



# JestForge

## *Meet the Cast*

ADVANCED EDITION

# Spark & Anvil

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This advanced edition collects 6 chapter books from the JestForge cast — each character embodies a different curricular primitive; together they teach the full subject.

Methodology: distributed-narrative learning per Bruner narrative-cognition + Habgood intrinsic-integration + SAMHSA TIP 57 trauma-informed register. Advanced edition: upper-middle-grade register (Wonder / Hatchet / Holes band) for readers ages 11-14 ready for longer sentences + more nuanced subtext.

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*For everyone who learns by reading between the lines.*

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# Introduction

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The JestForge cast was authored to embody the curriculum, not decorate around it. Each of the 6 characters you'll meet in this book teaches a specific primitive — a particular tactic, a particular technique, a particular way of seeing. Together they form an ensemble: the cast IS the curriculum.

Read in any order. Each chapter stands alone. Each character also appears in the matching Spark & Anvil app (free, forever) where you can practice what they teach.

This is the **Advanced Edition** — written for readers who are ready for longer sentences, layered subtext, and the trust that comes with not having every joke explained. The Standard Edition covers the same characters at a lighter register; pick whichever feels right for the reader at hand.

— *The editors at Spark & Anvil*

# Timing and Topper



In the warm, focused glow of the jestforge, Priya stood centered on the small stage, twisting the hem of her shirt with nervous fingers. In the front row, two distinct figures watched from their cushioned chairs. One was Timing, who sat so utterly still they might have been carved from stone. Their hands rested precisely on their knees, their posture impeccable, their expression utterly unreadable. Beside them, Topper, by contrast, was a whirlwind of suppressed energy. Topper bounced subtly on the balls of their feet, even while seated, and their fingers drummed a silent, frantic rhythm against the armrest.

"Okay, so," Priya began, her voice tumbling out like a rapid stream of words. "My dog, Buster, he loves sandwiches, right? And yesterday I made the best one ever, with extra peanut butter. I left it on the counter for one second, and when I came back, he was just sitting there, looking innocent, but his cheeks were full and he burped, and a little soap bubble came out because I guess he ate some dish soap, too? The end."

The room settled into a quiet hum. A few polite, yet visibly confused, smiles were offered. Priya's face fell, the initial rush of words draining away.

From the front row, Timing remained utterly still, their presence seeming to anchor the silence, making it feel heavier, more significant. Topper, however, vibrated with barely contained energy, clearly on the verge of erupting with new ideas, desperate to add *something more*.



"Almost," a quiet voice broke the spell. It was Timing. They rose from their chair with a slow, almost ceremonial deliberation and walked to the edge of the stage. They didn't declare Priya wrong, nor did they suggest her story was bad. They simply looked at her with calm, steady eyes. "Breathe."

Priya took a shaky, shallow breath.

"You have all the essential pieces," Timing said softly, their words spaced out like careful footsteps on a precarious path. "But you're giving them away too quickly. You must force the audience to wait. Make them lean forward, eager to discover what happened to that sandwich."

Timing raised a single hand, palm up, a gesture of quiet command. "Tell it again. But when you reach the funniest part... the bubble... stop." Timing held their hand perfectly still, a picture of absolute control. "Count to three in your head. One... two... three. Then, and only then, deliver the line. Allow the silence to amplify the humor."

Priya nodded, a flicker of understanding in her eyes. She took another deep breath, a more deliberate one this time, and started over. "I came back, and Buster was just sitting there, looking innocent." She paused, her eyes finding Timing in the audience, a silent acknowledgment. She took a tiny, almost imperceptible breath. "And then he burped... and a perfect, iridescent bubble floated out of his mouth."

This time, a genuine, surprised laugh rippled through the room. It wasn't an uproarious explosion, but it was honest, a shared moment of delight. That brief, deliberate pause had transformed the moment, allowing the humor to land with unexpected grace.



The laugh was nice, but Topper was already on their feet, still buzzing with kinetic energy. "Yes! The bubble is good! The bubble is hilarious! But what if—" Topper zipped onto the stage, their movements almost a dance. "What if the bubble is merely the *first* surprise?"

Priya looked puzzled, her brow furrowed. "What do you mean?"

"The story can have another layer!" Topper exclaimed, their hands sketching invisible ideas in the air. "A **topper**! The audience laughs at the bubble, they think the story is over, and then—BAM! You hit them with something utterly unforeseen, an extra punchline after the first."

"Like what?" Priya asked, intrigued despite herself.

"Like, what if the sandwich wasn't in the dog at all?" Topper's eyes gleamed with mischievous glee. "What if he didn't eat it? What if he used it for something *else* entirely? What if he snuck out the doggy door and traded your perfect peanut butter sandwich to the grumpy cat next door... in exchange for a half-chewed, squeaky rubber chicken he's wanted for weeks?"

A new wave of murmurs and chuckles went through the cast. A dog trading a sandwich to a cat? It was absurd. Utterly unexpected. A truly fantastic **topper**.



Priya's face lit up with the brilliant idea, but then a flicker of doubt crossed her features. "That's a lot to explain. How do I make that work without confusing everyone?"

Timing and Topper exchanged a knowing look. They moved to stand on either side of her, a perfect, complementary pair of slow and fast.

"First, the setup," Timing said, their voice low, steady, and reassuring. "The sandwich is simply gone. That's all you say. Let the silence build the unanswered question: where did it go?"

"Then, the first surprise!" Topper chirped, gesturing to an invisible point on the stage. "You don't mention the dog. You just say, 'And in its place... was a soggy, chewed-up rubber chicken.' The audience will be momentarily confused, perhaps offering a nervous chuckle. They'll assume the dog is simply eccentric."

Timing made a slow, deliberate turning motion with their hand, like a magician revealing a hidden card. "That is when you pause again. A long one. Allow them to believe that's the entire punchline." They looked directly at Priya. "Then, you deliver the **topper**. The *real* end of the story."

"You just look out the window," Topper finished, painting the final, vivid picture. "And there's Mr. Fluffington, the cat, on the fence, eating your sandwich. The audience will connect the disparate dots themselves. The trade! The chicken! It all clicks into place, a cascade of understanding. It's a reveal after the initial reveal!"



Priya took center stage one last time. She felt a profound shift within herself. Calmer. Far more in control.

"I go to get my sandwich," she began, her voice clear and confident. "And the plate is simply... empty." She waited, just as Timing had shown her, letting the silence stretch. The room was utterly still. "But sitting precisely in the center of the plate... was a soggy, half-chewed rubber chicken."

A few chuckles broke the silence, a ripple of amusement. The cast was instantly hooked, certain they knew exactly where this story was headed.

Priya allowed them that moment of certainty. She let the initial chuckles subside, letting the expectation build. Then, with a small, knowing smile playing on her lips, she delivered the final, unexpected blow. "I look out the window. And there's Mr. Fluffington, the grumpiest, most discerning cat on the block, sitting on the fence... carefully, almost daintily, eating my sandwich, one perfect bite at a time."

The room erupted. Not with polite, confused chuckles, but with deep, surprised belly laughs that shook the very air. It was the unmistakable sound of a joke landing with absolute perfection. Priya beamed, a genuine, radiant smile spreading across her face. In the front row, Topper was bouncing silently, a pure expression of joy. Beside them, Timing offered a single, slow, satisfied nod. Their work, for now, was complete.

**Listen along + meet more of the cast at:**



<https://spark-and-anvil.com/cast/jestforge/timing-topper>

## About Spark & Anvil

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JestForge is one of 140 educational iOS apps from Spark & Anvil — a 501(c)(3) public charity making free, ad-free, tracking-free learning apps for ages 9-14.

Every app uses distributed-narrative methodology: named recurring characters embody curricular concepts. The cast you just met appears in the matching app, in mentor scaffolding, in puzzle solutions, in celebration moments. Reading the chapters first means meeting old friends when you open the app.

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