

Jack and the Beanstalk

A long, long time ago, there lived a boy called Jack. One morning the good hard-working mother sobbed, "We must sell our cow and live on the money."

So, Jack set off to sell the cow. He saw a little old man on the road who called out, "Good morning! And where may you be going?"

"I am going to market to sell our cow—and I mean to make a good bargain."

"So you will!" chuckled a little old man. And he drew out of his pocket five beans.

"What!" Jack said. "My Milky-White for five common beans!"

"But they aren't common beans," put in the little old man. "If you plant these beans over-night, by morning they will have grown up right into the very sky." Jack was too flabbergasted even to open his mouth. "It's a good bargain, Jack," said the old man.

"Right as a trivet," cried Jack, without stopping to think, and the next moment he found himself standing on an empty road.

So whistling, he trudged home cheerfully. His mother was watching anxiously for him at the gate. "Tell me quick how much you got for her."

Jack held out the beans triumphantly.

His mother said, "What! Them beans?"

"Yes," replied Jack, beginning to doubt his own wisdom; "but they're *magic* beans. Oh! Please don't hit so hard!"

And she flung the miserable beans out of window and sent him, supperless, to bed.

When he woke, everything in the room showed greenish. He was out of bed in a trice, and the next moment was climbing up the biggest beanstalk you ever saw.

So he climbed until he saw a tall, shining white house. And on the doorstep stood a great big woman with a black porridge pot in her hand. Now Jack, having had no supper, was hungry as a hunter, and he said politely,

"Good-morning, ma'am. I wonder if you could give me some breakfast?"

Whereat the ogre's wife laughed and bade Jack come in. But he had hardly finished the porridge when the house began to tremble. It was the ogre coming home!

Thump! THUMP!! THUMP!!!

"Into the oven with you, sharp!" cried the ogre's wife; and the iron oven door was just closed when the ogre strode in. Jack could see him through the little peephole slide at the top.

The ogre began sniffing about the room. Then he frowned horribly and began the real ogre's rhyme:

"Fee-fi-fo-fum,

I smell the blood of an Englishman.

Be he alive, or be he dead,

I'll grind his bones to make my bread."

"Don't be silly," said his wife. "It's the bones of the little boy you had for supper that I'm boiling down for soup! Come, eat your breakfast. There's a good ogre!"

So the ogre ate his three sheep, and when he had done, he went to a big oaken chest and took out three big bags of golden pieces. And by and by his head began to nod, and at last he began to snore so loud that the whole house shook.

Then Jack nipped out of the oven and, seizing one of the bags of gold, he ran till he came to the beanstalk. He flung his burden down, and climbed after it.

And when he came to the bottom, there was his mother picking up gold pieces out of the garden as fast as she could.

Then he turned to look for the beanstalk; but, lo and behold, it wasn't there at all! So he knew, then, it was all real magic.

After that they lived happily on the gold pieces for a long time, but at last, a day came

when there was not one more. That night Jack slept like a top, and when he woke ... another bean had grown in the night. In a trice, Jack found himself before the tall white house, where the ogre's wife was standing with the black porridge pot in her hand.

He heard the ogre coming—

Thump! THUMP! THUMP!

The ogre began sniffing and calling out,

"Fee-fi-fo-fum,

I smell the blood of an Englishman.

Be he alive, or be he dead,

I'll grind his bones to make my bread."

"Twaddle!" said the ogre's wife. "It's only the bones of the boy you had last week that I've put into the pig bucket!"

"Umph!" said the ogre harshly; but he ate, and then he said to his wife, "Bring me my hen that lays the magic eggs. I want to see gold." So the ogre's wife brought him a great big black hen with a shiny red comb.

Then the ogre said, "Lay!" and it promptly laid—what do you think?—a beautiful, shiny, yellow, golden egg!

Jack could hardly believe his eyes, and made up his mind that he would have that hen. So, when the ogre began to doze, he just out like a flash from the oven seized the hen, and ran for his life!

How Jack got down the beanstalk he never knew, but get down he did. And the very moment Jack touched ground, he called out, "Lay!" and the black hen ceased cackling and laid a great, big, shiny, yellow, golden egg. So everyone was satisfied.

But one fine moonlight midsummer night before he went to bed, Jack stole out to the garden with a big watering can and watered the ground under his window. Then he slept like a top. When he woke, there he was in an instant on the beanstalk, climbing, climbing, climbing for all he was worth. But this time, he just hid in some bushes, and then he slipped out and hid himself in the copper pot.

And by and by he heard—

Thump! THUMP! THUMP!

"Fee-fi-fo-fum,

I smell the blood of an Englishman.

Be he alive, or be he dead,

I'll grind his bones to make my bread."

"Well, I declare, so do I!" exclaimed the ogre's wife. "It will be that horrid boy who stole the bag of gold and the hen. If so, he's hid in the oven!"

But when she opened the door, lo and behold, Jack wasn't there! And when the ogre had finished his breakfast, he called out to his wife, "Bring me my magic harp!"

So she brought out a little harp and put it on the table. And the ogre leant back in his chair and said lazily,

"Sing!" And, lo and behold, the harp began to sing, and the ogre fell asleep. Then Jack stole out of the copper pot like a mouse, crept to the table, and laid hold of the magic harp.

But it cried out quite loud, "Master! Master!" So the ogre woke, saw Jack, and rushed after him.

Jack just flung himself on to the stalk and began to go down as fast as he could, while the harp kept calling, "Master! Master!" Then Jack climbed down faster and shouted, "Mother! Mother! Bring an axe!"

Now his mother ran out. At that moment Jack touched ground, and he flung down the harp and he seized the axe and gave a great chop at the beanstalk.

And the ogre and all came toppling down, and, of course, the ogre broke his crown, so that he died on the spot.

After that everyone was quite happy. For they had gold to spare. Jack became quite a useful person. And the last bean is still in the garden.