

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

By Chris Stiles

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CHARACTERS

(18 to 30 or more actors: 2 Males, 2 Females, 14 or more Either)

NARRATOR 1	THE MAGIC BEANS/THE BEANSTALK (any number from three to ten)
NARRATOR 2	
NARRATOR 3	AUDIENCE MEMBER
JACK	THE GAGGLE OF GEESE (any number from three to a dozen)
MILKY WHITE, THE COW	CUE CARD HOLDERS (at least two)
JACK'S MOTHER	
THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER	CASTLE TOWER HOLDERS (two)
GIANT'S WIFE	

SET

Bare stage. A medieval setting can be suggested with a background of village houses, trees, etc.

NOTE

"Jack and the Beanstalk" is the traditional fairy tale retold. The script is fairly true to the traditional story, with the exception of a narrator's strike. The play involves many actors and audience participation.

PROP AND COSTUME LIST AND REQUIREMENTS

Simple costuming. Basic "medieval" clothing, like plain tunics, could be used. The cow could be created from a sheet and a mask. The geese could be suggested from masks as well. The beans could be adorned with simple bean shaped cardboard cutouts, and construction paper leaves could be used to create the beanstalk. Of course, if elaborate costuming is desired, then by all means, go for it.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The cast for this play is flexible in size. If you are willing to have a large beanstalk and a huge gaggle of geese, you can have many, many actors participate. You can even cast the beans and beanstalk separately. If you need a smaller cast, however, you can double many parts and even eliminate some parts, such as the Castle Tower Holders and the extra Cue Card Holder.

It is also easy to use a wide range of ages in this play, as I did in the original production. I used older actors for the principal parts and used kindergarteners (and younger) for the geese. None of the geese could read the script, and they never learned their cues, but their enthusiasm stole the show.

There is also great flexibility in the amount of work you can put in the show. You can build a set and have all their actors learn their lines, or you can work on a bare stage and perform it as a staged reading, allowing the actors to use their scripts. If the actors have fun, so will the audience.

The part of Milky White can be performed by two actors, with one actor under the costume playing the rear.

The role of the audience member can be a pre-cast actor, or you can pick someone out of the audience before the performance to read from the script.

“Jack and The Beanstalk” was originally produced by the Courtland Arts Camp in Courtland, Kansas on June 6, 2007.

DIRECTOR'S INSTRUCTIONS

“Jack and the Beanstalk” is designed to be as simple or complicated as a director desires. If there is little rehearsal time, this play works very well as a staged reading. The stage directions are simple and natural. This play can be staged anywhere with any size of stage.

As for the role of AUDIENCE MEMBER, you can plant a member of the cast to say these lines, or even better, select an actual audience member before the show, give him a script and have a genuine audience member in your show (this works very well, and gets the audience into the spirit of being the giant).

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SETTING: A bare stage. A medieval setting can be suggested with a background of village houses, trees, etc.

AT RISE: *NARRATOR 1 stands to the Right side of the stage. JACK stands Center Stage.*

NARRATOR 1: Once upon a time, there was a boy named Jack.

JACK: That's me!

NARRATOR 1: Yep. That's Jack. A fine young man . . .

JACK: Thanks!

NARRATOR 1: . . . who lives a not so fine life.

JACK: I do?

NARRATOR 1: Well, yes. I'm afraid so.

JACK: What's not so fine about it?

NARRATOR 1: Well, you live in a tiny little cottage . . .

JACK: It's not that bad.

NARRATOR 1: It only has one room.

JACK: Works for me.

NARRATOR 1: You sleep in a closet.

JACK: I'm a small person. I don't need much space.

NARRATOR 1: You sleep in a closet with your cow, Milky White.

(MILKY WHITE enters from Left.)

MILKY WHITE: Moo!

NARRATOR 1: You sleep in a closet with your cow, Milky White, because you're so poor you can't afford a barn.

JACK: That does get old.

MILKY WHITE: Moo?

JACK: No offense, Milky White, but you chew your cud in your sleep.

MILKY WHITE: Moo . . .

NARRATOR 1: Now you might be wondering about Jack's parents, and why it is that they can only afford a small, one room cottage, with only a closet for Jack and the cow to sleep in. This is Jack's mother.

(JACK's MOTHER enters from Right.)

MOTHER: Hello, everyone.

NARRATOR 1: Yes, this is Jack's mother. Nobody's sure what she does, exactly.

MOTHER: Hey, I stay plenty busy. I have to milk the cow each day.

JACK: I thought I did that.

MOTHER: Yes, well, I have to make sure Jack milks the cow. And I have to sell the milk we don't need.

JACK: I thought I did that, too.

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MOTHER: Well, sure. But I have to make sure you do that, too. And I have to clean up after the cow.

JACK: Now that I don't do.

MOTHER: No you don't. And to be honest, Milky White is a bit of a slob.

MILKY WHITE: Moo!

MOTHER: Well, it's true. If only we could afford a barn, this wouldn't be a problem.

NARRATOR 1: So you admit that you're poor.

MOTHER: Let's see . . . one room cottage, cow sleeps in closet with boy. Oh yes. We're very poor.

NARRATOR 1: Told you.

JACK: Okay. We're poor. But we'll get by, as long as Milky White provides milk for us to sell.

NARRATOR 1: Right. That might be a bit of a problem.

JACK: Why? What do you know?

NARRATOR 1: I know everything. I'm the narrator.

JACK: So what's going to happen to Milky White?

MILKY WHITE: Moo?!

NARRATOR 1: Let's not go there yet.

JACK: Why not?

NARRATOR 1: Because I've got to introduce the rest of the characters. You're not the only one in this story.

JACK: Oh right. Of course. Forgive me. Go ahead.

NARRATOR: Thanks. Now let's see . . . who are we missing?

(The MYSTERIOUS STRANGER enters from Right.)

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER: Ahem?

NARRATOR 1: Who are you?

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER: I'm the Mysterious Stranger.

NARRATOR 1: Ah yes. The Mysterious Stranger. And what is your real name, by the way?

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER: I can't tell you.

NARRATOR 1: Why not?

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER: Because then I wouldn't be a stranger, would I?

NARRATOR 1: I guess not.

JACK: Excuse me.

NARRATOR 1: Yes Jack?

JACK: Why is there a mysterious stranger in this story?

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER: Hey! You're not supposed to meet me yet.

NARRATOR 1: That's true, Jack.

JACK: But "mysterious stranger" implies something bad, and I don't want anything bad to happen to me. Or Mother. Or Milky White.

MILKY WHITE: Moo!

NARRATOR 1: Jack, come here.

JACK: Yes?

NARRATOR 1: What kind of story is this?

JACK: I think it's a fairy tale.

NARRATOR 1: It *is* a fairy tale. And how do all fairy tales begin?

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JACK: “Once upon a time . . .”

NARRATOR 1: Exactly. And how do fairy tales end?

JACK: Um . . .

NARRATOR 1: Think . . .

JACK: Usually, they end with, “and they all lived happily ever after.”

NARRATOR 1: Always, Jack. Always. They always end with “and they all lived happily ever after.”

JACK: Really?

NARRATOR 1: Really. So don't worry about the mysterious stranger, and let me introduce the rest of the characters.

JACK: If you say so.

NARRATOR 1: I say so. Anyway, where were we? We have Jack, his mother, Milky White . . .

MILKY WHITE: Moo!

NARRATOR 1: The mysterious stranger, and . . . let's see. Oh yes. The magic beans. Come on out, beans.

(The MAGIC BEANS enter, stand Center Stage.)

What? They're *human* beans.

ALL: Ba-doomp.

NARRATOR 1: So we have the magic beans, and with beans, of course, we have the beanstalk. But we'll have to wait for the beans to sprout to see that. And then we have the Giant's wife.

*NOTE - *If the BEANSTALK is cast separately, introduce the BEANSTALK in this line, having the actors wave from the side of the stage.*

(GIANT'S WIFE enters from Left, crosses to Center Stage.)

GIANT'S WIFE: Have you ever wondered why the giant's wife isn't a giant herself? Well, I have. What was I thinking? Marrying a giant. I can't begin to tell you the problems we've had. I'm 63 inches tall –he's 63 feet tall! The other day, he tried to throw me in his cereal bowl. Thought I was a raisin! Oh, and that's just the start of our troubles.

NARRATOR 1: Yes well, thank you. We'll be seeing you later.

(GIANT'S WIFE exits. NARRATOR 1 addresses audience.)

Like anyone forced her to marry the giant? Anyway, let's finish the introductions. There's Jack, his mother, Milky White, the Mysterious Stranger, the magic beans, the beanstalk, the giant's wife and . . .

(The GEESE begin honking from backstage.)

Just a minute. *(To GEESE.)* Will you guys be quiet?

(The GEESE stop honking.)

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Ladies and gentlemen, in this story we don't have a goose that lays the golden egg. We have a gaggle of geese that lay golden eggs.

(The GEESE begin to honk again.)

And they never shut up! Geese! Give me a minute, please! Go sit over there. And can you please be quiet just for one second?

(The GEESE are quiet for exactly one second, then begin honking again. The NARRATOR gives them a dirty look, and THEY get quiet.)

Now where was I? Oh yes. We're almost finished with the introductions. Jack, Jack's mother, Milky White, the Mysterious Stranger, the magic beans, the beanstalk, the giant's wife, and the gaggle of geese that lay the golden eggs . . . am I forgetting anybody?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: The giant!

NARRATOR 1: Excuse me?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: You forgot the giant!

NARRATOR 1: Oh yes. The giant. Well, that's a bit of a problem. You see, the giant is 63 feet tall. And this building is rather small . . .

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Are you saying there's no giant?

NARRATOR 1: Of course not. This is Jack and the Beanstalk. What would the story be without a giant?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So who's playing the giant?

NARRATOR 1: Why, you are.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Me?

NARRATOR 1: You and the entire audience. See, I figure if we put all of you together, you'd be about the size of the giant. So guess what? Ladies and gentlemen, you are the giant.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: But we don't know any of the lines!

NARRATOR 1: No problem. That's where Megan and Sara (*or whatever the names of the actors playing the CUE CARD HOLDERS*) come in. They'll hold up cue cards with your lines. Here. Let's practice. Girls?

(The CUE CARD HOLDERS enter, stand to the Right of the NARRATOR. Between them, THEY carry cue cards which read "Fee Fi Fo Fum," "I smell the blood of an Englishman," "Giant's Footsteps," and "Ugh!")

AUDIENCE: (*reading cue cards*) Fee Fi Fo Fum. I smell the blood of an Englishman.

NARRATOR 1: That was terrible. Can we try again?

AUDIENCE: (*again reading cards*) Fee Fi Fo Fum. I smell the blood of an Englishman.

NARRATOR 1: That was much better. Now let's work on your other part. The giant's footsteps. When you see this card . . . Sara?

(CUE CARD HOLDER holds up a card which reads "Giant's Footsteps.")

When you see this card, stomp your feet. Okay. Try it.

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(The AUDIENCE stomps its feet.)

You're supposed to be one giant. Can we try stepping in unison?

(The AUDIENCE again stomps its feet.)

Well, we're getting there. And you've got one more line. Try this.

(One of the CUE CARD HOLDERS holds a card which reads, "Ugh!")

AUDIENCE: Ugh!

NARRATOR 1: Excellent! And since you've met the entire cast – Jack, Jack's mother, the Mysterious Stranger, the magic beans, the beanstalk, the giant's wife, the gaggle of geese that lays the golden eggs and of course, The Giant, now we're ready to begin the story. As for me, though, I'm beat. I'm going to take a short break. But go on. Start the story without me.

(ALL exit except JACK, JACK'S MOTHER and MILKY WHITE.)

MOTHER: Very well then. Jack?

JACK: Yes mother?

MOTHER: Did you milk Milky White this morning?

JACK: Of course, Mother.

MOTHER: How much milk did she give?

JACK: Oh, 2 or 3.

MOTHER: 2 or 3 gallons?

JACK: Um, no.

MOTHER: 2 or 3 quarts?

JACK: Well, no.

MOTHER: 2 or 3 pints?

JACK: Not quite. More like 2 or 3 spoonfuls.

MOTHER: 2 or 3 spoonfuls? That's not even enough for us, let alone enough to sell.

JACK: I know, Mother.

MOTHER: And that's all she's been giving for days.

JACK: I know, Mother.

MOTHER: I'm afraid I have some bad news. We're going to have to sell Milky White.

MILKY WHITE: Moo?

JACK: Sell Milky White! But she's part of the family!

MILKY WHITE: Moo!

MOTHER: I know, but if she isn't going to produce, then we need to get what we can. We need to sell her.

JACK: But why would anyone buy a cow that gives no milk?

MOTHER: She has other talents, you know.

JACK: Like what?

MOTHER: *(taking JACK aside)* Let's just say she makes a heck of a pot roast.

MILKY WHITE: Moo?

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(JACK'S MOTHER exits. NARRATOR 2 enters, stands on the Right side.)

NARRATOR 2: And so Jack's mother instructed him to take Milky White into town, to fetch the best possible price.

JACK: *(to NARRATOR)* Who are you?

NARRATOR 2: I'm the narrator.

JACK: What happened to the other narrator?

NARRATOR 2: She's on break.

JACK: Break? But we have to continue the story!

NARRATOR 2: The narrator's union says we're entitled to 15 minute breaks. I'm filling in until she gets back.

JACK: There's a narrator's union?

NARRATOR 2: Of course. We're the most overworked performers in the business. We have most of the lines. We have to tell the whole story.

JACK: Fine. Then tell the story.

NARRATOR 2: Okay. Where were we?

JACK: I have to sell Milky White.

MILKY WHITE: Moo!

NARRATOR 2: Right. Here we go. *(to audience)* Jack's mother instructed him to take Milky White into town and get the best possible price.

JACK: Come on, Milky White. We have to go into town.

MILKY WHITE: Moo!

(JACK leads MILKY WHITE Left across the stage.)

NARRATOR 2: But halfway into town, Jack crossed paths with a stranger.

(The MYSTERIOUS STRANGER re-enters, intercepting JACK.)

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER: Hello, Jack.

JACK: *(to NARRATOR)* I thought you said he was a stranger.

NARRATOR 2: He is.

JACK: Then how does he know my name?

NARRATOR 2: I don't know. That's why he's mysterious.

JACK: I suppose. *(to MYSTERIOUS STRANGER)* So, Mysterious Stranger, what do you want?

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER: Why, Jack, I'm looking for a cow to buy.

JACK: You're looking to buy a cow?

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER: Yes. And a cow like Milky White is just the sort of cow I'm looking for.

MILKY WHITE: Moo!

JACK: How did you know the name of my cow?

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER: I tell you, I'm the mysterious stranger. And I will buy that cow from you, and you won't have to walk into town.

JACK: I like that idea. How much can you give me?

NARRATOR 2: And that's when the Mysterious Stranger made Jack an unusual offer.

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER: I'll give you these beans.

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(The MAGIC BEANS enter.)

JACK: These?

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER: Yes. All of them.

JACK: But these aren't beans. They're people.

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER: They're *human* beans.

ALL: Ba-doomp.

JACK: So why would I want to trade a cow for beans?

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER: Because they're not ordinary beans. They're *magic* beans.

JACK: Magic?

MYSTERIOUS STRANGER: Magic!

JACK: *(to NARRATOR)* Magic?

NARRATOR 2: Magic!

JACK: Magic?

MILKY WHITE: Moo!

NARRATOR 2: And so Jack thought about this deal for a moment. He knew his mother would be upset if he didn't bring home money, but he also knew it was a once in a lifetime opportunity to cross paths with a mysterious stranger and be offered magic beans. And who knew what this magic might bring? Perhaps somehow he would get Milky White back someday. He accepted the stranger's offer and traded Milky White for the magic beans.

JACK: Goodbye, Milky White. Perhaps someday we'll be together again.

MILKY WHITE: Moo!

NARRATOR 2: The Mysterious Stranger took Milky White, and Jack went home with the magic beans. His mother's reaction, as expected, was not so good.

(The STRANGER and MILKY WHITE exit. With the BEANS following, JACK takes a few steps to the Right. MOTHER enters from Right.)

MOTHER: You did what?!

JACK: I sold Milky White for a handful of beans.

MOTHER: Beans? Are you out of your mind?

JACK: But they aren't ordinary beans, Mother. They're magic.

MOTHER: Magic beans. That's ridiculous. Where are these magic beans?

JACK: *(signaling to BEANS)* Right here, Mother.

MOTHER: These? These are people!

JACK: They're hu—

NARRATOR 2: Jack!

JACK: Yes?

NARRATOR 2: The audience has requested that we stop making that joke.

JACK: Fine with me.

MOTHER: So how do you know these beans are magic?

JACK: The man told me so.

MOTHER: What man?

JACK: The man who bought Milky White.

MOTHER: What was his name?

JACK: Um . . . Mr. . . . Mr. Stranger.

MOTHER: Mr. Stranger. What was his first name?

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JACK: I don't know . . . um . . . Mysterious?

MOTHER: You traded our cow to a mysterious stranger and got nothing but beans?

JACK: I tell you, Mother. They're magic.

MOTHER: Hogwash. There's no such thing as magic.

NARRATOR 2: And Jack's mother, so very disappointed, sent Jack to bed and threw the beans into the yard.

(JACK exits. MOTHER "throws" the BEANS; SHE exits. At this point, the BEANS huddle together on the ground, then slowly stand up to simulate "growth.")

But that night, something magical happened. The beans were magic and while Jack and his mother slept, the beans sprouted and grew into a beanstalk, a beanstalk which grew, and grew and grew until it reached the sky. When Jack awoke the next morning, he was astounded.

JACK: Wow! They really were magic beans.

NARRATOR 2: And Jack knew there was nothing to do but climb this magnificent beanstalk, to see what sort of magical places it might go.

(JACK climbs the BEANSTALK. This could be done by the actor clambering over the BEANSTALK actors, or pantomiming the act of climbing.)

And when he reached the top, he found himself on a cloud and on that cloud was a castle.

(The NARRATOR waits for the "CASTLE TOWERS" to appear, who are late with their cue.)

I said, on that cloud was a castle.

(The CASTLE TOWERS enter and take their place on the stage.)

JACK: Wow! A castle! I wonder who lives here?

(The GEESE enter.)

GEESE: Honk, honk, honk, honk . . .

(For each of the GEESE's lines, THEY continue honking until the next character says their line.)

JACK: Excuse me, who lives here?

GEESE: Honk, honk, honk, honk . . .

JACK: I said, who lives here?

GEESE: Honk, honk, honk, honk . . .

JACK: I said . . .

(The GIANT'S WIFE enters.)

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GIANT'S WIFE: I say, young man. Why are you talking to a gaggle of geese?

JACK: I wanted to know who lives here.

GIANT'S WIFE: And you thought the geese would tell you?

GEESE: Honk, honk, honk, honk . . .

JACK: I just climbed up a giant beanstalk that sprouted from magic beans, up to a cloud that holds up a castle. Why shouldn't I believe that geese can talk?

NARRATOR 2: Jack had a point.

GIANT'S WIFE: You have a point. But these geese don't talk . . .

GEESE: Honk, honk, honk, honk . . .

GIANT'S WIFE: They just make a lot of noise.

GEESE: Honk, honk, honk, honk . . .

GIANT'S WIFE: Pipe down! I swear, if they didn't lay golden eggs . . .

JACK: They lay golden eggs?

GIANT'S WIFE: That's what I said. Would you like one?

JACK: You're giving me a golden egg?

GIANT'S WIFE: Oh sure. We've got more than we know what to do with.

JACK: We? Who is we?

GIANT'S WIFE: Who is we? Well, we is myself and the most nasty horrible mean and ugly excuse of a man you could ever imagine.

JACK: And who would that be?

GIANT'S WIFE: My husband.

JACK: Your husband?

GIANT'S WIFE: And because he's nasty and horrible and mean and ugly, you might want to make yourself scarce, if you catch my drift.

JACK: I'm not afraid.

GIANT'S WIFE: Did I mention he's 63 feet tall?

JACK: I find that hard to believe.

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