

# Jack and the Ruffians

*By Laura Joye*

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## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

The slightly obnoxious and conceited Storyteller narrates this version of “Jack and the Beanstalk.” Jack’s family makes and sells the best cheese and butter in the world. That is, until the competition gets jealous. Vegetable merchants Vlad (who is not-so-nice) and his sister Carol (who is missing a few cards in the deck) make a wish with some pink magic beans to ruin Jack’s family’s livelihood. When Jack’s cows suffer strange and dramatic demises, and Jack’s dad is captured by ruthless and revolting Ruffians for his cheese-making skills, Jack’s mom goes on a daring adventure to rescue her husband with a ladle as her only weapon. Jack is left to do one thing: climb the giant beanstalk that mysteriously appeared overnight! When he, along with his newfound friends, Ray and Prissy, stumble upon the Giant family, they discover much more in the clouds than they ever expected — learning that sometimes the only thing that can be done during tough times is to keep friends close and keep hopes high! Approximately 40 minutes.

## **PREMIERE PERFORMANCE**

The show was performed at Theatre Atchison  
Atchison, KS, June 26th and 27th, 2013.

Special thanks to:

Travis Grossman (Script advisor)

Connie Shalz (Costume design)

Chuck Pulliam (Set design)

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(From 15 to 30 or more. Most roles are gender neutral.)*

STORYTELLER	BUYER 4
CHILD 1	BUYER 5
CHILD 2	BUYER 6
CHILD 3	VLAD
CHILD 4	CAROL
JACK	RAY
JACK'S MOM	PRISSY
JACK'S DAD	RUFFIAN 1
COW 1	RUFFIAN 2
COW 2	RUFFIAN 3
COW 3	BABY GIANT
BESSIE SUE	MAMA GIANT
BUYER 1	PAPA GIANT
BUYER 2	FARMER SCRUBBS
BUYER 3	

**DIRECTOR'S NOTES**

This play is extremely versatile in the number and gender of actors needed. Storyteller's lines can be split evenly between two actors to accommodate for a large cast. More Ruffians can be added as well. Children could even wear white and play some clouds who dance with Baby Giant up in Cloud 9, or the clouds could be made from material light enough for children to hold and sway with the "wind." Jack, Ray, and Vlad can be played by boys or girls changing their names to: Jackie, Rita, and Val; and pronouns are altered to fit the correct gender.

For a smaller cast, it would be fun to have the cows played by simple hand puppets worn by the actors. Bessie Sue could even be a hand puppet Jack controlled. If there are enough actors to play cows, encourage them to create an actual personality. There are many places in the script where it would be ideal for the cows to comment on the action around them by mooing, especially Bessie Sue. She, and all the cows, are wonderful parts for children who struggle with memorization yet can convey expression on stage!

### **PROPS and MUSIC**

Bag with tissues and a script, ladle, items to sell, baskets with vegetables, snacks, variety of baskets, money, bag, beans (some pink), sign that reads "Boo," rope, 4 rags, rabbit ears, pitchfork, optional campfire. Dramatic music of your choice can be used each time a scene is retold.

### **COSTUMES**

**STORYTELLER:** Bright and colorful, to convey the idea of a traveling minstrel or entertainer.

**COWS:** Brown, black, or white shirts and leggings. Felt ears can be attached onto headbands. Cow-patterned neckerchiefs add a nice touch.

**VLAD and CAROL:** Slightly different from the others. Nicer or different colored clothing. Carol will need a wig.

**RUFFIAN 1, 2, and 3:** Rough, torn shirts and pants.

**BABY, MAMA, and PAPA GIANT:** All white or very light pastels.

**ALL OTHERS:** Peasant clothes.

### **SET**

*(Although scenes are indicated, action is continuous)*

Unit set. Something for the Storyteller to perch on, such as painted boxes or stools, should be placed on either side of the stage. A bench with a sign that says "Market" can be brought on for the Market scene. The Beanstalk can be as simple as a ladder or a complex, self-standing structure with a platform at the top that allows the actors to descend backstage. Clouds can be made out of light material that children can hold, if the cast is large, or built to be self-standing, for a smaller cast. A sign reads "Welcome to Cloud 9." A rock can be placed stage right for the Ruffians' Lair.

**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: LIGHTS are dim. CHILD 1, 2, and 3 are sitting around the campfire centerstage with STORYTELLER.)*

**STORYTELLER:** My children, legend says that above the treetops, past the tops of the mountains, and high in the clouds, lives...

**CHILD 1:** A werewolf!

**CHILD 2:** A vampire!

**CHILD 3:** A pig with a poker!

**STORYTELLER:** A giant.

**CHILD 1:** A giant wasp?

**CHILD 2:** A giant man-eating alligator?

**CHILD 3:** A giant potato with a pitchfork out for revenge?

**STORYTELLER:** Just a giant. A giant with a chicken who lays golden eggs and a harp that plays on its own.

**CHILD 3:** So what does he eat?

**CHILD 2:** I bet he snatches little birds as they fly home to their nests!

**CHILD 1:** Blue Jays, Cardinals, majestic Eagles...

**CHILD 3:** There's no need to get scared. He's way up there, he can't hurt us!

**STORYTELLER:** How false you are, little one. When the giant gets too hungry, he sweeps his hand down to the earth and brings up to the clouds whatever he has scooped up.

*(CHILDREN gasp.)*

**CHILD 2:** Does he ever come to *(Name of a familiar city)*?

**STORYTELLER:** Stay watchful, little ones, especially on this dark and stormy night.

*(SFX: Thunder rolls. CHILDREN scream and run off stage.)*

**Scene 2**

*(LIGHTS up full.)*

**STORYTELLER:** *(Snickers and rips off cloak.)* Oh, how I enjoy teasing and scaring! *(To audience.)* Are you scared yet? No? Are you comfortable in your seats? Yes? Good, good. Because you, my friends, willing or not, are about to enjoy the most fabulous retelling of “Jack and the Beanstalk” that has ever crossed this fine earth. It’s a little different than what you might already know. But don’t worry! I am here to take you through it. My name is Percival *(or Penelope)* P. Cloud, and this, my friends, is Jack.

**JACK:** Hi, everyone!

**STORYTELLER:** Jack was a nice boy –

**JACK:** Thanks!

**STORYTELLER:** He had nice parents, too.

**JACK’S MOM and JACK’S DAD:** Hello!

**STORYTELLER:** They were called the Jacques family. The Jacques had a nice herd of cows.

**COWS:** Moooooooooooo!

*(BUYERS and EXTRAS enter with baskets, buying and selling from each other. One or two benches are brought on to set the feel for a market.)*

**STORYTELLER:** They made butter and cheese from the milk.

**JACK’S MOM:** Freshly churned butter, right over here!

**JACK’S DAD:** Mozzarella, Swiss, Cheddar...getcha cheese for the week!

**BUYER 1:** Look at that, the best butter and cheese in town!

**BUYER 2:** You know, the only cheese my little Annabelle will eat is cheese from the Jacques’ herd!

**BUYER 3:** That’s nothing. My husband says he’d rather not eat anything at all if he can’t have cheese from the Jacques’ cows every day!

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