

# Laughing Turnip

by Jim Gold

**T**om Legume had a vegetable garden in his backyard where he planted rows of tomatoes, corns, potatoes, Swiss chard, carrots, cucumbers, and turnips.

At the end of the summer, he started picking his vegetables, filling baskets with tomatoes, corn, potatoes, Swiss chard, carrots, cucumbers . . . and turnips.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Tom looked around. Who was laughing? No one else was in the garden. He bent to pick some more.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

“Who’s that?” He looked in his basket.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

It was the turnip! Really?

Tom had never heard a laughing turnip before. He shook his head in wonder.

But soon his confusion turned into an idea. His mother and father needed cash to open a dry-cleaning business. No one had ever heard of a laughing turnip. With proper promotion, this vegetable could make lots of money.

The next day, Tom took the turnip to Pathmark, where he laid it beside his purchases at the checkout counter. When the turnip laughed, the checkout man eyed Tom. “Young man, are you laughing at me?”

“No, sir,” answered Tom. “It’s my turnip.”

“You think I’m stupid?”

“No, no. There it is on the counter.” Tom pointed to the dormant vegetable. The turnip laughed.

“Watch out, kid. Anyone laughs at me gets smacked in the face.”

“It’s not me. It’s my—”

When the turnip laughed again, the checkout man grabbed a broom. “Get out!” he shouted, swinging the broom. Tom grabbed his turnip and ran out the door.

Next he went to the hardware store. The turnip laughed again. “Sorry,” Tom apologized to the manager. “It's my turnip.”

“Just pay for the hammer,” the manager sighed. “Why do I get all the nutcases?”

Tom began to doubt himself as left the store. “Who will believe me? What can I do with my turnip?”

He walked several miles in deep thought. Suddenly, he cried, “TV stations! They'll believe me!”

He visited the local WBBB-TV station and showed his turnip to the director. The director called management. Management loved it! Rubbing his hands with glee, the director said, “No other station has one. Our ratings will soar!”

Then the head of sales added, “We can't put a naked turnip on TV. Let's dress him up.”

They dressed the turnip in a shirt, tie, jacket, pressed pants, and polished black shoes. After that, the vegetable looked quite handsome. Management decided to give him his own talk show.

The new show, called “Turnip Time,” opened in December in a prime-time spot. Audiences loved the Laughing Turnip. Holiday sales increased after he answered all their questions with a laugh. As his speaking ability improved, he expanded the breadth and depth of his answers, commenting on politics, human relations, gender marriage, space travel, and the weather. He punctuated every sentence with a healthy chortle.

Management then changed his name to Ted Turnip.

Years passed. Much of the country became vegetarian. Ted made so much money he soon gave up his talk show and bought the TV station, a farm, and a garden in the country—and then he gave up laughing altogether.

At that point, Ted Turnip didn't need Tom Legume anymore. He gave him twenty-one dollars for his service as a talent scout and told him to kiss off.

Meanwhile, Tom's parents' dry-cleaning business was nearly bankrupt. But Tom wouldn't quit. The following spring, he planted another garden. Fourteen laughing turnips came up. Using one of them as a talk-show host and the others as reporters, actors, and ad reps, he started his own TV station.

After his network raked in its first million, he saved his parents' business with a quick infusion of cash.

When Ted Turnip heard about Tom's new success, vegetable jealousy drained the vital juices from his green heart, and soon, like any other dried vegetable, he shriveled up and died.

Today, Ted is planted in the Vegetable Graveyard owned by none other than the entrepreneur Tom Legume. The Graveyard recently raised its entrance fee to ten dollars per lettuce head—all tax deductible.

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