

Jack and the Magic Beans

By Vera Morris

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JACK AND THE MAGIC BEANS

adapted and dramatized from the Benjamin Tabart version of the English folktale, *"The History of Jack Spriggins and the Enchanted Bean."*

By
VERA MORRIS

CHARACTERS

In Order Of Appearance

SCARECROW GIRL	the crows are smarter than she is
JACK	brave young lad
SUSAN	Jack's sister
JACK'S MOTHER	about to lose her farm
VILLAGE WOMAN #1	lives in fear of the Giant
VILLAGE WOMAN #2	more of the same
THE TROLL	works for Giant; nasty
THE CHICKEN	no turkey when it comes to brains
HIGH SHERIFF DUMDUM	full of self-importance
PRINCESS TULIP	lovely girl; dutiful daughter
LADY STUMBLE-MUMBLE	her lady-in-waiting, mumbles and stumbles
MISS PRISS*	Jack's cow
BEAN-SELLER	mysterious visitor
COOK	likes to look busy
KITCHEN GIRL	busy, busy
HOUSEKEEPER	famous for making Wiggle-waggle
GIANT	a terrible brute with a fierce appetite
GOOD QUEEN VIOLET	prisoner of the Giant
SINGING HARP	can lull the Giant to sleep
EXTRA VILLAGERS, SERVANTS	as/if desired
*MISS PRISS, the cow, can be played by one or two performers	

For preview only

JACK AND THE MAGIC BEANS

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action of the play takes place long ago, in the Land of the Giant.

ACT ONE

Scene One: The farm belonging to Jack's mother

Scene Two: On the road to the village square

Scene Three: The village square

Scene Four: The road again

Scene Five: Back on the farm

ACT TWO

The kitchen in the Giant's castle, up in the clouds.

ACT ONE

Scene One

The farm belonging to JACK's mother. Day. The door to the cottage is STAGE RIGHT. There's a DROP showing painted fields across the back of the STAGE. Or, there can be a couple of scenery FLATS UPSTAGE with a view of the fields painted on. SCARECROW GIRL if positioned UP CENTER, facing the audience, arms sticking out.

At Rise: SOUND OF ROOSTER CROWING. In a moment; the door opens and OUT STEPS JACK. Or, if the door is not practical, he steps INTO VIEW from behind the cottage facade. JACK's a lively young fellow. He loves adventure. He yawns and stretches out his arms. Again -- SOUND OF ROOSTER CROWING.

JACK: Oh, what a fine night's sleep I had. (*Steps toward audience.*) I know today is going to bring good fortune. I feel it. (*To SCARECROW GIRL.*) Good morning, Scarecrow Girl.

SCARECROW GIRL: Good morning, Jack.

JACK: It's going to be a beautiful day.

SCARECROW GIRL: If you say so, Jack.

SUSAN'S VOICE: (*From OFFSTAGE LEFT.*) Is that you, Jack?

JACK: (*Calls LEFT.*) Of course it's me. (*To audience.*) That's my sister Susan. (*SUSAN ENTERS. She's about JACK's age and has no time for nonsense. Carries a small straw basket.*)

SUSAN: About time you were getting up. I've been out of bed for an hour.

SCARECROW GIRL: It's the early bird that gets the worm.

SUSAN: Good morning, Scarecrow Girl.

SCARECROW GIRL: Good morning, Susan.

JACK: What's in the basket? Something good to eat, I hope. (*Rubs his tummy with a circular motion.*) I haven't tasted food in such a long time.

SUSAN: Who has? I thought I might forage up some berries for breakfast. But there isn't a berry to be had. The birds have eaten them all.

MISS PRISS' VOICE: (*From OFFSTAGE RIGHT.*) Moooo-ooooo. (*JACK reacts, steps RIGHT. Looks OFF.*)

JACK: It's Miss Priss. She's hungry, too. She can't give milk, y'know, if she doesn't eat.

SUSAN: (*To audience.*) How true.

MISS PRISS' VOICE: Moooo-ooooo. (*JACK's MOTHER STEPS from the cottage door. Or, from behind it. She has an old broom.*)

MOTHER: Any luck with the berries, Susan?

SUSAN: Not a one.

MOTHER: Tsk, tsk.

SUSAN: The birds got them all.

SCARECROW GIRL: Good morning, Jack's Mother. (*Lowers her arms.*)

MOTHER: Good morning, Scarecrow Girl. (*Sweeping here and there.*) It does seem to me you might have scared off those birds. After all, it's your job.

SCARECROW GIRL: They come at night. I can't see them in the dark and they can't see me.

SUSAN: Unless there's a moon.

SCARECROW GIRL: The moon wasn't shining last night.

MOTHER: Nothing to eat, nothing to eat. Same old song. Soon we'll be nothing but skin and bones.

SCARECROW GIRL: Bones and skin, bones and skin.

JACK: Cheer up. Something good is bound to happen.

MOTHER: (*Stops sweeping. To audience.*) My son Jack is such an optimistic lad. Not as bright as he appears -- but optimistic. (*VILLAGE WOMAN #1 and VILLAGE WOMAN #2 ENTER LEFT in a state of excitement. Each wears an apron and carries a basket.*)

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: (*To MOTHER.*) You poor, poor woman.

MOTHER: I can't deny the truth. I'm poor. Plain enough to see.

VILLAGE WOMAN #2: We're all poor in this wretched village. (*Nods to #1.*) But that isn't what she means.

SUSAN: What does she mean?

SCARECROW GIRL: Good morning, ladies.

VILLAGERS: Good morning, Scarecrow Girl.

VILLAGE WOMAN #2: (*Indicates #1.*) She means Sheriff Dumdum is headed this way.

SUSAN: The High Sheriff?

JACK: Why?

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: You're going to be evicted.

MOTHER/JACK/SUSAN: (*Horried.*) Evicted?

SCARECROW GIRL: What's that mean -- evicted?

VILLAGE WOMAN #2: It means he's going to toss everyone off this farm.

SCARECROW GIRL: That's horrible! (*Bawls.*) Boo-hoo, boo-hoo, boo-hoooooooo.

MISS PRISS' VOICE: (*As if in answer.*) Moooooooooooo.

VILLAGE WOMAN #2: Something about non-payment of taxes.

MOTHER: Taxes? Who has money to pay taxes?

SUSAN: Besides, Good Queen Violet would never let us be evicted. She's too kind for that.

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: (*Surprised.*) Then you haven't heard?

JACK: Heard what?

VILLAGE WOMAN #2: Good Queen Violet has been taken away by -- (*She stops and nervously looks over her shoulder. She's afraid someone or something bad might be listening.*)

SUSAN: Taken away by what?

JACK: Taken away by who?

VILLAGERS: The Giant! (*Reaction.*)

JACK: (*Angrily.*) The Giant! The Giant! Always the Giant. Will we never be free of the Giant!

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: He's demanding a huge ransom from Princess Tulip. Either she pays up or she'll never see her mother again.

SCARECROW GIRL: That's awfull (*Bawls.*) Boo-hoo, boo-hoooooooo.

MISS PRISS' VOICE: Mooooo-ooooo.

SUSAN: (*Looks upward.*) He's lucky his castle is up there in the clouds. (*OTHERS look upward.*) Where no one can reach him.

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: Who'd want to?

VILLAGE WOMAN #2: The less we know of the Giant the better. That's what I say.

JACK: (*Points upward.*) Look therel (*ALL squint upward.*) It's the traveling bucket!

ALL: (*To audience.*) The Giant's sending someone down!

JACK: (*Agitated.*) Here it comes! Take cover!

ALL: Ooooooooooooo. (*ALL cover their heads and drop to the ground*)

MOTHER: We have nothing else. You've been here before.

MISS PRISS' VOICE: Moooooooooooo.

TROLL: What's that? It's a cow. Give me the cow.

MOTHER: Miss Priss? Never.

JACK: You heard my mother. Never. (*Motions with broom.*) Now, you get out of here.

TROLL: Careful, Jack. Careful. I'll tell the Giant on you. Hee, hee, hee. He eats lads like you -- seasoned with salt and sprinkled with pepper. (*MOTHER hugs JACK close.*) Hee, hee, hee.

MOTHER: You're horrid.

TROLL: (*Takes this as a compliment.*) Thank you. (*Stern.*) If you don't give my tribute to take to my master he'll destroy this cottage with one great sneeze!

MOTHER: Oh! This is my home.

TROLL: As if I didn't know. (*Tormenting her.*) Ach-choo.

MOTHER: (*Wipes away a tear.*) If it isn't Miss Priss it'll have to be the other.

JACK: But, Mother --

MOTHER: No arguments, Jack. We have enough trouble. We mustn't anger the Giant.

JACK: (*Dutiful.*) If you say so. (*Dejected, head low, JACK EXITS UP RIGHT.*)

TROLL: (*To audience.*) Everybody has to pay tribute to the Giant. It's the law. The Giant's law.

MOTHER: (*Tentative.*) Is it true what I've heard?

TROLL: That depends on what you've heard.

MOTHER: The Giant has seized Good Queen Violet.

TROLL: True, true, true. It's up to Princess Tulip to come up with the ransom money. Otherwise, Good Queen Violet will be Gone Queen Violet. Hee, hee, hee. (*Does a weird little dance, hopping about on one foot.*) Fee fi fo fum
I smell the blood of an Englishman. (*To MOTHER.*) That's my master's favorite poem. Isn't it lovely? He's a sensitive brute. (*Dances some more.*) Be he alive or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to bake my bread.

JACK'S VOICE: Here we are, Mother. (*JACK REAPPEARS holding a long rope. He's pulling something into the yard. In a moment it appears. It's a GIANT CHICKEN [HEN]. Walks birdlike and darts its head from side to side.*)

CHICKEN: Cheep, cheep, cheep.

MOTHER: Such a lovely chicken. Never gives me a bit of trouble.

JACK: We raised it from a chick.

TROLL: (*Studies the bird.*) What's this? This is no ordinary hen. It's a

giant one. Where'd you get this bird?

JACK: We found it on the ground. Long ago.

MOTHER: It was only a little bundle of feathers.

TROLL: This must be the chicken that fell out of the Giant's kitchen window. You're giving me back something that doesn't belong to you in the first place. That's a special chicken.

JACK: You mean because it's so large?

TROLL: I mean because it can lay golden eggs. (*JACK and MOTHER are stunned, then amused.*)

BOTH: Golden eggs? Ha, ha, ha.

TROLL: What's so funny?

MOTHER: Why, this chicken has never laid a single ordinary egg.

TROLL: I tell you it's the Giant's giant chicken. If it doesn't lay golden eggs it will soon be on the Giant's dinner plate.

MOTHER: Oh!

TROLL: Covered in gravy and string beans. (*Alarmed at the prospect of ending up on a dinner plate, CHICKEN SQUAWKS in outrage. JACK drops his end of the rope.*)

HIGH SHERIFF'S VOICE: (*From OFF LEFT.*) There's nothing to fear. High Sheriff Dumdum's here.

JACK: (*Looks LEFT.*) It's the High Sheriff.

TROLL: The silly fool. (*Unseen by the OTHERS, the CHICKEN gathers up the rope and LEAVES the STAGE. It runs up an aisle and OUT at the rear of the auditorium. HIGH SHERIFF DUMDUM ENTERS wearing some sort of uniform or official robe. He's a pompous man, impressed by his position in life. He carries a long staff decorated by ribbons or a gold knob at the top -- the symbol of his lofty office.*)

HIGH SHERIFF: Good day to you, Jack. Good day to you, Jack's Mother.

MOTHER: How can it be a good day when we're to be evicted? (*She throws her apron to her face and sobs.*)

HIGH SHERIFF: That's neither here nor there. You haven't paid your taxes. Pay up or get out.

TROLL: You tell them, High Sheriff. What a nice job you have. Tossing people out of their homes. How I envy you. (*Only now does the HIGH SHERIFF notice the TROLL. Startled, he jumps back.*)

HIGH SHERIFF: Bless me! It's a troll.

MOTHER: Not just any troll.

JACK: It's the troll that works for the Giant.

HIGH SHERIFF: (*Shaking in fear.*) I didn't recognize you.

TROLL: Naturally. Otherwise, you'd show more respect.

HIGH SHERIFF: Respect, respect. Yes, respect.

TROLL: (Commands.) Bow to the Giant's troll, you insignificant lump.

HIGH SHERIFF: (Offended.) See here, Troll, I'm a man of great importance. I have position in society. I don't bow to trolls.

TROLL: Bow or I'll tell the Giant on you!

HIGH SHERIFF: (Bowing and scraping all over the stage.) Yes, yes, Your Horribleness. Whatever you say, Your Repulsiveness. A pleasure to bow and scrape before you, Your Grossness. Please extend my compliments to your master, the Giant. (As the HIGH SHERIFF humbles himself, TROLL dances about in glee. JACK and his MOTHER stand close, fascinated by the scene.)

TROLL: Bow, bow, bow. Hee, hee, hee. (Suddenly, TROLL stops. Looks about.) Eh? What's this?

MOTHER: What's what?

TROLL: Where is it?

JACK: It?

TROLL: The chicken! The chicken that lays the golden eggs!

HIGH SHERIFF: Chicken that lays golden eggs?

TROLL: Shut up, fool. (Frantic.) Where is it? Where is it?

JACK: I don't know.

MOTHER: It was here a moment ago.

TROLL: (Speaks to the first row.) Have you seen the chicken? (Whether or not anyone answers, TROLL LEAVES the STAGE and moves into the AUDIENCE. At first, his words are loud, as he questions spectators sitting in aisle seats -- "Have you seen the chicken?" But as he moves up the aisle, his voice grows less audible -- "The chicken?" "Have you seen the chicken?" "The chicken that lays the golden eggs?" Eventually, he EXITS at the back of the auditorium. As TROLL moves up the aisle, OTHERS move to the edge of the STAGE and stare after him.)

HIGH SHERIFF: What an unpleasant fellow. I'd slap him in irons if he didn't belong to the Giant.

MOTHER: If you were a proper High Sheriff, you'd arrest the Giant.

HIGH SHERIFF: Quiet! (Shaking in fear.) He might be listening.

JACK: Why must everyone fear the Giant? Why don't we do something about him? (MOTHER slaps one hand over her son's mouth. She and HIGH SHERIFF look upwards -- as if they feared the Giant might be listening. PRINCESS TULIP, a pretty girl, ENTERS LEFT. She has a lovely smile but, at the moment, she's quite unhappy.)

PRINCESS: Oh, dear. You got here before me, High Sheriff. (HIGH SHERIFF comes to attention and salutes in stupid fashion. That

is, palm out, hand trembling.)

HIGH SHERIFF: Princess Tulip.

MOTHER: *(Curtsies.)* Princess.

JACK: *(Slight bow from the waist.)* Princess.

MOTHER: Quick, Jack. Fetch a chair for the Princess.

JACK: I'm on my way, Mother. *(He runs into cottage, or darts behind the facade.)*

PRINCESS: I wanted to tell you myself, Jack's Mother. I wanted to explain.

MOTHER: You mean about the eviction?

HIGH SHERIFF: *(Slapping at his costume.)* I've got the eviction notice here somewhere.

PRINCESS: The Giant is holding my mother hostage.

MOTHER: I heard.

PRINCESS: Unless I give him two bags of gold, he says he'll put my mother in a blackbird pie.

MOTHER: The beast!

PRINCESS: In a blackbird pie sprinkled with cinnamon.

MOTHER: I shouldn't think that would taste good. *(JACKS RUNS OUT with a chair.)*

JACK: Here we are, Mother. One chair for the Princess. *(He positions the chair CENTER.)*

MOTHER: Won't you sit, Princess?

PRINCESS: You're most kind. But I mustn't stay long. There's so much to be done. *(PRINCESS moves to chair, sits.)*

HIGH SHERIFF: *(To MOTHER.)* You're not the only one to be evicted, you know.

PRINCESS: The only way I can raise the ransom is to foreclose on those farms that haven't paid their taxes to the Crown. I've sold everything of value. My jewels, my ermine-trimmed robes, my silk dancing slippers. My three sparkling tiaras. It's not enough.

MOTHER: You poor, poor child.

HIGH SHERIFF: Unless the taxes are paid, this farm will be auctioned in the morning to the highest bidder. *(Bangs staff on the ground.)* Hear ye, hear ye -- and stuff like that.

JACK: But where will we live?

HIGH SHERIFF: You can sleep in the palace garden with the others who have been evicted. *(To PRINCESS.)* I'll look about the place. Buyers always want to know if there's water on the property. *(With great pomp, flourishing the staff as he walks, HIGH SHERIFF EXITS RIGHT.)*

PRINCESS: I came to apologize. I've been apologizing to everyone

in the kingdom. But I must rescue my mother. (Sobs.)

JACK: I've never seen a princess cry before.

PRINCESS: I hope you never see a princess cry again.

MOTHER: I'd like to give that Giant a piece of my mind.

PRINCESS: He'd probably cook it. (LADY STUMBLE-MUMBLE stumbles IN from LEFT. She carries a bag supposedly filled with gold coins. She's a clumsy girl who stumbles more than she walks, and her dialogue always trails off into mumbles.)

LADY STUMBLE-MUMBLE: Princess. (She stumbles.) Oops.

PRINCESS: (To MOTHER.) You'll have to forgive my lady-in-waiting. Lady Stumble-Mumble is clumsy, but she's loyal and has a good heart.

LADY STUMBLE-MUMBLE: Only one bag of gold, Princess. That's all we've been able to manage.

PRINCESS: But the Giant insists on two bags of gold.

MOTHER: Greedy Giant.

LADY STUMBLE-MUMBLE: I know what we ought to do.

OTHERS: What?

LADY STUMBLE-MUMBLE: First, we write out a petition to the Giant and have everyone sign it. Then -- (At this point, her dialogue dissolves into a symphony of mumbles. Doesn't make any sense at all. A few words come out clear enough, but the rest is a hopeless mess. OTHERS stare, trying hard to catch what she's saying.) -- we do this. (Mumble, mumble.) Then, after that, we do this -- (Mumble, mumble.) If anyone objects -- (Mumble, mumble.) Should the Giant refuse -- (Mumble, mumble.) Total victory -- (Mumble, mumble.) Cheers from the people -- (Mumble, mumble.) No more trouble in the kingdom -- (Mumble, mumble.) And all will end well. (OTHERS continue to stare. What on earth was she talking about? Finally.)

PRINCESS: Well, yes. Thank you, Lady Stumble-Mumble. That was most enlightening.

MOTHER: Princess Tulip, if only you could give us a little more time.

PRINCESS: Could you pay something? Even a few coins would help. A few coins would delay the sale. (LADY STUMBLE-MUMBLE opens the bag and thrusts it forward.)

JACK: We don't have so much as a penny, Lady Stumble-Mumble. (LADY STUMBLE-MUMBLE mumbles, closes the bag.)

PRINCESS: I'm afraid if you don't have something by morning, the farm will be auctioned off. We must ransom the Queen. As loyal subjects, I trust you will understand.

JACK: We are loyal subjects, Princess. Never doubt that.

MOTHER: And we do understand, even if our hearts are breaking.

PRINCESS: *(Stands.)* Again, forgive me for doing what must be done. Come, Lady Stumble-Mumble. On to the next farm. *(PRINCESS sweeps OUT, LEFT. MOTHER curtsies. JACK bows. LADY STUMBLE-MUMBLE follows after PRINCESS, turns back and speaks to OTHERS.)*

LADY STUMBLE-MUMBLE: Dear friends, always remember the wise words of Good Queen Violet -- *(She mumbles a few lines of nonsense. Turns to EXIT, stumbles.)* Oops. *(She's OUT.)*

JACK: If only we had those few coins. We could save the farm.

MOTHER: There is only one thing left to do, my son.

JACK: What's that, Mother?

MOTHER: We must sell the cow.

JACK: *(Horried.)* Sell Miss Priss! *(To audience.)* Did you hear what my mother said? Sell Miss Priss!

MOTHER: She's all we've got left to sell. Fetch her, Jack. It's market day in the village. It's now or never.

JACK: But, Mother, Miss Priss is a friend.

MOTHER: Don't argue with me. *(Dejected, head low, JACK EXITS RIGHT.)* Being a mother in such times is not easy. *(She moves to the chair and sits. As she does, there's a COMMOTION at the back of the auditorium. It's the CHICKEN fleeing from the TROLL.)*

CHICKEN: Squawk, squawk, squawk! Cheep, cheep, cheep! *(CHICKEN runs down an aisle for a few rows. TROLL ENTERS from back of auditorium, in pursuit.)*

TROLL: Come back you fowl thing! You belong to the Giant! *(Frantic, in a panic, CHICKEN pushes her way across a row of the audience, making her escape as best she can. TROLL, also, pushes his way into the row of audience members, snarling and growling as they react to the disturbance.)* Get out of my way! Make room! Step aside! I'm on official business for the Giant! Don't interfere!

CHICKEN: Cheep, cheep, cheep! Squawk, squawk, squawk!

TROLL: Come back, I say! Dumb chicken! *(CHICKEN escapes OUT the rear of the auditorium. TROLL FOLLOWS. ONSTAGE, MOTHER wipes away another tear. JACK appears, leading MISS PRISS, the cow. [NOTE: Ideally, COW should be played by two performers, one for the front and one for the rear. An alternative to this is a single performer, in costume, walking upright. SEE PRODUCTION NOTES.])*

MOTHER: A sad, sad day.

JACK: Must we sell Miss Priss, Mother?

MOTHER: You know our situation, Jack. Nothing to eat. Taxes to be

paid. A queen to be ransomed. If it isn't one thing, it's another.
MISS PRISS: Mooooo-ooooo. (MOTHER stands, steps to the COW.
Kisses it on the head.)

MOTHER: Goodbye, Miss Priss. Try to forgive us, if you can. We
wouldn't be doing this if we weren't desperate.

MISS PRISS: Mooooo-ooooo.

MOTHER: Go along, Jack.

JACK: Yes, Mother. (To audience.) Mother knows best.

MISS PRISS: Mooooo-ooooo. (JACK crosses LEFT and EXITS. MISS
PRISS FOLLOWS. MOTHER picks up the chair and EXITS RIGHT.)
End Of Scene One

[NOTE: The following brief scene, on the road to the village square,
can be worked in a couple of ways. (1) As JACK EXITS with MISS
PRISS, the CURTAIN CLOSES and JACK and MISS PRISS soon
APPEAR on the FORESTAGE, from EXTREME DOWN LEFT. The
FORESTAGE becomes "the road." (2) If you're not using a curtain, the
"cottage door" is removed as JACK and MISS PRISS make their cross,
and the open STAGE becomes the road.]

ACT ONE

Scene Two

The road [FORESTAGE or open STAGE].

At Rise: JACK ENTERS from EXTREME DOWN LEFT or from STAGE
LEFT if no curtain is used. MISS PRISS trails behind.

JACK: The way I figure it, Miss Priss, is like this. Somehow, we've got
to get rid of the Giant. If only people weren't so afraid.

MISS PRISS: Mooooo-ooooo.

JACK: First things first. We've got to save the farm.

MISS PRISS: Mooooo-ooooo. (VILLAGE WOMAN #1 ENTERS from
RIGHT.)

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: I saw the High Sheriff, Jack. Sorry to hear
the auction's tomorrow.

JACK: Princess Tulip says if we can pay something we might hold on
to the farm a bit longer.

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: Don't tell me. Let me guess. You're going to
sell Miss Priss.

MISS PRISS: Mooooo-ooooo.

JACK: Afraid so. I wish it were otherwise.

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: Let me have a look at her. If you're not
asking too much, I might buy her myself.

MISS PRISS: Mooooo-ooooo. (VILLAGE WOMEN #1 crosses to the

cow, investigates.)

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: Let me see your teeth, cow. (MISS PRISS shakes her head "no.") I must see the teeth. I'm not buying a cow-in-a-poke.

JACK: Show her your teeth, Miss Priss. (MISS PRISS tilts her head up and VILLAGE WOMAN #1 checks the choppers.)

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: Hmmmm. I think this is an old cow. The teeth are worn down and they look brown.

MISS PRISS: Moooo-ooooo.

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: And her tongue is thin. Much too thin. I don't fancy a cow with a thin tongue. I don't suppose she can produce milk?

JACK: Only because we haven't been able to feed her. But I'm sure she'll do her best for you. (To prove that MISS PRISS is a worthy dairy, JACK steps to the cow's tail and works it like a pump handle.)

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: That's a strange way to milk a cow.

JACK: Miss Priss is an unusual cow.

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: Looks quite ordinary to me.

JACK: Come on, Miss Priss. I know you can do it. Try. Try hard.

MISS PRISS: Moooo-ooooo. Moooo-ooooo. Moooo-ooooo. (JACK pumps the tail harder and harder. Finally, MISS PRISS MOOS in triumph. A pint bottle of milk is produced from the cow costume.)

JACK: (Takes bottle of milk.) There! What did I tell you. She's a fine cow.

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: (Impressed.) I must admit I'm surprised. How much do you want for her?

JACK: One gold coin.

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: One gold coin! Have you lost your senses, Jack? There isn't that much money left in the whole kingdom! I'll give you two copper pennies.

MISS PRISS: Moooo-ooooo.

JACK: I'm sure I can get more than that at the village square. It's market day.

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: The village square on market day is filled with villains and rogues. You'd better do business with me. Two copper pennies and the cow is mine.

JACK: I could never sell Miss Priss so cheaply.

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: Have it your way. She's a silly-looking cow, anyway. If I were you I'd sell her to the butcher. She might make good hamburger meat. (Furious by the put-down, MISS PRISS kicks out her hind legs and butts VILLAGE WOMAN #1

in her backside. Or single cow actor back-kicks with one foot.
NOTE: To do this, **VILLAGE WOMAN #1** must stand in such a way that kicking at her with the cow legs is a fairly simple matter.) *Oh!* She kicked me! (To audience.) Did you see that? The cow kicked me!

JACK: She didn't like what you said about hamburger meat.

VILLAGE WOMAN #1: Who cares what a cow likes or doesn't like? I'll get the High Sheriff, that's what I'll do. (She runs from the **FORESTAGE** or into the audience and up the aisle.) Sheriff! Sheriff! Arrest that cowl! Arrest that cowl!

MISS PRISS: Mooooo-ooooo.

JACK: Now you've gone and done it. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Miss Priss? (In way of apology, **MISS PRISS** brushes her head against **JACK** almost as if she were a kitten expecting a loving pat.)

MISS PRISS: Mooooo-ooooo.

JACK: Spruce up, Miss Priss. I want you to look your best. Bright eyes. Head high, step lively. You're going to save the farm. At least for a little while. (Head high, stepping lively, **MISS PRISS** prances **DOWN RIGHT** on **FORESTAGE**. **EXITS**. **JACK** is left **ONSTAGE** holding the pint bottle of milk. He holds the bottle out to the front row.) Anybody out there care for a bottle of milk? Milk is very good for you. (Hopefully, someone in the audience will step forward and take the prop bottle. If not, **JACK** keeps it and follows **MISS PRISS** calling out, "Anybody want to buy a bottle of milk?" In either case, **JACK EXITS**.)

End of Scene Two

ACT ONE Scene Three

Village square. [The village square is nothing more than the open stage space (SEE PRODUCTION NOTES). If the curtain was closed for previous scene, it now opens. If the curtain wasn't used, **JACK EXITS** and **VILLAGERS ENTER** the open space from **LEFT** and **RIGHT**.] If you wish to use some **EXTRAS** they can be employed at this point as "shoppers" and/or "sellers." Or, you can use characters from **ACT TWO**. (**HOUSEKEEPER**, **COOK**, **KITCHEN GIRL**, **QUEEN**) One sells ribbons, another eggs, another might hold a toy goose under an arm. Flowers, etc. **LADY STUMBLE-MUMBLE** and **PRINCESS TULIP** can also function as shoppers. Ditto for the **TROLL** and maybe, **GIANT CHICKEN**. **VILLAGE WOMAN #2** has a tray of dipped apples with sticks. The tray is looped around her neck with thin rope.

End of Script Sample

PRODUCTION NOTES

STAGE PROPERTIES

ACT ONE: Door to cottage, or cut-out front [facade] of cottage, backdrop cloth or some scenery flats illustrated with view of painted fields.

ACT TWO: Painted scenery flat to represent portion of stove/oven. Table for stove (front covered with paper or practical oven "door"). Side table with: pots, pans, cooking utensils. Dishware table with: cups, saucers, funnel, plates, basin for washing, towel. Dinner table with chair or stool for Giant. Also on dinner table: Oversized cup [pail], ketchup bottle, knife.

ACT ONE - Brought On: Scene One - Basket (SUSAN); old broom, apron (MOTHER); basket (VILLAGE WOMAN #1 and #2); long rope for chicken (JACK); long staff with ribbons (HIGH SHERIFF DUMDUM); chair (JACK); bags of coins (LADY STUMBLE-MUMBLE).

Brought On: Scene Two - Pint bottle of milk (COW -- from inside costume) -- can be wooden bottle painted white, or small dairy bottle painted white.

Brought On: Scene Three - Market products: fruits, vegetables, flowers, eggs, toy goose (SELLERS, VILLAGERS); tray with dipped apples and sticks (VILLAGE WOMAN #2); hand bell (HIGH SHERIFF DUMDUM); bag of coins (LADY STUMBLE-MUMBLE). Cloak, hat with feather, pouch with 5 beans, jelly beans work very well (BEAN-SELLER.)

Brought On: Scene Four - Pouch with 5 beans, or jelly beans (JACK).

Brought On: Scene Five - Pouch with 5 beans, or jelly beans (JACK). Stepladder beanstalk (pushed on during blackout).

ACT TWO - Brought On: Large platter with rope (spaghetti) and red paint (sauce) (COOK); large platter with pie (shaving cream) (KITCHEN GIRL); prop food (EXTRAS); chef cap and apron (KITCHEN STAFF); beans, or jelly beans (BEAN-SELLER); bowl and spoon (HOUSEKEEPER); club (GIANT); small set of prison bars, wrist chains (QUEEN); pitcher (COOK); bed sheet or white beach towel (COOK, KITCHEN GIRL); tiny saucer

(KITCHEN GIRL); tiny cup (COOK); floor broom (KITCHEN GIRL); string with golden key (SINGING HARP); hoes and rakes (VILLAGERS); golden egg (CHICKEN).

SOUND: Rooster crowing (can be done by an actor), large wooden bucket hitting the ground (can be done by slamming a bundle of newspapers to the floor, or tipping over a stack of wooden boxes), weird music or sound effects for growth of beanstalk. Lively music. Offstage thumping (walking) of Giant (optional), fight music.

LIGHTING: Blackout(s), optional green light for beanstalk, Giant "light" (when he first enters scene), optional strobes.

COSTUMES: As indicated in script. The usual "once-upon-a-time" wardrobe (Consult Sheila Smolensky's Costuming for Children's Theatre/Pioneer Drama Service.) Mentioned here are only those items that deserve special attention.

SCARECROW GIRL: She should look as much like a real scarecrow as possible. Funny hat, strange makeup. Straw sticking from her sleeves, shoes and hat.

COW (MISS PRISS): Use two actors, one for front and one for rear. If you can't get an actual "cow" costume, have actors wear white trousers, a blanket to suggest cowhide and create a "head." Same if you are using only one actor. A suit of long white underwear will work. Rent a cow head from a costume store or "create." Gloves for hooves.

GIANT CHICKEN: Again, a rental costume is the easiest way to go, but if you have to create one, actor can wear a suit of long underwear dyed brown (red will work). Covered arms for wings. Tail feathers, beak. Yellow gloves. If you have access to some other "poultry" costume, don't be afraid to substitute -- GOOSE, DUCK.

THE GIANT: He should look as big as possible -- certainly "bigger" than anyone else on stage. To do this he should wear clumsy boots that are somewhat difficult to walk in. The soles can be extra thick to add a few inches. Give him a high hat to add height. If not that, a bushy fright wig. He should wear a scary full beard and a wide belt. Body padding for bulk. Gloves. To

add menace he carries the club. Maybe false ears.

SINGING HARP: If the harp cut-out can't be attached to the costume, simply have the actress carry it. Naturally, this is a "small" harp, or a lute.

MISCELLANEOUS: Flexible Casting - **SCARECROW GIRL** can be switched to a male character -- **SCARECROW**. **THE TROLL** can be female instead of male. **CHICKEN** can be portrayed by an actress or an actor. **MISS PRISS** can be two boys, two girls or mixed. **BEAN-SELLER** can be either male or female. **COOK** can be changed from a female role to a male one. A talented actress might also be considered for the role of **JACK**.

EXTRAS can be used as servants in the Giant's castle, **VILLAGERS**.

Play can easily be performed with an all-female cast.

COW DANCE: Although the dance is strictly optional, give it consideration. It's a great audience pleaser. **MISS PRISS** might tap-dance or waltz. Be creative. For example, someone might bring out a stool and the hind end might sit. Hind end's feet "dance" one way, while the feet belonging to the front end can "dance" in the opposite direction, etc.

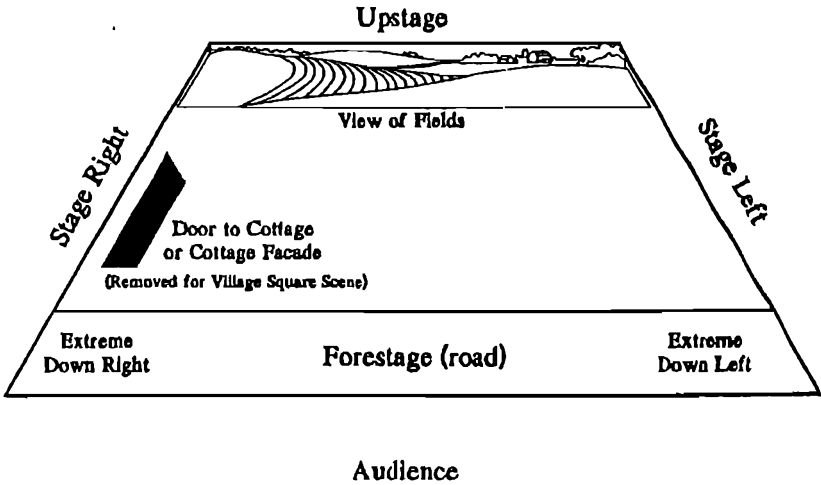
THE BEANSTALK: Quite simple. The stepladder is shoved or rolled into position during the blackout. It should be as "bushy" and as green as you can make it (vines, leaves). **JACK** only climbs a step or two -- slowly -- before the curtain closes or the stage lighting goes to black.

MARKET DAY: Some lively music helps in setting the mood. Some pennants or flags might be dropped from overhead. Someone could carry a bunch of balloons, or pretty scarves on a pole, to "color" the scene.

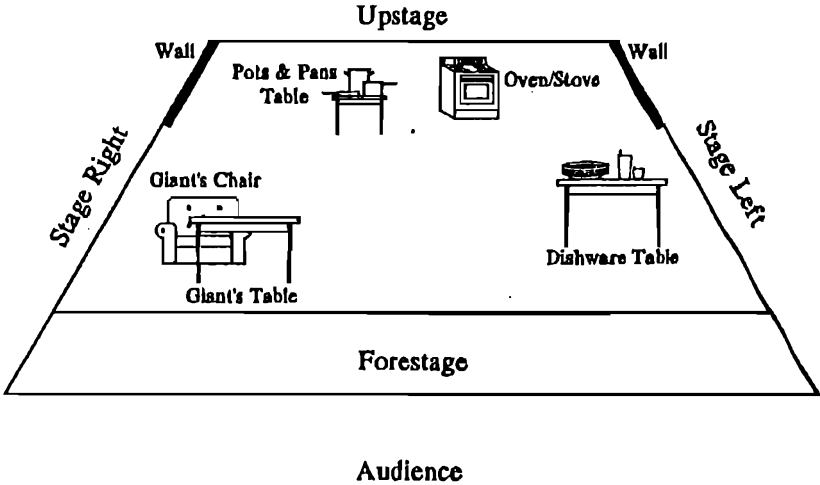
GIANT HAS HIS LUNCH: This will prove a wildly funny scene. **DON'T END IT TOO SOON.** As you rehearse the nonsense, all manner of business will present itself. If it looks good, use it. Audience should see a mad, frantic scene of constant motion. Comings-and-goings. Busy, busy, busy. **MUSIC** and **LIGHT** will add to the onstage comedy.

JACK AND THE GIANT FIGHT: Again, don't end it too soon. Don't rush it. This is where the villain gets defeated and your young audience will want to savor the moment. The fight can be extended by having JACK and the GIANT leave the stage duelling, only to reappear at some new location and continue with the fight: The clumsy but powerful GIANT versus the nimble but less powerful JACK.

Suggested stage setting - Act I
The Farm Belonging to Jack's Mother



Suggested stage setting - Act II
The Kitchen in the Giant's Castle



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