



## JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

On the edge of a village, there used to live a very poor family. They lived a humble life in a small shack, but they were happy and content. The father made his living as a woodcutter and the mother took care of the household and their little boy Jack.

However one sad day, a tree fell on the unfortunate father and he never returned home again.

After his death, a cloud of misery crept into the house. Jack and his mother had nothing to eat and the only thing keeping them alive was their only cow Milky, who provided delicious milk for them. Although winter was almost knocking on their door, they didn't have a single penny left. Jack's clothes were so worn out that they were mostly just patches stitched together. He dreamed of having his own warm coat and new shoes.

One day Jack's desperate mother said: "We have to sell the cow! Take her to the market in the morning and sell her for as much money as you can. It's the only way we can survive the winter."

The next day Jack prepared the cow, his mother drew the last bucket of milk and said goodbye to her beloved Milky. Jack polished the bell on Milky's neck and walked her on a rope to the market. The day was hot and there was a long dusty road ahead of them, turning Jack's bare feet.

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“Who knows if anyone even buys our Milky,” Jack thought aloud.

As he was entering the market, he met a strange old man at the gates. His long snow-white beard glittered on his red robes as he sang something to himself, and when Jack walked by, the old man spoke to him:

“I’ll buy that cow from you. I don’t have any money, but I can give you these magic beans. Trust me, if you take one of these, you’ll get much more than you think.”

Just as he said it, he took the cow, slipped the beans into Jack’s hand and disappeared behind the city gate.

Jack started walking back home, terrified. He lost the cow and had only a handful of beans to show for it.

“What’s mum going to say? How are we going to survive?” worried the boy.

His mother knew something was wrong as soon as she saw him coming in the distance. She would never guess, though, how bad a trade her son had made.

“Damn you and your ‘magic’ beans! We’ll starve to death this winter!” shouted his mother. She took one of the beans and angrily threw it out the window.

Jack felt terrible for disappointing his mother like that. He lay in his bed long into the night, unable to fall asleep.

The loud chirping of a bird woke Jack up in the morning. The bird was excited that it had a new place to rest because overnight a large beanstalk had grown outside Jack’s window. The beanstalk was as thick as a tree and so high one could climb it all the way to the sky. Without hesitation, he jumped out of bed and started climbing its branches barefoot, the giant leaves below him protecting him if he fell.

He climbed and climbed until he reached the clouds and saw the walls of a beautiful palace behind them. Colossal strongholds, thin towers and a barred gate protecting the arched entrance appeared in front of him – a peculiar fairy-tale world. To his surprise, Jack realised that he wasn’t afraid to jump from the beanstalk over to the path leading to the palace. So he jumped and ran towards this wondrous world.

When Jack reached the heavy gate, he noticed the old man who had sold him the magic beans. Strange lights glimmered around him, making him look even more

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mysterious. Jack entered the tall gate and suddenly found himself standing by a heavy curtain. He heard strange noises coming from the other side. When he pulled it away, a room with a table covered in food and riches appeared in front of him. A terrifying giant was sitting at the table, shoving chunks of meat in his mouth. Jack noticed a golden hen at the giant's feet. Every now and then, it laid a golden egg which rolled away towards a golden harp playing beautiful melodies on its own.

"If only I had some of these beautiful treasures... We wouldn't starve then, we could buy the cow back and fix the house," thought Jack.

For a while, he watched the giant, who was feasting on delicious foods while being surrounded by incredible treasures. Finally, the monster fell asleep at the table, drunk with wine and exhausted by his gluttony.

Suddenly the old man appeared next to Jack.

"I'm going to climb on the table now and take at least one bag of gold," said Jack and the old man nodded. So Jack climbed quietly on the table and grabbed a large sack of golden coins. When he saw the giant snoring away with his head buried between bowls of food, he took a careful look around the room.

"What else should I take?"

The hen laying golden eggs ran to Jack on its own.

"Take me with you," it cackled in an irresistible voice as Jack was already taking it under his arm.

"The golden harp," he said. "I would be a fool to leave it here. I've never heard such wonderful music."

Jack, loaded with treasures, quietly made his way outside. But just as he left through the palace gate, he heard the awakened giant shouting angrily behind him. He was almost holding Jack in his hand when the old man appeared once again, swung his magic wand and glued the giant to the spot. Jack jumped on the branches of the beanstalk and started climbing down the sprouts.

But the giant couldn't stand defeat. He freed himself from the wizard's spell and climbed down the beanstalk, going after the boy. Jack could hear the wind whistling in his ears as he was climbing faster and faster. Everything whirled and swirled around him and once again the giant nearly had him in his grip.

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Jack almost reached the ground when he shouted at his mother: “Mum, mum, hand me the axe, quickly!”

He jumped down, took the axe from his mother and started chopping down the stem as fast as he could. The beanstalk cracked and tumbled down by a lake, hurling the giant, who didn't have time to jump down, into the depths of the water.

Jack and his mum watched the lake for quite a while, worried the giant would come out and take back all his treasures. But the water was silent and Jack sighed with relief. The giant beanstalk started vanishing, disappearing bit by bit, and soon there was no sign of it.

At that moment, Jack finally dared to look at his mum. But she was smiling from ear to ear. She was so happy that her son was safe and sound and that he had brought all those treasures with him.

Ever since then, the hen had been giving them golden eggs while the harp had been filling their days with sweet melodies. They lived happily and soon everyone forgot all about that horrible giant from the mysterious land. People started calling Jack “Jack the Beanstalk” since the trip up the beanstalk turned him into a rich farmer who never forgot how he had once climbed all the way to the sky.