly nervous) had accepted him as one of their own. But, on this day, his mutation would activate to a less passive end. The mass was coming to a close, and he went to blow out the candles by the altar. This time, not only did carbon dioxide flow rapidly from his lips, but other gases joined in. Flammable gases like methane and carbon monoxide flowed with a breath meant to destroy the flames. The effect produced was a cone of flame that seemed to have shot from the boy's mouth.

The methane, unbeknownst at the time of course, was a byproduct of his mutation. This mutation was one that kept his cells young, he would not age normally. He was, however, putting out a whole lot more methane than the average human would. Now, at the time of the church fire, he was not producing nearly as much as he does today- his metabolism had not shot up yet as a result of this mutation. His metabolism apparently skyrocketed to force him to eat more food to in turn provide his body with the massive amounts of energy that it needed to stay youthful. He was becoming an engine, one that had cells capable of staying young and healthy if given a lot of energy to do so. In turn, this engine had byproducts. Byproducts that he could use to explosive ends.

Now, no one actually perished in the church fire he caused in his attempt to end the mass by distinguishing the last candle. However, the townsfolk had a real issue letting the boy back into the rebuilt church, let alone their hearts. Those who had once loved him as a regular boy were now the ones spreading rumors about the fire-breathing demonesque young boy from London's outskirts.

Of course, the boy's family tried to forget the incident. Or at least his mother did. His father had not spoken to him since, and his siblings were terrified of his existence. Things were not as they had been before, but he was still living with them and enduring the troubles. As he tried to mend his relationship with his family during a difficult transition into mutated manhood, he killed the one chance had at success.

The family was not stupid, they knew that the candle was the issue. They kept the boy away from all sources of flame to be sure he would not ignite another dangerous fire. His mother, after a very taxing day of sibling rivalry and a fight between her special boy and her husband, came to check on the boy deep into the night. She figured that while he was sleeping there was no possibility of another incident.

She gently sat down beside him and slowly brought the candle close to see her young one's face. With motherly love, she caressed his cheek and wished the best for him. He awoke with a start at her touch, and in the proceeding breath ignited not only his own face but his mother's dress. She burned alive that night, and he was left with a scarred face to remind him of the terrible circumstances culminating around his being.

He was chased from his home, never to return.

The boy wandered, and grew into quite the prankster. He hid his identity with a very menacing venetian mask, it was white and glossy with a very large nose and furrowed brows.

His contempt for those who banished him fueled his mind; the byproduct of his mutation fueled his attacks. He became known, mostly due to the headlines of the papers, as Spring Heeled Jack. His body refused to age beyond a man of his mid twenties, his mutation grew stronger. Eventually, not only did his body reproduce cells very well (to keep him young), but it also did so with great speed (healing any ailments he received surprisingly quickly. As if to haunt him, the burns on his that he received before the new ability manifested were never healed. His muscles also grew very strong and he worked on his agility. He became quite acrobatic from his constant escapes, hence the 'Spring Heel' moniker.

His endeavors grew more and more dark as his hatred of the mankind who shunned him did the same. Starting out with simple pranks and scares, he moved onto sexually harassing, and in some cases, raping women. He was an outcast, and this was his twisted way of quelling his desire for flesh. He also began to violently attack the men of the towns he visited, focusing a lot of attention on the military. He saw them as the protectors of his adversary- normal humankind. He was known for dropping in from above and smacking lieutenants across their surprised faces.

As the red-eyed menace became more widely known, he had to devise a secondary method of defense- he got a cane. This cane had a short sword hidden within its shaft, and if cornered Jack would draw it with great fury in his glowing eyes.

His other tool of the trade was a very nice sterling silver lighter. He had stolen it from his father, a man he no longer considered as such. He had it with him at all times, it had a Venetian mask engraved on its surface as a mark of his ownership. This was what he used to give the impression of a very bright and powerful fire-breathing skill.

Eventually Jack tired of Europe and ventured to the new world- America. He has been back and forth a few times, but since the last sighting in the 1970's he has been hiding out here in the U.S.

I met Jack because of my mutation. My mutation is much different than his, but still was the source of my alienation from the general populace. My looks are not exactly acceptable on the streets. I did the clichéd thing and ran away to the circus. Well, at least I didn't decide to torture those who tortured me. I am a little more levelheaded. I use their fear and curiosity as a means for my survival. Their prejudice keeps food on my table.

My mutation has a similarity to Jack's: my glowing red eyes. My eyes are luminescent, they produce enough light for me to see even in the darkest of situations. This means I must keep the best in UV protection for my eyes at hand, they are too sensitive for daylight. I also have the ability to alter the effects of gravity on my body and, more and more each day, on other objects. This ability somehow is connected to vestibular sense, and as such I am extremely balanced and aware of my position at all times. Finally, my body is also revealing a healing factor: another similarity with good old Jack. The similarities in our biology may have saved my life, and may yet save his humanity.

He showed up to terrorize the circus. He had heard of a mutant living among the humans of the circus, and was furious. Jack may have been hiding out since the 70's, but he had been active-

searching for and antagonizing mutants who were sympathetic to his persecutors of old. Since I was living in harmony with the humans, I was on his list.

He did not know what my mutation was, but figured that he would use his acute vision to his advantage, attacking late at night. He loved the fear aspect so much. He started with some light scaring to let his presence be known, building up to the usual sexual altercations, and ending with straight forward violence against the ringleader and other important members of the circus. He apparently then spotted the painted trailer exclaiming that visitors marvel at the Prowler. Yes, that is what they call me.

He burst through a window, but of course I was already awake. With a name like 'the Prowler' and a mutation like mine, it is only natural that I go partially nocturnal. Anyway, he was hoping to catch me off guard, obviously he was discouraged to see me sitting quietly reading a novel in my recliner. With no lights on. Instantly he greeted me, and expressed his annoyance with my similarity to him.

"I just can't believe I stumbled upon some brat with the same mutation as me," he said, putting a certain tone on 'me' that reflected the self importance he had gained in all of his adventures. He was quite full of himself for being completely alone. And, he referred to me as 'brat' simply because I did not look to be my current age of 21.

"Who exactly are you?" I asked, without removing at least a bit of my attention from the novel I had at hand (*Life of Pi*, if you are interested).

"Well, I was going to be the very essence of your nightmares... the scourge of your existence. What exactly are you doing fraternizing with the bastards? You know they don't accept you as one of them," he prodded. He also pointed at me in an oh-so-melodramatic manner, and I sensed his age. No one talked with that air about them anymore, no one who wasn't acting in a play.

"I like your mask," I told him. "Does that really terrify the others as much as you want me to think? And, by the way, of course I know they don't accept me. But in case you haven't noticed: This is a circus. The people here are not accepted by other people either. And, in fact, we use that to make a living. They are amazed and scared by us, and will pay to view us. So you see, just because they wronged me, I do not have to comply to their negativity."

He did not seem very excited at that response. It led me to believe that the other mutants had not come to this conclusion. Maybe they were all delusional, seeing some fragment of belonging and acceptance on the world and clinging to it. Either that, or they had all come to my exact conclusion and he was tired of hearing it.

"I have the urge to burn for your apathy towards their sins!" he exclaimed angrily, fuming.

"Pyrokinetic, eh? Well, may I first ask why you are burning other mutants to prove your point? Why not burn those who you so strongly despise?" I inquired, stupidly trying to push this dark stranger's buttons. It's amazing how unafraid one can be when their body has the ability to heal itself in minutes, sometimes seconds.

He explained to me how long he had been around (including I previously mentioned) and told me that he had given up on scaring and tormenting the humans once he heard about others who were springing up with mutations. He said they needed to see the light, that they were not being accepted in this world and they should feel the urge to do something about it.

"You just seem like you can't get over things too well... Did you say it's been 150 years? Well. I can't question your persistence, but I can question your sanity." I added.

With that, he lit his lighter and proceeded to blow a stream of fire at me, burning the book I was so eagerly reading. That was not pleasing to me. It was a very good book. My skin immediately began healing itself, I dealt with the pain.

"I hope you know you owe me a new copy of *Life of Pi*," I admonished. He simply stood in silence for a few seconds, obviously surprised by our second parallel.

"Great, a little clone of Spring Heel right before me." he so dramatically put.

“What? You do that, too? Weird. Well, if it makes you feel any more unique, I don't spew fire. I do this instead.” I informed him, concentrating with everything I had to ‘grab’ his lighter and levitate it to my right hand. I wasn't going to have him burning my trailer to the ground. It was my home, as lowly as it was. I was also wondering about the fact that my mind prefers to put objects in my right hand, even though I am left-handed by nature. It made me wonder which side of my brain did the levitation trick.

“Child, you will return that to me immediately, or face the consequences,” he advised, beginning to draw his short sword.

“I'm not really the violent type, but I would like to suggest that you don't take me on in hand to hand combat. The reason is linked to the levitation trick, and it could prove quite painful and difficult to take me down.” I tried to intimidate my would-be attacker. I was a shrimp, and I was hoping the words would be enough.

“I would like to think that I am no pushover either, lad.” he said, getting tensed for his planned attack.

I tossed him his precious lighter. “Fine, have it back then. I guess you don't really breathe the fire on your own then.” I mocked.

He was not pleased, and lunged. I reacted, lifting and rotating out of my recliner and up onto the ceiling, evading his strike and walking down the far wall. I then put everything I had into pulling his sword to the ground. He could no longer hold it, and it crashed to floor. I slid it to my vicinity, picking up.

“Will we play the same game all night, trading which of your weapons I hold, or shall we talk about why you are going to let me be?” I smirked.

“You have potential, if only you would see the flaw in your logic. These humans deserve none of your kindness.” he snarled.

“Who are we to decide what they do or do not deserve? I would argue that some higher power would deserve that privilege, not the ones stung by their prejudice. We have a bias. Well, especially you.” I laughed.

“I admit that your argument does not lack a healthy dose of logic... I wish to discuss this further...” he expressed with a tone of defeat.

“Don't be raw about it, I just don't think attacking everyone really solves your problem...” I told him, easing up a little on the tension and returning his short sword.

He moved into my trailer, I told the rest of the circus that he was an angry relative come to get me back from their captivity. They bought it, probably because of our ‘family resemblance’. He needed a rest anyway, I could tell he would enjoy joining us.

After about a week, he became bored, and I had the ringleader introduced to his control of flame. The ringleader agreed that he would make a wonderful addition to the fire-breathing segment. A wonderful finale, even.

He became my adopted, surly father figure. He may have been angry, but he had much to teach and tell. And apparently, my idealistic innocence had something to aid his faring temper. We both finally began to feel like we were fitting in somewhere...