

Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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Jack and the Beanstalk

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Characters:

Jack

Mother

Flim-Flammer/Peddler (a disguise, not a double)

Mrs. Ogre

Ogre

Note: There are narrative speeches which are labeled COMPANY. This does not mean they speak in chorus, lines are to be distributed on a line-by-line basis, to each of the actors, as common sense dictates. These speeches usually involve direct address to the audience. ALL CAP verses are sung.

SCENE ONE

ALL ONCE. . .
ONCE UPON A TIME AT THE EDGE OF THE
WOOD
THERE LIVED A POOR WIDOW WHO WAS VERY VERY
GOOD.
ON A LITTLE PATCH OF LAND, IN A LITTLE WOODEN
SHACK,
AND THE PRIDE OF HER LIFE WAS HER YOUNG SON,

JACK Jack.

ALL AND WHEN WE TELL YOU THE WIDOW WAS POOR,
THIS IS NO MERE OPINION WHICH WE EXPRESS,
THE WIDOW WAS BROKE, YOU MAY BE SURE,
WITHOUT A DOUBT--NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS.
SHE WAS
HARDSCRBBLE POOR,
CHURCH-MOUSE POOR,
BARE-BONES POOR,
STONY-BROKE POOR,
RAG-POOR,
DIRT POOR—

JACK Dirt poor?

ALL WELL, IT'S HARD TO STAY CLEAN WHEN YOU CAN'T BUY
SOAP.
AND IF YOU HAVE NO MONEY, WELL THEN--NO SOAP!
AND, LET US TELL YOU--
NO
HOPE!

COMPANY But the widow was resourceful. She used sand to scrub her kitchen
table and rocks to wash her clothes.

MOTHER *(calling out)* Jaaack--time to hang out the clothes...

JACK Coming, Mama.

COMPANY Jack was a good boy,
 A neat kid,
 A cool dude.

MOTHER Jack is kind, Jack is honest—

COMPANY But a touch romantic,
 And a bit of a dreamer.

JACK When I grow up, I'm going to save the world,
 Or a corner of it.
 Make it safe for kids to play in the streets,
 And make sure those kids get plenty of eats.
 And--oh yes, I'll be a brave astronaut,
 And a skilled brain surgeon,
 And a great, great philosopher ...
 And I'll save the whole world,
 Or a corner of it.

MOTHER My son Jack is hard-working and diligent,
 Not to mention highly intelligent.

COMPANY Why the lad was so smart he was downright philosophical.

JACK Problem: if a lad has one potato, but there are two mouths to feed,
 how many potatoes does each person get? (*Thinks*) One divided by
 two equals one half . . . ergo, each mouth gets half a potato.
 Problem is, I have no potato.

COMPANY Jack had another problem. He was gullible.

MOTHER Hey, are you calling my son names? He's a good boy.

COMPANY Gullible--that means he'd believe anything. He'd swallow any
 story, hook, line and sinker. He was so honest, he couldn't believe
 anyone else was willing to lie for a profit. Yes, Jack was gullible.

A flim-flammer appears, wearing a long vest with many pockets; each crammed with merchandise – beads, sunglasses, maps, deeds, 'I love New York' buttons, everything. He sports a moustache, the ends of which point up.

FLIM-FLAMMER Pssst--young man, wanna buy something?

JACK Whatcha selling?

FLIM-FLAMMER Whatcha buying? Actually, young man, I'm selling the Brooklyn Bridge.

JACK Really?

FLIM-FLAMMER Would I kid you?

JACK The Brooklyn Bridge ... that's famous. And very tall. Golly. I'd like to buy it, only I have no money.

FLIM-FLAMMER You must have a penny or two. You must have something. Anything?

JACK Just this old house--a shack, really.

FLIM-FLAMMER Trade a mere shack for that glorious bridge?

JACK Anyway, our roof leaks. And it's about to fall down anyway.

FLIM-FLAMMER You don't own anything else? Absolutely nothing?

JACK There is something. It's a cow.

FLIM-FLAMMER A COW—

JACK Named Suzette--but you can't have her.

FLIM-FLAMMER *(petting the cow)* Nice Daisy.

JACK She's like a member of the family.

FLIM-FLAMMER Nice Bossy.

JACK Her name's Suzette! She lets me scratch her back with a stick, she's very affectionate. Generous, too. She gives us milk every day! Suzette is our bread and butter--I mean our milk.

FLIM-FLAMMER Too bad. Hey, kid--I'm also selling the Empire State Building--cheap. And that big arch in St. Louis--?

JACK An arch? An arch? What's around the arch?

FLIM-FLAMMER Nothing. Air.

JACK Air? Ridiculous! You can cross over a bridge. You can go into a building. But an arch with nothing but air--? Give me a break.

JACK leaves.

FLIM-FLAMMER Kid? Kid, come back!

COMPANY Jack was gullible, but he wasn't stupid.

FLIM-FLAMMER That's what you think – I'll catch him yet. I'll trick him by his own virtues: his kindness, his loyalty, his ... logic!

FLIM-FLAMMER leaves. MOTHER enters, distressed, carrying a bucket.

MOTHER Oh dear oh dear, the news is not good. No indeed, it's positively negative!

JACK enters, running.

JACK Mama- Mama, I just met a man who wanted to sell me the Brooklyn Bridge—

MOTHER Oh dear oh dear, Jack . . . bad news-

JACK He was also selling the Empire State Building-

MOTHER Very seriously unfortunate news.

JACK And some big arch in St. Louis-

MOTHER Disaster! Catastrophe! Red alert--!

JACK I explained that we had no money and--what? What catastrophe? What bad news?

MOTHER Suzette--she--she--look--! (*She turns the bucket upside down. There is nothing in it.*) No milk--she's gone dry.

JACK What?

MOTHER The cow has no more milk. The milk bottle's empty, the well has run dry.

JACK Maybe if I reason with her—

MOTHER Cows can't reason. We're going to starve!

JACK Suzette? Darling Suzette, old pal, let me whisper in your ear. I'm awfully hungry. Haven't had my breakfast yet. Couldn't you give us a nice quart of milk? (*He listens, but the news is not good. He turns back to his mother.*) Mama, she says it's all gone. Oh, Mama, will we really starve? What can we do?

MOTHER SELL THE COW!

JACK MAMA, YOU DON'T MEAN THAT, SURELY WE DON'T NEED TO—

MOTHER SELL THE COW? AND HOW!

JACK I'M NOT HUNGRY IN THE LEAST. WE'LL COOK UP A POT OF WEEDS.

BOTH ADD A PINCH OF SALT. STIR IN SOME DANDELION SEEDS...

JACK And voila--A FEAST!

MOTHER We don't have a pinch of salt!
 SELL THE COW!

COMPANY SELL THE COW!

MOTHER DO IT NOW!

JACK MAMA, TRY TO UNDERSTAND,
 I HAVE ALWAYS LOVED SUZETTE,
 SHE'S HUNG IN THROUGH THICK AND THIN,
 SHE'S BEEN MUCH MORE THAN A PET,
 SO GENTLE AND KIND-

MOTHER SELL THE COW.

COMPANY SELL THE COW.

MOTHER I KNOW HOW HARD IT IS, JACK,
 WHY YOU'RE MAKING SUCH A FUSS;
 BUT IT'S TIME TO FACE THE FACT,
 IT'S EITHER HER OR US,
 WE HAVEN'T HAD MUCH LUCK, JACK,
 NOTHING THRIVES HERE, NOTHING GROWS,
 WE'VE TRIED COURAGE, WE 'VE TRIED PLUCK, JACK;
 WE'VE WORKED HARD, HEAVEN KNOWS.
 YES, HER MILK IS DRIED UP AND I'M AT MY WIT'S END,
 OUR STOMACHS ARE EMPTY AND I CAN'T PRETEND
 THAT I HAVE A SOLUTION TO OUR SITUATION
 SO I'LL END YOUR CONFUSION WITHOUT HESITATION--
 YOU MUST TAKE HER TO MARKET NOW--
 SELL THE COW!

COMPANY SELL THE COW!

MOTHER SELL THE COW!

JACK Okay, Mama . . . please don't cry. Suzette-

MOTHER You're a good boy, Jack.

JACK Suzette, we're going to take a nice walk.

MOTHER Remember, son, drive a good hard bargain. Our future—our very lives - depend on it-

JACK Don't worry, I'll milk her for every penny she's worth-- smile, Mama, that was a joke. I'll try to find her a good master, someone who'll love her as much as I do. See you at sunset, Mama.

He goes, sadly leading Suzette. MOTHER waves goodbye, then addresses the audience.

MOTHER A good master? Poor Jack, he doesn't get it. Suzette will be hamburger by tomorrow. That's all she's good for, now. *(She blows her nose, sadly.)* I wouldn't mind a nice hamburger about now ... with ketchup and tomatoes and some fries, and broccoli on the side, and a milk shake and . . . oh, my poor stomach ...

SCENE TWO

JACK is walking with the cow, confiding in his best friend.

JACK So we've got to say farewell. It's gonna be hard, Suzette-- parting is such sweet sorrow, as the poet said: but Mama is scared we'll starve, she was crying. I can't stand it when she cries. Mama's led such a hard life-

COMPANY Historical footnote: Jack's father was killed when Jack was just a baby. He had left his little family to go hunting one morning, and had never returned. A search party did find a torn scrap of fabric from his coat clinging to a bush— *(COMPANY holds up a small piece of distinctive fabric – a wild-colored motley patchwork.)* They recognized it by the distinctive pattern Jack's mother had woven into the cloth. It was caked with blood. Beside it lay his tin hunting horn. Nothing else was ever found. It was commonly believed that tigers had eaten Jack's father down to the bone. The poor man. . .

The FLIM-FLAMMER appears, and spots JACK. Unseen by JACK, he reverses his vest and then his moustache so the ends point down.

JACK So you see I've just got to sell you at market. There's nothing else I can do for my mother. She's had all the responsibility for so long that – (*He sees the peddler in the distance.*) Look at that funny old peddler, Suzette. He looks familiar. ..Hello mister.

PEDDLER high fives him.

PEDDLER Hi, kid.

JACK Whatcha selling?

PEDDLER Whatcha buying? Matter of fact, I didn't sell a thing today. I traveled all the way to market, but when I got there the market was closed, there was a sign that said CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. There wasn't a soul in sight—

JACK But--that's where I'm headed.

PEDDLER Don't bother.

JACK I'm on a serious errand. It's a matter of life and death. It's imperative that I sell Suzette—

PEDDLER Imperative? That's a fancy word.

JACK It means important ... crucial.

PEDDLER Say, you're pretty smart for a kid. All those big words and you even know what they mean! You talk like a philosopher-- that's a person who has a kind of ... attitude ... of very smart . . . kind of . . . talking and... big words...

JACK A philosopher is a person who makes an inquiry into intellectual and moral systems, or into the nature of things based on logical reasoning rather than empirical methods.

PEDDLER You said a mouthful! I'm impressed with the depth of your thinking. You can cogitate! (*To audience.*) That means he can think. (*To JACK*) You can deduce empirically. (*To audience.*) I'm not sure

what that means. (*To JACK*) But one thing I do know: it ain't logical to go all the way to market when it's CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE, is it?

JACK (*Thinks*) I guess not.

PEDDLER Is it logical to run away from the deal of a lifetime?

JACK What deal?

PEDDLER With me, of course. You want to sell the cow--sell it to me!

JACK For cash?

PEDDLER shakes his head.

PEDDLER No cash.

JACK No cash, no cow. You see, she's a cash cow.

PEDDLER We could barter.

JACK Barter?

PEDDLER Trade. Swapsies. You give me that dried-up old cow—

JACK Hey, you'd better treat Suzette with respect!

PEDDLER Okay, okay. Suzette, my dear, you've got lovely eyes.

JACK That's better.

PEDDLER Look, you give me this charming bovine creature, and in return. . .

JACK Yes?

PEDDLER I give you beans.

JACK Beans?

PEDDLER Beans.

JACK I beg your pardon! Beans aren't worth . . . a hill of beans!

PEDDLER These are special beans. See. ..so many colors, odd shapes. And they're magic! They'll amaze you.

JACK Sorry, it's not logical. It makes no sense at all.

PEDDLER You want proof? 1: you go to the market to sell your cow so you can buy food. Are you with me? (*JACK nods.*) But--2: the market is CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE, correct? (*JACK nods.*) I deduce you've got two possible choices. (A), you return home with the cow, and go hungry, or (B), you can trade the cow for this bunch of beans which you can eat or plant. Now which is the logical choice?

JACK B!

PEDDLER (*soft shoe*) ISN'T LOGIC GRAND?
THERE IS ALWAYS SOMETHING PLEASIN'
WHEN A PERSON USES REASON
SO HIS BRAIN-CELLS CAN EXPAND--
I JUST HAVE TO SHAKE YOUR HAND!
ISN'T LOGIC GRAND?

JACK Why thank you very much, that's-

PEDDLER AND PHILOSOPHY – THAT'S SWELL!
I MUST SAY, IT IS DELIGHTFUL
TO MEET ONE WHO'S SO INSIGHTFUL
AND WHOSE ANALYTIC S SKILLS PROPEL
THOUGHTS WHICH, MIXED TOGETHER, JELL;
YES, PHILOSOPHY IS SWELL!
I LOVE LOGIC – IT'S SO NICE,
TO SEE ACTS OF CONCENTRATION
AND MATURE CONSIDERATION
YIELD CONCLUSIONS SO PRECISE,
THAT'S WHY LOGIC IS SO NICE,
AND WHY YOU'LL TAKE MY ADVICE—

He sticks out his hand. Jack, still into the rhythm of the soft-shoe, automatically shakes it.

PEDDLER Congratulations! You've won the grand prize, Jack! (*He empties the beans into a plastic bag, ties it with a bright ribbon.*) And as a bonus, this fine plastic bag. And as a bonus to the bonus, this gorgeous ribbon!

JACK (*Jack shakes his head.*) No. No, wait--you're using false logic.

PEDDLER A deal's a deal. We shook on it.

JACK (*bewildered*) Did we? Did we make a deal? I didn't think—

PEDDLER Well then, say goodbye to your cow. And remember ... don't spill the beans. Ha ha . . .

JACK (*Jack kneels down by Suzette.*)
SUZETTE, TRY TO BE STRONG. SEE? YOU'VE MADE A BRAND-NEW FRIEND.
HE'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU.
HE'LL SCRATCH BEHIND YOUR EARS--
(WHY ARE MY EYES SO FILLED WITH TEARS?)
AND I'LL COME VISIT YOU.
AND MAYBE--MAYBE IN THE END
YOU'LL END BACK HOME WHERE YOU BELONG—
(*He runs out, clutching his bag of beans.*)

PEDDLER Poor kid, he's breaking my heart. And he never realized those magic beans were fakes! I feel terrible. (*He blows his nose into a huge hanky then smiles.*) Still. ..a deal's a deal. He shook on it! Come on, Miss Suzette...or should I call you Sir Loin?

SCENE THREE

Jack and his mother. She is holding the beans.

MOTHER You what? You WHAT????!

JACK But Mama, we can eat the beans.

MOTHER When they're cooked, there won't be enough beans to fill the hole in my tooth, much less my stomach! My stupid son, my foolish philosopher, we're doomed, doomed! And as for these beans—*(She throws them away.)* They're worthless! *(A silence.)*

JACK Mama?

MOTHER What?

JACK I'm still hungry.

MOTHER Try eating a dish of logic. No, never mind, I'm sorry. No point in yelling when the deal is done. Too bad. Let's go to bed, child, and forget our hollow stomachs. Maybe we'll find something to eat in the morning.

They go into their shack. The lights dim. A silence. Then snores. Then a strange sound coming from behind the house, an upward-spiraling green growing noise. A large vine grows up and up. Then silence. Then bird song. Dawn. Jack appears, rubbing sleep from his eyes.

JACK Morning ... and I'm still hungry. Maybe I'll be able to pick some good weeds. I've heard cat tails and bull rushes are tasty, and nutritious too. *(Jack sees the vine.)* What's that ... thing? *(To Us)* (A) It's green. (B) It wasn't here yesterday. (C) It's taller than a ladder. (D) It's reaching for the sun. And (E) there are funny pods hanging from it. Beans! I logically deduce that it's a beanstalk!-- the plant must have grown up overnight! It sprouted from those magic beans Mama threw away. But to grow so high, so fast--that's not logical! So they really were magic. *(He removes a pod, opens it, eats a bean.)* Pretty tasty. Nothing like fresh beans for breakfast! *(Eats.)* Beans galore! And a towering beanstalk. I wonder how high up it goes? There's only one way to find out—

Mother enters sleepily. She sees the stalk.

MOTHER What's this thing?

JACK Beanstalk--grew over night.

MOTHER Help. We've been invaded! It's from outer space!

JACK Have some fresh beans, Mama.

MOTHER There's something strange about this beanstalk. It's too tall. And it grew too fast.

JACK I told you those beans were magic.

MOTHER You think so?

JACK Taste 'em.

MOTHER Delicious. And so many of them. Jack, we won't starve after all-- Jack, where are you going?

Jack has put on a knapsack and slung the little tin hunting horn over his shoulder.

JACK *(climbing)* I'm going to climb to the top, so I can get to the bottom of this— *(He gives a horn blast. It's a pretty puny sound.)*

MOTHER But we have enough food now—

JACK *(climbing)* I've got to find out what's up there—

MOTHER Curiosity killed the cat.

JACK *(climbing)* Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

MOTHER Better safe than sorry.

JACK Better late than never. Mama, I've got to go—

 I 'M NOT GONNA WAIT,
 WON'T HESITATE,
 STUCK TO THE GROUND,

COMPANY HE'S HEADING STRAIGHT FOR THE SKY!

JACK I'VE GOTTA CLIMB,

ALL HAND OVER HAND,
RIGHT TO THE TOP,

JACK NOTHING CAN STOP ME!
I'M GONNA HOPE

ALL THIS IS THE ROPE
THAT LEADS TO THE SKY--
I'VE GOTTA TRY IT!
PIERCING THE CLOUDS, INTO THE BLUE
MAYBE YOU'LL REACH THE RAINBOW.

JACK THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN A HANDFUL OF BEANS.

ALL YOU'RE GONNA GET THERE WE KNOW.

MOTHER I HOPE HE FINDS WHAT HE IS LOOKING FOR,
I PRAY HE COMES HOME SAFE AND SOUND;
MY SON'S GOT COURAGE AND PLUCK,
STILL, WE COULD USE SOME GOOD LUCK,
SO I HOPE HE COMES HOME SAFE AND SOUND.
I HOPE AND PRAY HE COMES HOME SAFE AND SOUND.

ALL WE'RE NOT GONNA WAIT,
WON'T HESITATE
STUCK TO THE GROUND,
WE'RE HEADING STRAIGHT FOR THE SKY!

JACK I'VE GOTTA CLIMB,

ALL HAND OVER HAND,
RIGHT TO THE TOP,
NOTHING CAN STOP US!
WE'RE GONNA HOPE
THIS IS THE ROPE
THAT LEADS TO THE SKY--
WE GOTTA T R Y IT!
PIERCING THE CLOUDS, INTO THE BLUE

MAYBE WE'LL REACH THE RAINBOW.

JACK THERE'S MORE TO LIFE THAN A HANDFUL OF BEANS.

ALL NO COMPROMISES, NO IN-BETWEENS,
WE'RE GONNA GET THERE BY ANY MEANS,
WE'RE HEADING STRAIGHT FOR THE SKY.
BYE-BYE . . .

SCENE FOUR

COMPANY And so Jack climbed, upward and upward, heading for the sun.
Once he nearly slipped — (*Gasp from the company.*) His arms began to
get tired. Would there ever be an end to it?

JACK I can see it--just above me. It's a kind of platform. A ceiling. But
wait--what might be a ceiling for me could be a floor for someone
up there. I'm still thinking logically, that's good to know! (*He arrives
with a thud.*) I've just fallen down--or do I mean up?

*He looks around. There is a huge table, stool and a cauldron (enormous) with a pan over it
(likewise enormous), a golden harp and a very large laundry hamper. And a lady. It's hard to tell
her age, for she's got on a fright wig and mob cap and many aprons.*

JACK Knock knock. Anyone at home?

MRS O Whatcha selling?

JACK Whatcha buying?

MRS O Whatever you're selling, we don't want any!

JACK Any what?

MRS O Whatever you're selling.

JACK Look, I'm not selling a thing. (*He sniffs.*) What are you frying? I'm famished--I've been climbing since dawn and something smells delicious!

MRS O Just some fried codwollops on toast points for my husband. He always comes home for lunch--he can't get enough of my cooking.

JACK Fried codwollops! My favorite!

MRS O You can't barge in here--it's simply not done, it's not in the Book of Good Manners to show up uninvited.

JACK Let me introduce myself; my name is Jack.

MRS O I'm Mrs. Ogre. You may call me Mrs. O. But you can't come in.

JACK I'm so thirsty and hungry, you've got to let me in. Besides, your cooking has the smell of great poetry.

MRS O Poetry doesn't smell!

JACK It does. It can smell like fine brandy or sunny beaches, or damp fern-filled woods, or flowers. Or if it's bad, it just stinks!

MRS O And my codwollops?

JACK (*Thinks*) Like the salty brine of a blue sea on a sparkling, sunny day - ma'am.

MRS O Really?! That's very beautiful, you speak like a poet. (*Jack starts to move in.*) No, wait--halt! Not a step further!

JACK Ma'am, I won't hurt you. I came in peace—

MRS O (*The light dawns*) Oh, you thought I was afraid of you! No, I can tell you're a good kid, I was afraid for you.

JACK Why, ma'am?

MRS O *(To us)* The boy's so polite! *(To jack)* Because my husband will be home for lunch any time—

JACK *(famished)* Lunch. . .

MRS O And he doesn't like visitors. But since you're so hungry ...so polite, maybe just a small bowlful of codwollop--made from my magic frying pan!

JACK Oh yes, yes! First I'll wash my hands. *(She dishes it out from a large pot.)*

MRS O *(To us)* Such a genteel, such a clean young man. *(To Jack)* But you must be gone before he comes home.

JACK Is he shy?

MRS O Shy? Hardly. The man's a monster!

JACK *(eating)* Delicious! Your frying pan is magic!

MRS O He's a regular tyrant—

JACK Nectar and Ambrosia!

MRS O He's an ogre. *(She refills jack's bowl. He eats.)*
(tango) NEVER MARRY AN OGRE
THAT ONE SWEPT ME OFF MY FEET
SAID HOW MUCH HE LOVED ME,
ALWAYS ACTED SO SWEET.
BUT NO SOONER HAD WE CUT UP OUR WEDDING CAKE
THAN I SAW MY BIG MISTAKE,
NEVER MARRY AN OGRE.
NEVER MARRY AN OGRE
IN HIS KITCHEN HE THEN LOCKED ME,
MADE ME COOK DAY AND NIGHT--
AND HIS APPETITE, IT SHOCKED ME!
WHEN HE'D COME HOME FOR LUNCH, HE'D MAKE THE
HOUSE SHAKE,
HE WOULD GORGE, AND I WOULD QUAKE,

NEVER MARRY AN OGRE.

She empties the rest of the pot into jack's bowl.

MRS O HIS HUNGER IS HUGE, BUT HIS TEMPER IS SHORT.
MY HOURS ARE LONG, PLUS I GET NO SUPPORT,
SO AFTER YEARS OF HEART-BREAK, I'D LIKE TO FORSAKE--
THOUGH I'M SCARED TO LEAVE MY HUSBAND, THE OGRE.
NEVER MARRY AN OGRE.
TRY A WIMP OR A ROGUE OR
A FOOL--BUT DON'T MARRY AN OGRE.

JACK I'm not sure I can eat another bite. Mrs. O, I honestly think you're a genius! You could be a great chef in Paris . . . not that I've ever been to Paris.

MRS O Why thank you, Jack, your appreciation means a lot to me.
(*Thunderous footfall sounds.*) Oh, mercy me--!

OGRE FEE, FIE, FO, FUM...

JACK DID YOU HEAR THAT? SOUNDS TO ME LIKE A DRUM!

COMPANY The china cabinet began to shake. The golden harp began to vibrate. Books fell off the shelves. The whole house shook--!

MRS O He's coming, you've got to hide!

OGRE FO, FUM, FEE, FIE...

COMPANY HE MUST BE A VERY SCARY GUY.

JACK (*Still eating*) Is he that bad?

MRS O You don't know the half--there's no time to make an escape, so I'd better hide you--(*To us*) But where? Under the table? No the ogre's knees would knock against him. Behind the harp? No, my husband might decide he'd like a little music. Next to the stove? Too hot, it would cook the poor boy. In the laundry basket? Good idea! It's been done before, but it's safe and he'll be out of sight.

She stuffs him into the hamper.

MRS O In you go. Don't make a peep on pain of death! But once he's asleep you can creep out and run back down the stalk-- no, don't say a word, don't try to talk, not a squeak, not a squawk--here he comes!

OGRE *(from offstage)* FEE, FIE , FO, FUM--
Honey, I'm home!

MRS O I'm here ... all alone.

The ogre enters, sniffing the air.

OGRE I smell codwollops and toast--one of my favorites.

MRS O Coming right up! And how was your day, dear? What did you do?

OGRE WITH A FEE AND A FIE AND A FO AND A FAY,
SO FAR IT'S BEEN A BEAUTIFUL DAY.
I TORE THE WINGS OFF SOME BUTTERFLIES,
AND BULLIED SOME BALL -PLAYING BOYS;
THEN I BURNT DOWN TWO HOUSES
AND PICKLED SOME MOUSES,
AND RUINED A LITTLE GIRL'S TOYS.
I'D SAY IT WAS TIME WELL SPENT. I WORKED UP A BIG
APPETITE--
WHERE'S THE GRUB--?

MRS O Dear, shouldn't you wash your hands before you eat?

OGRE Wash my hands? Wash my hands?

MRS O It's sanitary--and it's the gentlemanly thing to do--

OGRE Shut up, woman, and serve me my grub.

Mrs. O sighs, takes the pot, brings it over to the table, starts to ladle some food out-- stares into the pot and gasps. Nothing there.

COMPANY But the grub was all gone. The only thing left was the heavenly smell, which lingered on the air like a beautiful memory.

From the clothes hamper there is a profound belch. Mrs. O covers by clearing her throat.

MRS O It appears to be ...gone.

COMPANY She was scared to death!

OGRE Gone?

MRS O Gone. Missing. Absent—

COMPANY (*helpfully*) Stolen—

MRS O Stolen!

OGRE Who's the thief? I'll grab him or her, and make a meal on 'em! Or ... maybe I'll make a meal on you!

MRS O Husband, if you'll calm down and give me a few minutes, I'll whip up something delicious, it will just take a jiffy—

OGRE (*child's tantrum*) But I want fried codwollops--!

MRS O And you'll get them--I still have some in the pantry, relax, put your feet up.

He does, on the hamper. He sniffs.

OGRE But there's something in the air, today. What is it?

MRS O I haven't the faintest idea what you're referring to—

OGRE A familiar scent--wait--what is it? I smell boy!

MRS O Don't be silly, dear.

OGRE No, absolutely, positively—

OGRE I SMELL BOY!
IT'S NOT PHEASANT, IT'S NOT QUAIL,
IT'S NOT PETER COTTONTAIL,
IT'S NOT BAMBI, OR HIS MOTHER,
IT'S NOT BATMAN OR THAT OTHER
I SMELL BOY!
PURE BOY!

MRS O Husband, how do you expect me to cook if you carry on so?

OGRE I SMELL BOY,
IT'S NOT LASSIE, IT'S NOT CAT.
IT'S NOT PRIEST OR DIPLOMAT,
NEITHER GANDER, GOOSE NOR SOW,
THOUGH THERE IS A HINT OF . . . COW? . . .
NO, IT'S BOY!

And I think the boy is a thief! He's stole my grub!

MRS O I have a wonderful idea! While I'm cooking, you can count your gold. Here, it always calms you down. *(She hands him a bag of gold which he throws on the floor.)* -Or you can play your harp. *(She plucks a chord. A beat. He yawns.)*

COMPANY It was a magic harp. When anyone plucked its strings, a strange stupor overwhelmed the ogre—*(Mrs. O plucks another chord.)*

OGRE Don't touch my harp! *(He yawns.)*

COMPANY And he would fall fast asleep.

OGRE IF I FIND HIM , THEN I'LL BEAT HIM ,
BETTER YET, I'M GONNA EAT HIM ...
(He yawns.)
I SMELL BOY...
I SMELL BOY...

He begins to nod off. Mrs. O looks at him.

MRS O Thank heaven, he's asleep. That harp always makes him drowsy, it's better than sleeping pills or tranquilizers, it knocks him out. (*She gently slides his legs off the hamper, speaks down to the hamper.*) The coast is clear, young man. I'm going to the pantry to get some more codwollops, and by the time I get back you'd best be gone. You know what he'll do if he catches you—

Jack climbs out of the hamper.

JACK I know, I heard, he'll eat me up. Mrs. O, you're a kind and beautiful lady and I want to thank you for-

MRS O Just go. No time for manners, now.

JACK Look, I hate to eat and run—

She grabs the bag of gold.

MRS O Go! Notice t h e bag of gold, it's just lying there idle. Notice, I'm heading into the pantry. If you're smart, you'll take the gold and go back t o where you came from.

JACK Isn't that stealing?

MRS O No, because he stole it from honest folks. Just think of it as a gift from me. Let's just say it's going to feed a hungry young man-

JACK And his mother—

MRS O And his mother. (*To us*) He's thoughtful – I like that!

JACK (*To us.*) I'd better leave. Shall I do what she says? (*He picks the bag up.*) What do you think?

COMPANY Take it! Take it! Your mother's still hungry! The lady gave it to you as a gift – follow her advice-

MRS O But you'd better hurry-- He's beginning to wake up-- Hurry!

COMPANY Run ! Speed it up!

Jack grabs the bag and exits.

OGRE *(waking)* I SMELL BOY.. .
I SMELL BOY. . .

Mrs. O produces a steaming pan.

MRS O Codwollops, dear- *(Ogre grabs the pan, chug-alugs, and disappears.)*
(To us) I always said, the way to a man's heart is through his
stomach.

JACK Golly, I escaped just in the nick of time!

"AND DOWN AND DOWN I GO,
ROUND AND ROUND I GO--"

(To us.) Have you ever noticed that it's easier to go down than to
climb up? There's a logical reason. It's called gravity, you see, the
Law of Gravity states...

SCENE FIVE

Mother enters weeping and eating beans.

MOTHER I HOPE HE FINDS WHAT HE'S LOOKING FOR,
I PRAY HE COMES HOME SAFE AND SOUND,

I yelled at him because of the beans, and now I'll never see him
again—

Jack crash lands at her feet.

JACK I'm home, Mama.

MOTHER And he was such a good boy at heart!

JACK Mama, it's me, I'm back, and in one piece. And I've had the most
extraordinary adventure—

MOTHER Where can he be, now?

JACK In front of your nose, Mama! *(He embraces her. More tears.)* Now I ask you, is it logical to cry, when the very person you're crying over is right here? *(She shakes her head, blows her nose.)*

MOTHER Where have you been, child? Are you hurt? Are you hungry? Have some beans—

JACK No beans--I'm stuffed to the brim with codwollop and toast—

COMPANY And so Jack filled her in about all that had happened. About the nice lady who let him in, and fed him her wonderful cooking, and hid him. And about the ogre, who was a very cruel tyrant, as well as a bad bet for a husband. And about—

JACK The gold! Here's a bag of gold for you, Mama. Now you'll never go hungry again. And I'll buy you such a pretty new dress, and a cow-

COMPANY And so they rejoiced, and enjoyed their good fortune. But Jack could not forget that mean ogre and his unhappy wife. And soon the urge for adventure began to tease him. And tickle him. And taunt him. And haunt him. It wouldn't let him sleep. He longed to go back and see the nice lady once more. And he thought:

JACK Perhaps she shouldn't be left alone with that ogre--he's too mean--I could bring her down here. With us.

COMPANY He wasn't sure why, but that urge teased and tickled and taunted and haunted him.

Jack awakens at night, looks up at the beanstalk, shoulders his knapsack and the hunting horn, and creeps away.

COMPANY So once more Jack climbed, upward and upward, heading straight for the sun, until his mother's house was a wee speck down below, and finally--pop--it disappeared from sight. And he came to the land where the ogre lived. And he knocked on the door where the ogre lived.