

JACK* and the **BEANSTALK*

By William J. Springer

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Plenty of stage action for youngsters and lots of snappy, humorous dialogue for any adults in the audience makes this a perfect play for children's theatre. All the familiar characters from the classic fairy tale are here but with a little bit of a modern day twist including gullible, inquisitive Jack and his poor mother; a smart, determined cow; the magical egg-laying goose; and a not-so-scary Giant and his wife. To children's delight, Jack's cow refuses to be sold and is constantly chased across the stage, first by the bean seller and then additional characters from other fairy tales! The smart aleck Narrator almost gets into a fight with the Mother about the magical qualities of the beans and the giant's wife insists he mow the grass. Easy to memorize lines, easy to tour. One bit part may be played by a child from the audience.

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CHARACTERS

(14 parts)

NARRATOR
WOMAN (Fairy Godmother)
JACK
INHABITANT (Mr. Manch)
MOM
CINDERELLA
COW
GIANT'S WIFE
50 CENTS *
GIANT
ROBBER *
GOOSE
FUNNY LITTLE MAN
PRINCE

**These two characters can be double-cast into two other roles appearing later in the play. The role of 50 Cents may also be played by a youngster from the audience.*

GENERAL NOTES TO DIRECTOR

It is suggested that you cast the smallest actor as the Giant which makes a very comical effect. The Giant's wife, however, should be very tall so as not to give the joke away. Also, be sure that when the Goose lays the raw egg he/she does so on a part of the stage where the "chase" will not have to run through it.

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SCENERY

The play is fairly fast moving and so whatever type or style of scenery you choose you should lend itself to the pace. Let your imagination take you where it will, but don't try to burden the show with overly elaborate scenery that will slow down the pace with scene change delays. The play has been performed most often with only two scenic elements:

- 1) A "grass mound" cut out that is about 3 to 4 feet in length and 12 to 15 inches high at its center point. This set piece serves the purpose of masking the bottom of the beanstalk as it is raised and lowered.
- 2) The beanstalk itself can be made out of long strips of green fabric 4 to 5 inches wide. Sew each strip into a long "tube" and turn inside out. Exact length needed will vary with height of stage since beanstalk should reach from the floor to full height of stage. Tubes (*5 to 7 needed*) are then loosely braided together and fabric leaves and pods are attached. Heavy duty fish line is attached to the top of the beanstalk. This line is run through pulleys over the stage so that raising and lowering of the beanstalk is controlled from the wings of the stage. The beanstalk starts out coiled on the floor behind the "grass mound" and is made to grow on cue. When Jack climbs up, the stalk is lowered while he pantomimes the climbing action. The reverse is true when Jack and the Goose climb down.

NOTE: In the original production, the theatre's structure permitted a technician to be on a catwalk over the stage floor. Instead of the beanstalk growing up it grew down (*being dropped from above*). If you are able to do this it is a very funny effect. The Narrator still says, "The beanstalk grew up," but instead it falls down into position. If this method is used, the beanstalk should still raise and lower (*as mentioned above*) when Jack climbs up and down.

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Scene 1

(AT RISE: JACK, MOM, and COW stand facing UPS. They turn toward audience when they first speak. The NARRATOR is seated on a stool SL.)

NARRATOR: Once upon a time there lived a boy named Jack.

JACK: *(Turning.)* Hello. My name is Jack. I am a boy. I lived once upon a time.

NARRATOR: Jack lived at home with his mother.

MOM: *(Turning.)* Hello. I'm Jack's mother. I live at home with Jack.

NARRATOR: They were very poor.

JACK: Mother, how poor are we?

MOM: Jack, we are very poor.

NARRATOR: All they had was 50 cents and a cow.

COW: *(Turning.)* Hello. I'm the cow. Roughly translated, that's moo, moo, moo.

50¢: *(Enters.)* I'm 50¢. Roughly translated, that's 43¢ after taxes.

ROBBER: *(Enters with gun.)* Hello. I'm the bank robber. I also rob poor mothers and their sons. I'll take your 50¢, if you don't mind. I'll take your 50¢, if you do mind. *(HE starts off with 50¢.)* Oh, I almost forgot. *(Crosses to MOM.)* Here's your receipt. It's tax deductible. *(ROBBER exits with 50¢.)*

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NARRATOR: Jack and his mother were very poor. All they had was a cow and a receipt. But the cow ate the receipt.
(COW does so.)

MOM: Oh, Jack what are we to do?

JACK: (*Looking at COW'S belly.*) I don't suppose the IRS would take an X-ray.

NARRATOR: There was only one thing for them to do. Jack's mother said:

MOM: Jack.

JACK: Yes, Mother?

MOM: There is only one thing for us to do.

JACK: What is that?

MOM: I don't know.

NARRATOR: They had to sell the cow.

MOM: Sell the cow?

NARRATOR: Sell the cow!

JACK: Sell the cow?

MOM: Sell the cow!

COW: Sell the cow?

JACK: Sell the cow!

COW: To who?

JACK: To who? I wish I knew. Do you?

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