

Jack and the Beanstalk

By Lane Riosley

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STORY OF THE PLAY

This is a fast-paced adaptation of the classic tale of Jack and the Giant as only Lane Riosley can do it. Madcap adventures, funny dialog and strange characters inhabit the world of Jack and his beanstalk.

About 45 minutes.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6M, 8F)

MOTHER

JACK

MILKY WHITE: The cow.

TOM: Thief.

BLINKY: Thief.

SNORE: Thief.

PAPER-MAKER

HARP-MAKER

CLOTH-WEAVER

BEAN-MAN

GIANT: A large man.

GIGANTA: The Giant's wife.

HEN: A puppet.

HARP: A puppet.

EXTRAS: Crowd at the fair.

SETTING

Scene 1: A broad, empty plain with a cottage center. The cottage is not in good repair and the single room is almost bare.

Scene 2: The Fair. Merchants bring on carts, signs and flags and banners for all kinds of goods.

Scene 3: Section of a castle containing a large oven. The Giant enters opposite pushing another section of the castle with a table and two chairs. Both castle sections are littered with trash and large cloth bundles - the Giants are terrible housekeepers.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: MOTHER enters with a bucket of water.)

MOTHER: Jack? Jack!? Where is he, that foolish boy?
JACK! *(SHE sets down the water and stretches. Then she goes to the little stove and opens it.)* What am I doing? I can't light the stove; there is no wood for the fire.
(Mutters to herself.) I can't light a fire with no wood...what was I thinking... *(Shouts.)* JACK!

(JACK enters wearing dirty, mended clothes.)

JACK: Yes, Mother?

MOTHER: Jack...oh, look at you! You were clean just an hour ago! Here, wash yourself in this bucket!

JACK: *(Washes, but quickly gets distracted.)* I was just walking along the river and looking at the fish. OH! Oh, there was a big fish! This long! *(Stretches his arms to full extension and then moves over to make the fish even longer.)* And it was gold and white and it had whiskers...

MOTHER: Jack, I'm sure you saw a fish like that...in your imagination. Didn't you?

JACK: *(Reduces his length estimate to about two feet.)*
This long?

MOTHER: That's more like it.

JACK: I guess they don't call them fish stories for nothing, huh!

(Laughs at his own joke, his MOTHER looks at him sternly.)

MOTHER: Sit down, son, I have to talk to you. *(JACK sits on an overturned bucket.)* Now, you know that we have very few possessions. This cottage, left to me by my mother, a few possessions left to us by your father and a cow your father and I bought when you were born.

JACK: Milky White?

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MOTHER: Milky White, yes. Son, she is very old now and she has stopped giving milk. Do you know what that means?

JACK: She gets to retire?

MOTHER: No, son, she must be sold.

JACK: Sold?! No!

MOTHER: We have nothing left, Jack! Nothing! We must sell Milky White!

JACK: No! Why, she...she's like part of the family! She has supported us all her life! She gave us milk which we sold and now that she's old you want to throw her out! It isn't fair! She's my friend!

MOTHER: She's a cow, son....

JACK: But she talks to me and....

MOTHER: No, she does not talk to you.

JACK: She talks to me.

MOTHER: She does not talk to you.

JACK: *(Mutters.)* She does not talk to you.

MOTHER: What did you say?

JACK: Nothing. Are you sure we don't have anything else to sell?

MOTHER: We have sold everything.

JACK: I know! I could get a job! I could go down to the docks and join a pirate ship! I could be the chief pirate and swash and buckle and buckle and swash and bring home lots of treasure for you!

MOTHER: Jack...

JACK: And then we could have a fine, big cottage and Milky White could have a barn of her own and --

MOTHER: Son! Those are dreams! And dreams never get anyone anything! Dreams are nice, but they don't really mean anything. Not in the real world.

JACK: But I could --

MOTHER: You are only a boy! Someday you will be a man. Then you will accomplish great things, but... *(SHE stops, shakes her head.)* If the world could only be the way it was a few years ago. If we lived in a forest the way we used to. If we had farms and fields and if the world was cool the way it used to be. *(Wipes her brow.)* If, Jack. If.

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JACK: You're talking about the time before the Giant took all the trees away.

MOTHER: Yes. Before the Giant took all the trees. Do you remember that time?

JACK: I think I do. I remember when I was very, very young and it was cool, the way the river is cool when you jump in early in the morning. I remember the cottage was surrounded by tall...trees. Were they green?

MOTHER: Yes, they were green.

JACK: And there were sounds from the trees. Did the trees make sounds?

MOTHER: Birds. Those sounds were made by birds, Jack.

JACK: Birds. They were pretty sounds. Pretty...birds. And there were other things in the forest. Animals. Things that flew and cheeped and crawled and ran. Colors. So many colors.

MOTHER: I'm glad you remember, Jack. I only wish the forest could be here for you children to remember.

JACK: Why did the Giant take the trees away?

MOTHER: When the Giant comes to steal from us, we do not fight him. We are all too afraid of losing what little we have left. So he takes and he takes and he takes, and one day he took all the trees. No one tried to stop him.

JACK: I would have tried! I would have stopped him!

MOTHER: You were very small, Jack, and very young. You could have done nothing. *(Pause.)* You know, Jack, there is a fair going on in town.

JACK: Yes! I was going to ask you if I could go...only...I know I wouldn't have any money to spend and...that's all right. I just want to see the fair! Can I go? Can I? Can I?

MOTHER: Yes.

JACK: YAY!

MOTHER: *(Pause.)* Now you must go and get Milky White and take her to the fair to sell.

JACK: But...but...

MOTHER: I'm sorry, Jack. That's just the way it has to be. Accept no less than two pieces of silver for her. Now, go on. Go. Go.

JACK: I can't believe you're asking me to do this!

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