

Starring:

Bella Kingdom	Jack Woodstock
	

“She’s A Lumberjack and She’s Okay”

The sunlight poured through the lush green thicket of the woods beyond the bustling life of Harper City. Bella's cheerful footsteps echoed through the forest as she made her way to Jack's cabin, the vibrant pink of her hair standing out against the muted tones of the woods.

Her heart was heavy with concern for her friend. - Jack, once a strong and resilient man, now sat alone on the porch of his cabin. The weight of his recent divorce, the loss of his family, and the strain of financial hardship were etched across his face.



Approaching him, Bella's eyes softened with empathy. Jack held a cup of coffee in one hand, a cigarette in the other, and a small organizer trembled in his grip. Despite his attempts to appear calm, his inner turmoil was palpable.

"Hey there, tough guy," Bella said, her voice a gentle salve in the midst of Jack's pain.

Jack looked up, his eyes lighting up with surprise and gratitude at the sight of his friend.

"...hey...? - Bella Kingdom! - What's brought you up here...?" he asked, his voice carrying a mix of astonishment and relief.

Bella settled down next to him, her presence offering a momentary reprieve from his troubles.



"I don't know," she replied, a hint of playful teasing in her tone. "Maybe my favorite little outback man hasn't been to the gym lately, and maybe I was worried about him."

Jack managed a faint smile, appreciating the effort she was making to lighten the mood.

"I didn't know you knew me so well..." he said, his voice trailing off.

"Me neither," Bella admitted, her eyes reflecting genuine concern. "But Chloe clued me in on what's been going on with you, so I thought I'd come and say hi. I've never gotten along with that Carol of yours; There's not many girls I can say have been rude to ME, but... yeah. Let's just say she hasn't exactly impressed me."

Jack let out a sigh, his shoulders slumping under the weight of his troubles.

"...hardly impressed me, either," he confessed, his voice heavy with bitterness.

A long pause hung between them, filled with unspoken understanding.

"I'm sorry, honey," Bella said softly, her words carrying the warmth of genuine friendship.

"It's okay. I'm just trying to look after myself right now. I'm the only guy I know who can do it," Jack said, his voice laced with resignation as he shared his struggles with Bella.

In a gesture of comfort, Bella patted Jack gently on the back, understanding the weight of his words.



"But what the hell do you do?" Jack continued, his voice filled with frustration. "If I fight, I drag those children through courts, and I drive that mother even crazier, and the kids will be the ones to feel her

frustrations even more than me. I don't like her, but she's good to the kids. So, I'm caught as to whether to intervene or not... and it feels best if I... not."

A heavy silence settled between them, each word hanging in the air, laden with Jack's turmoil.

"Sorry, Bella," Jack muttered, his eyes reflecting the complexity of his emotions.

Bella reached out, her hand resting gently on Jack's arm, her eyes filled with understanding.

"...don't be sorry," she said softly. "Honey, I'm only quiet because this subject's your domain. I just wanna hear what your mind's up to."

Jack stood up, his resolve firming as he patted Bella on the shoulder, silently inviting her to join him.

"I gotta cut some wood for my fire, and some of the city folk. We can keep talking, if you can stomach it," Jack offered, his voice a mix of weariness and determination.

Bella smiled, her pink hair catching the sunlight as she matched his determination.

"It takes more than a bit of emotion to put me off, Jack. Can I chop too?" she asked, her tone light yet sincere.

Jack eyed Bella, his initial surprise giving way to a faint smile.

"S-Sure. That'll... liven things up a bit," he agreed, his mood lifting slightly.

Bella let out a hearty laugh, striking a playful pose and flexing her muscles for emphasis.

"I'm pink, but I'm POWERFUL!" she declared, her laughter infectious.

They shared a genuine moment of camaraderie, even Jack exhaling through a tiny withered grin, Bella's warm voice echoing throughout the forest as they headed towards the firewood shed. Jack tossed Bella an axe, and together, they embraced the physical task ahead, finding solace in each other's presence amidst the challenges of Jack's life.

Jack watched Bella with a mix of amusement and caution as she prepared to chop wood, his voice tinged with a hint of concern.



"...please don't cause an earthquake. As the maintainer of the forest, it'd be a bad look for me," Jack said, a playful glimmer in his tired baggy eyes.

Bella grinned playfully, looking borderline dangerous as she examined the axe with her huge eyes wide with an almost child-like excitement. She lowered her eyelids, firing a sultry smile at her friend.

"Honey, my muscles amplify my power, so if I swung too hard I'd slice the planet in two! It's fair to say that I wouldn't wanna do something like this if I didn't have good CONTROL of my strength," she replied, her tone light but assured.

Jack chuckled, acknowledging her point, albeit with a touch of disbelief.

"...it also explains how you can pat me on the back without breaking every bone in my body. I take your point," Jack said, smiling to himself as Bella effortlessly sliced the wood like she was cutting a cake, barely swinging at all but with maximum effect.

"...so... have you considered seeing a doctor yet?" Bella asked, her concern evident as she carefully chopped another small section of wood. Despite her immense strength, she handled the axe with precision, valuing their conversation over the activity.

Jack placed another section of wood on the chopping block, his expression thoughtful.

"...why would I do that...?" he replied, his voice trailing off.

"A tune-up, I guess. I'm not saying you need a straitjacket and a padded cell, but..." Bella started, her words gentle yet insistent. - Jack nodded, his eyes reflecting the internal struggle he faced.

"I hear ya. I'd be lying if I said I wasn't bouncing off the walls, some days. Talking to myself, you know how it goes," he admitted, his vulnerability showing.

Bella offered a comforting smile, finding solace in their shared understanding.

"Hey, don't knock talking to yourself. Bella's my favorite person to talk to, y'know!" she said, her laughter filling the air.

"Yep. That Jack knows his stuff, for sure. Well, some days he does," he replied, his tone self-deprecating.



Bella, always eager to help, pointed her axe toward a large uncut pile of logs, her eyes sparkling with determination. - "Hey! - Can I do a whole log?" she asked, her enthusiasm infectious.

Jack couldn't help but laugh at the genuine excitement sparkling in Bella's eyes as she gestured towards some of the freshly cut trees.

"Ha ha! - N-No, Bella. - I try not to chop it all up at once because it's surprisingly rough out here, I try not to cut what isn't going to be used straight away." Jack explained, his amusement evident.

But Jack glanced at the pile of logs, then at Bella's epic and muscular physique, and back at the logs again, his curiosity piqued.

"...a-although I do kinda wanna SEE you make quick work of one. Alright! - Just one!" Jack conceded, a smile playing on his lips.

"Yes!" Bella cheered heartily, effortlessly lifting one of the massive, heavy logs as if it were as light as a feather. Jack couldn't hide his astonishment.

"Geez. You just pluck it off the ground like it's a coffee cup, don'tcha..." he marveled, his eyes wide with disbelief.



Bella gently placed the log on the ground and began chopping it into sections, her strength evident in each precise stroke. Jack found himself laughing more and more as he watched her work.

"Ha ha! - What??" Bella questioned, her expression a mix of confusion and amusement.

"YOU! - You're slicing it like it's a loaf of bread...!" Jack exclaimed, his laughter infectious.

"Is... that bad...?" Bella asked, a hint of concern in her voice.

"No! - You're just INSANELY strong...!" Jack replied, his admiration clear.

A pause settled between them, filled with unspoken gratitude.

"Heh. - You really cheered me up today, Bella; I appreciate it. I was really feeling like crap," Jack confessed, his voice genuine.

"Aww, you're welcome, Jack," Bella said warmly. "I've never chopped wood before; it's been fun!"

Jack smiled appreciatively at Bella's accomplishment, acknowledging the speed and efficiency with which she had handled the task, but before long, the Pink Paladin was slaying countless wooden logs.



"This is too much fun. I have to stop." Bella stuttered, her chunky hands finally dropping the axe.

"I'll say. You're an addict and you need to quit before you take out the whole forest, you big beautiful maniac." Jack muttered, looking around at the mounting pile of chopped wood beginning to surround them, his playful insult warmed Bella's heart to hear, like an ember of who the man used to be still burning inside him.

"...well. You've done... MORE than what would've taken me half an hour in a few SECONDS, so how about a coffee?" he suggested, his voice warm. "The beans are actually from this land just a few acres that way."

"Cool. That sounds lovely," Bella replied, her cheerful tone matching the pleasant prospect. "Shall I pile these up while you do that?"



"Err - sure! - Go ahead. I'll be back in a few minutes," Jack agreed, his gratitude evident as he retreated back into the cabin.

As Bella continued stacking the wood, her thoughts turned inward. She pondered Jack's struggles, recognizing that she couldn't fix him, nor should she attempt to. Instead, she followed her heart, finding solace in his presence and cherishing the genuine connection they shared. She simply wanted to enjoy his company, hoping that in those moments, he might find a measure of peace.

"Some things can only heal with time, and time passes fastest when you're having fun," she mused to herself, finding comfort in the wisdom of those words as she worked. With each log she placed neatly in the pile, she embraced the simple pleasure of being there for her friend, offering him the support he needed without expecting anything in return.

Bella smiles warmly to herself, knowing that Jack was far from a man with nothing to do, and wondered what other work she could help him with.

Of course, this was not about the work, this was about the company.

