

# Plays for Young Audiences

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*The Curious History of*  
***Jack and the Beanstalk***

*A Brief Investigation into Imperialism, Hooliganism, and  
Organic Gardening in Medieval Ireland*

By  
**Chad Henry**

*Jack and the Beanstalk* was first presented by Seattle Children's Theatre for the 1993-94 season.

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

FAERY #1

FAERY #2

FAERY #3

EILEEN O'FENIAN (Faery second class)

JACK SPRIGGINS

WIDOW SPRIGGINS

LIAM FLAHERTY

PADDY O'RILEY

BOSSIE (a cow)

MRS. MCGARRAHAN

MRS. O'CONNELL

BEAN MAN (a used bean salesman)

BEAN GIRL ONE (magical spokesmodel)

BEAN GIRL TWO (magical spokesmodel)

OGRESS (Giant's wife)

LACKEY ONE (OOGEDY)

LACKEY TWO (BOOGEDY)

LACKEY THREE (BOO)

ULG (The Giant, or Yrffaddyr)

HEN (that lays golden eggs)

THE MAGIC HARP

Note: With considerable doubling, the original SCT production of this script employed 9 actors.

## Act 1, Scene 1

The rath of the Shi of Tir Na N'og.

Stage fog. Lights twinkle dimly in the distance. The light is like that just after sunset. Eerie music. Choral voices singing a wordless chant. The tinkle and shiver of hundreds of tiny bells. Three tall robed FIGURES stand upstage in the gloom, facing the audience. Only the dimmest outline of their shapes can be discerned. Green slanted eyes gleam with animal curiosity and detachment from underneath their hoods. There is a wierd, modal chant over the drone of a fiddle. The creatures' voices intone.

FAERIES                    Baghdad Bleimor. An heol a sav. Traighli sine.

FAERIE #1                Come forth –

FAERIES                Come forth!

Enter EILEEN O'FENIAN.

EILEEN                    I'm late – terribly sorry – but – better late than never!

FAERIE #1                Who is it comes before the court of Tir Na N'og?

EILEEN                    Oh! Your pardon. It is I, Noble Lady--I mean, me— Eileen O'Fenian! Faery second class. (*Holds up her book*) Studyin' hard for my promotion! (*EILEEN drops her wand, there is a flash and a puff of smoke*) Eek--faith, but I'm all discombobulated...(*She retrieves the wand.*)

FAERIE #3                Recite your duties, Eileen O'Fenian.

EILEEN                    Well , let's see—I've got so many, you know. Now let me think— I'm in charge of all the primroses and cowslips that grow in our part of Ireland. And it's my job to keep the robin redbreasts hereabouts safe from kitty cats and little boys. And, uh--and, uh-- and, uh--What am I forgetting? Och! (*smacks her head*) I'm the guardian fairy of--oh, what's his name, he's a human, you know-- King Spriggins of County Clare. (*There is an eerie banshee wail from the upper air.*)

FAERIE #3 Guardian faery of King Spriggins of County Clare. (*Another banshee wail, louder.*)

EILEEN Oh, yes. He's a grand king. Strong, brave. To tell the truth, I don't give him a second thought—

FAERIE #3 Eileen O'Fenian, listen and lament--King Spriggins is murdered.

FAERIES Foully murdered.

EILEEN Murdered? Och, no! No! Who could have done such a terrible-- (*gasp*)--the giant?

FAERIES The giant! Murdered the king and stole away his three treasures-- the sun, the wind, and the rain!

FAERIE #1 There is a drought upon the land.

FAERIE #3 This is an evil thing.

EILEEN Oh, your pardon, I beg you! I'm just one small faerie--I've so many duties...

FAERIE #1 Silence! You must pay the penalty for your mistake.

FAERIE #2 You will be stripped of your magical powers.

FAERIE #3 Forfeit your youth and beauty.

FAERIE #1 And be banished forever from Tir Na Nog.

EILEEN Leave my home forever! Please--is there nothing I can do to change your mind?

FAERIE #3 There is one thing only. Find the king's anointed son, and send him against the giant to bring back the kingdom's ancient treasures.

FAERIE #1 Only then may you return.

EILEEN Must I do all this with no magic?

FAERIE #1            Here are seven magical spells to assist you. You may use each spell once, and then it is gone. But beware. With each spell you use, you will grow older and weaker, and if you use them all, you will die. Apply them wisely, Eileen.

EILEEN              The giant Ulg is sixty feet tall! Teeth like daggers and eyes like fire! He lives on human flesh! Not even a king's son could prevail against such an evil monster!!

FAERIE #1            It is your only hope. If you fail , you will never more return to Tir Na N'og.

EILEEN              Then I fear I'll see this land no more.

Song: Farewell to Tir Na N'og

EILEEN              *Oh, Giants and Princes  
And Great Kings and Queens  
I know next to nothing  
about such things  
Tir Na N'og, Tir Na N'og  
I love you so  
But far from Tir Na N'og  
I now must go  
Oh, far from Tir Na N'og  
I now must go*

Music continues.

FAERIE #1            Eileen O'Fenian, prepare to be transformed!

FAERIES             *Chamch Sin  
Snoilen Peinh  
Buain a Rainich  
Buain a Rainich  
Chamich Sin  
Snoilen Peinh  
Buain a Rainich Deorghnan*

EILEEN                    *Fare thee well to Tir Na N'og*  
*Farewell to your sky*  
*Farewell, wings*  
*What good are wings*  
*To vagabonds who may no longer fly?*

FAERIES                    *Chamch Sin*  
*Snoilen Peinh*  
*Buain a Rainich*  
*Buain a Rainich*  
*Chamich Sin*  
*Snoilen Peinh*  
*Buain a Rainich Deorghnan*

EILEEN                    *Fare thee well to Tir Na N'og*  
*Let your music play on*  
*In my dreams your songs will echo*  
*Though forevermore I may be gone*  
*I am gone*  
*I am gone*  
*I am gone*

FAERIES                    *Chamch Sin*  
*Snoilen Peinh*  
*Buain a Rainich*  
*Buain a Rainich*  
*Chamich Sin*  
*Snoilen Peinh*  
*Buain a Rainich Deorghnan*

*As the music continues, a huge bell starts tolling away under ground. There is a rush of wind, a clap of thunder, a blinding flash of lightning, a howl of voices and a tangle of bells, spiraling away into eternity. EILEEN is transformed into a hideous, ugly crone.*

EILEEN                    No!

*Lights down.*

## Act 1, Scene 2

The swirl of bagpipes sounds from offstage, then an Irish band kicks in with a rousing dance tune, such as "Molly in the Pig Pen."

Lights rise on a thatched hovel in the forest. Inside, a hearth, blackened rafters, a window seat before an oil cloth window. A peat fire is burning on the hearth, a kettle on the hook, and smoke drifts across the horizon. Chickens are making a racket offstage, and a rooster crows. Outside, the dooryard. A few turnips, cabbages, and several pole teepees covered with green beans. A chopping block with a hatchet stuck in it.

JACK SPRIGGINS appears from behind the house. JACK is a smart and handsome lad. We can tell already that he'll go far, he just needs a hand up. Right now, he's trying to increase his income opportunities by developing a ventriloquism act with his chicken, Roy Rogers.

Under one arm he carries Roy, who is squawking and struggling. In his free hand he has a book he is reading on how to do ventriloquism. JACK puts the chicken down on its feet.

JACK                      There. Shhh. Stay there . Good chicken.

The WIDOW calls from offstage. JACK continues to concentrate on the chicken while fielding directions from the WIDOW.

WIDOW                    Jack! I 'm near to out of firewood.

JACK                      The axe is too dull for choppin ', Ma.

WIDOW                    Well, sharpen it.

JACK                      Ma, can you sharpen it for me? I'm awful busy right now.

WIDOW                    Sharp it yerself or chop wood with a dull axe, one or the two.

JACK                      Yeah, Ma. There, chick! There, chick, chick!

WIDOW                    Then, after, I want you to weed the beans.

CHICKEN                  Awwwkk buck buck buck! Buck buck buck.

JACK                    There now. You just move your beak when I nod to you, and I'll throw my voice the way it seems like you be the one talkin'.

CHICKEN                Okay, Jack.

LIAM and PADDY enter, stand watching JACK.

LIAM                    Jack, my beamish boy!

PADDY                  It's the lad himself!

ROOSTER                Hello, lads!

LIAM                    Have ye got a shillin'?

JACK                    Shush yourself, Flaherty! I'm puttin' this here chicken under a conjuration. Now. You are completely under my power, do ye understand? You will follow my every command! Bark like a dog!

CHICKEN                Roof roof!

LIAM                    *(Laughs like a maniac).* Do it again! *(Laughs again).*

CHICKEN                Roof roof! Arooo!!

PADDY                  What an eejit! Playin' with chickens!

JACK                    I'm not neither! It calms the animals down when—when trouble comes. *(BOSSIE crosses the stage).* I done it to the cow, too!

PADDY                  The cow?

JACK                    What does the donkey say, Bossie? *(BOSSIE stops and looks at the boys, and says...)*

BOSSIE                  Hee haw!

JACK                    What did I tell ye? Oh, I love my sweet little Bossie-wossie! Mm-smack! *(JACK hugs and kisses BOSSIE. BOSSIE exits, chewing her cut and clanking her bell.)*

PADDY                    You're a strange one, so you are.

LIAM                     Don't tease the lad, Paddy. He's just a few beans short of a pod.

As they sing this nursery rhyme, they jostle and push and whack JACK about the stage.

Song: Jack

PADDY &  
LIAM

*Jack Laddy Jack  
With his head in a sack-i-o  
Simple little hick  
Of a shanty mick  
Quick double quick  
Won't ya give him a whack-i-o  
Beat him on the bottom  
With a rhubarb stick!*

Vamp underneath.

JACK                    Lay off! Ye great droolin' goons! Someday I'll be greater than all of ye!

*For I'm  
Jack Jack  
Spriggins O Mac  
Gimme no lip  
Or I'll give ye a smack  
Jack Jack  
Me ma wears black  
But someday I'll be king-o!*

PADDY &  
LIAM

*Jack Jack  
Head in a sack  
Sleepin' all day  
In the old haystack*

JACK                    *I'll seek my fortune and  
When I come back*

*I'll buy me ma a sparklin' diamond ring-o*

ALL                    *I'll have me sword  
And a silver knife  
And I'll lead me a rowdy  
And a rovin' life*

JACK                    *And I'll get enough gold  
To fill up a sack  
I'm black Jack Davy  
Jack!*

*Dance break with the three boys – and maybe the cow.*

PADDY &  
LIAM                    *Jack Jack  
He eats hardtack  
He sleeps in the ashes  
And his wits are slack  
Whack him quick  
Little shanty mick*

JACK                    *But someday I'll be king-o*

PADDY &  
LIAM                    *Ye'll never be king  
Ye silly old thing*

JACK                    *I tell ya I'll be king-o  
And I'll have meself  
A snow-white mare  
And a castle high  
On the hill up there  
And a golden crown is what I'll wear  
And I'll buy my ma a sparklin' diamond ring-o  
And I'll buy my ma a sparklin' diamond ring-o*

*Percussion a accordion continue under dialogue.*

LIAM                    *Quit dreamin', boy! Go and grab that shillin'!*

JACK                   What are we goin' to do?

PADDY                 No time for questions! The other lads are waitin' for us!

LIAM                   We'll explain on the way!

JACK                   *(He dashes to the cookie jar and pulls out a coin, flips it in the air, and pockets it)* She'll never miss one little shilling! Come along, lads!

*A swift light change. The sound offstage of giant footfalls, walking across the countryside. The chickens go crazy. The BOYS freeze in fear, looking up and to the far horizon.*

JACK                   The giant!

PADDY                 Hsst! The giant is coming!

WIDOW                *(Entering, panicked)* Jack? Jack? God help us! Where are ya?

PADDY                 It's him. Hsst! Not a sound!

*The sounds move on and the light changes back.*

WIDOW                Just passin' by.

LIAM                   Just passing by.

PADDY                 H e ' s gone.

LIAM                   He hasn't been seen for half a year or more!

WIDOW                MURDERIN ' BEAST! Jack – the firewood.

*She exits. The others remain rooted for a moment, looking up. JACK shakes himself loose.*

JACK                   If I was king, I'd drive that murderin' theif from here for ever.

LIAM                   Sure ye would, Jackie. Sure ye would.

JACK                   I would!

PADDY                    Come on! The lads are waitin'!

The LADS run noisily off stage. The WIDOW SPRIGGINS runs around the side of the cottage, pushing a barrow of turnips.

WIDOW                    Jack? (*She looks about, sees JACK is gone, heaves a sigh*). Boss! Come, Boss! It's milkin' time! Eeeeeeeeeee-yip yip yip! Come, Boss! Get yer great rumpus out here, now.

BOSSIE                    (*off-stage*) Mmmmm!!!! (*A cow-bell clunks and clonks as BOSSIE ambles back onstage.*)

WIDOW                    Could you go any slower, do you think? Let you get over here by me, and stand still, the way I can finish the milkin' before judgement day! (*She pulls up a stool and begins to try to milk.*)

BOSSIE                    Mmmmm.

WIDOW                    You think YOU got sorrows. Just look at me! What with the well runnin' dry, weasels in the henhouse, and only three shillings to my name... Thank God anyway for the butter and cream money.

BOSSIE                    Moo.

WIDOW                    You're not dry, surely? You're only holding back to tease me. Come on, lass.

Song: Give Us Some Milk

WIDOW                    *Woud you give us some milk  
If I asked you sweetly  
Woud you fill up my pail  
If I asked you nice  
Oh, we can't live on water  
So I'll give you some extra fodder  
If you give me some milk  
Right now  
You Bossie old cow*

*Oh our life is so hard  
And it's gonna get harder  
If you're udderly empty  
Then my cupboard is bare  
Oh, we've nothing but lard  
And a bucket of chard out in the larder  
Come on Boss, it's  
Time to open the faucets  
Or we haven't a prayer*

*What a time to run short (plink, plonk)  
I've a son to support (plink, plonk)  
There's the rent and the tax (plink, plonk)  
Bossie, this is no time to relax*

*If you give me some milk  
Then I'll give you some clover  
If you give me some cream  
Then I'll give you some hay  
Look, I'm squeezin' each teat  
So soft and sweet isn't it a treat  
Woncha give me some milk right now  
You Bossie old cow?*

Music continues under. NEIGHBOR LADIES enter.

MRS

McGARRAHAN     Widow Spriggins, would ya have a drop of cream to sell?

MRS O'CONNELL   And I need...

WIDOW             You need your rent money, I expect?

MRS O'CONNELL   I'll let it go in exchange for a pat of butter.

WIDOW             Well, that's grand of ye. Though herself is actin' a bit strange this morning. *(She suppresses a curse as milk resolutely refuses to come out).*

MRS O'CONNELL   Och, she's dried up.

MRS

McGARRAHAN It's the Wee Folk done it!

MRS O'CONNELL She's dried up from fright, more like. (*stage whisper*) The giant hisself come through the valley, not five minutes ago.

MRS

McGARRAHAN In the midst of life, we are in the midst of death.

MRS O'CONNELL I mind fifteen years ago when the giant laid waste our village...

MRS

MCGARRAHAN ...stold the sun and the wind and the rain...

WIDOW ...and killed the king.

MRS

MCGARRAHAN And now, nothing but drought...

WIDOW Gardens won't grow, rivers won't flow, wind won't blow, and cows dryin' up outta season.

Song: Give Us Some Milk (continued)

WIDOW *Oh, our life is so hard*

LADIES *Yes our life is so hard*

WIDOW *And it's gonna get harder*

LADIES *Full of sorrow and care*

WIDOW *Oh, my pockets are empty*

LADIES *Empty pockets, empty pockets*

WIDOW *And my cupboard in bare*

LADIES *Nothin' there but air*

WIDOW *Oh, we've nothing but lard*

LADIES *Just greasy old lard*

ALL *And a bucket of chard out in the larder  
Come on boss, it's  
Time to open the faucets  
Or we haven't a prayer*

LADIES *No she hasn't a prayer*

WIDOW *What a time to run short (plink, plonk)  
I've a son to support (plink, plonk)  
There's the rent and the tax (plink, plonk)*

ALL *Bossie, this is no time to relax*  
(Ladies echo) *If you give us some milk (Just some pasturized milk)  
Then we'll give you some clover (Roll you over in the clover)  
If you'll give us some cream (We dream of cream)  
Then we'll give you some hay (Some hay right away)*

WIDOW *Doncha know that the cottage*

LADIES *Tumble down cottage*

ALL *Is out of cottage cheese*

WIDOW *So please don't tease  
A widow*

LADIES *A poor old widow*

WIDOW *Won't you give just a little*

LADIES *(Just a little, Just a little, Just a little)*

ALL *Milk right now  
You Bossie old cow*

*Enter EILEEN in a hurry. She pushes past the LADIES and clutches the WIDOW'S arm.*

EILEEN                    Begging your pardon--Please--beg pardon--Be you the Widow Spriggins?

MRS. O'CONNELL (*Officious*) She might be her, Granny, and she might be not. Who is it wants to know?

WIDOW                    I am the Widow Spriggins.

EILEEN                    Oh, your majesty! Thank the stars!! My feet are killin' me! I've been walkin' for fifteen years!

MRS  
MCGARRAHAN        She's raving mad, the old hag!

WIDOW holds up a warning hand. EILEEN looks at the other two, then back to WIDOW.

EILEEN                    Have ye got a son Jack?

MRS O'CONNELL        She surely does. The entire village knows him.

EILEEN                    Where is he? I must speak to him at once!

WIDOW                    (*Guarded*) He's not here—

MRS O'CONNELL        He probably run off the minute she asked him to help with the chores.

MRS  
MCGARRAHAN        The woman with a son in her house has a sorrow in her heart.

EILEEN                    I've got to find him right away. oh, I 'm wore out--could ya let me have a cup of milk before I go? And a bit of bread? Or perhaps a bowl of stew--or—

MRS O'CONNELL        Oh! The baggage!

MRS  
MCGARRAHAN        Ye'll no such of a thang, ye sorry old beggar!

EILEEN                    Beware! I'm a faerie! (*She says "faerie" in the same tone of voice as Regan in The Exorcist*).

MRS O'CONNELL (*Gasp! Spits through her fingers, crosses herself*). A faerie indeed!

EILEEN                    (*Overlapping*) Hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil!

*She zaps her hands in the direction of the LADIES. The sound effect is of a quite powerful magic spell heading in the general direction of the LADIES, flying wide, then boomeranging back toward EILEEN. The spell hits her full in the face and she is knocked to the ground. She gives it a second try—this time the spell hits the LADIES who stand frozen with their mouths open. BOSSIE bawls in terror and galumphs off-stage.*

EILEEN                    Pardon, your Majesty.

WIDOW                    What have you done to them? Who are you? How did you learn my secret?

EILEEN                    The guardian faery of the king knows many things.

WIDOW                    Then it's YOU I have to thank for my desolation?

EILEEN                    Yes, yes, truly, forgive me, great lady. I am come to make amends, if I can.

WIDOW                    Amends. I don't know whether to laugh or cry.

EILEEN                    Your son must go to the castle of the giant.

WIDOW                    No! No! I forbid it! He's only a child..

EILEEN                    He's nearly a man. The blood royal flows in his veins—

WIDOW                    His father's son. If I lose him—

EILEEN                    If you keep him here, in ignorance, he will always be wayward  
lout.

WIDOW                    If I keep him here, he will remain alive. You'll work no more of  
your mischief here. Begone!

EILEEN                   Your majesty-- (*FAERIE ambience*)

FAERIE #1               Eileen O'Fenian!

EILEEN                   Yes, noble lady?

FAERIE #1               Find Prince Jack. You've no time to waste.

EILEEN                   All right, all right. I'm goin', I'm goin'!

FAERIE #1               And mind your temper. You've wasted one spell already-- you've only six spells left.

*The LADIES are stirring—the spell is fading--they have no memory of it.*

MRS

MCGARRAHAN    Be on your way, you crazy old beggar woman!

MRS O'CONNELL   Don't be botherin' dacent folk such as ourselves.

EILEEN                   All right, all right. I'm goin', I'm goin'! Only six spells left. To think I wasted one on the likes of you two! Rrraaaaghhh!! (*She roars at the LADIES, who scream like banshees. She exits.*)

*A surge of wild music. Yelling, hollering, whooping. JACK enters, with LIAM and PADRAIC hot on his heels. They're in the middle of a mock sword battle, with sticks. The boys knock over the turnip cart. Turnips go bouncing and rolling everywhere. The WOMEN scream and go running after the turnips, picking them up.*

JACK                   Two against one! No fair! Eeeee!!! (*JACK runs around and hides behind the WIDOW.*)

LIAM                   Get him, Paddy!

PADDY                Take that, ya big ninny! (*PADDY takes a swipe at JACK with his stick. The WIDOW takes a broom and lays into PADRAIC and LIAM. JACK scrambles up to the roof.*)

LIAM                   King of Ireland, is it?

WIDOW                   Get off! G e t away! You great blatherskites! Jack, come down from there before ya put yer foot through the thatch!

JACK                    I can't Ma--I'm afraid of heights. It's makin' me all dizzy just lookin' down!

WIDOW                   Get DOWN here, do you hear me? Moonin' and moitherin' the live long day! What am I to do with you?

JACK                    *(Biting into a turnip)* Who, me?

MRS  
MCGARRAHAN        If he was mine, I'd send him out to work! Tis said, homekeeping youths have ever homely wits!

LIAM                    Homely is rights.

MRS O'CONNELL      If he was mine, the lazy, dirty tatterdemalion, I'd lay into him with that broom, so I would.

JACK                    Well, I ain't yours, and I'm glad of it.

MRS.  
MCGARRAHAN        Oh! That's a nice mouth on him!

MRS O'CONNELL      I should say. And I'll just be troublin' ye for the rent money now, Widow Spriggins.

WIDOW                   *(With a dark look at JACK)* I'll just get it. *(She goes to a jar or a drawer and looks for coins.)* There were three shillings in here! I'm sure of it. Jack--?

JACK                    I think maybe the Faeries took it.

WIDOW                   Sure and the faeries have had a field day around here of late!

JACK                    NOW, Ma—don't go losin' your temper. You know it ain't good for your healt.

WIDOW                   Where did that shilling go?

JACK All right! I took it! With good reason. Paddy sez to me he knows a sure fire way I could double me money.

WIDOW Double your money?

PADDY I never said that—

JACK Double it. Paddy Murphy he says to me he says his dog Wart can run faster than Sean O’Grogans’ Irish Wolfhound. He says if I bet a shilling on Wart to win, I’ll make two in return. I sez to myself, wouldn't it do me heart good to place two shillin’s into me dear little Mars rough red hands. They line up the dogs at the startin’ line. The dogs is snarlin’ and barkin’ and champint at the bit and pawin’ at the ground, rarin’ to go. On your mark, get set, go, yells Sean. The dogs go tearing around the village green, neck and neck. Wart's on the inside. The Wolfhound is trailing him by a span at least! One lap they run! Two laps they run! They're comin’ in for the last lap, and Wart's ahead by a good three lengths! The crowd’s goin’ crazy—jumpin’ in the air , throwin’ their hats up, hollerin’ 'til they’s hoarse! The dogs is neck and neck, barrelin’ down the track, kickin’ up turf and slaverin’ great long strings of spit! Now Wart's pullin’ ahead! It’ s Wart comin’ in to the finish line! It’s in the bag! It’s--suddenly Wart sits down to scratch a flea, and the wolfhound goes sailin’ across the finish line. I thought to double your money for ya, Ma. And I all I done was lost your shillin’.

LIAM & PADDY King of Ireland! He can’t even pick a winner in a dog race!

WIDOW You lads! Go on! Before I crack your heads open! Be off with you now! Mrs. O’Connell, could the rent wait until Tuesday?

MRS O’Connell Tuesday and not a minute later, or it’ll be my sad duty to throw you out. *(To JACK)* Out!

LADIES *(Sung) Bad bad Jack  
Head in a sack  
You stepped on a crack  
You broke your mother’s heart...*

The LADIES exit in high dudgeon, or gear, whichever is greater.

WIDOW                    Three days to come up with the rent! We'll be sleepin' alongside the road.

JACK                      Couldn't we sell something?

WIDOW                    Sell what? Bossie's gone dry. We've no eggs. The garden will hardly grow. Three days. Old biddy. She would never have dared treat us that way in the old days.

JACK                      Why? Were we rich in the old days?

WIDOW                    We were a family of high degree. Our name was known throughout the land. The old days were the good days. *(She picks up the hatchet, begins to chop kindling with the very dull hatchet during the following.)*

JACK                      Tell me again, Ma. In the old days there was rain, and wind, and sun.

WIDOW                    *(Sung) Once this land was so sweet and green  
One the rain like precious jewels showered down all around  
One the summer air was so sweet and clean  
One the west wind like a harp sang serene  
One in the sky the sun, gold and round  
Like a thousand candles shone, shone a-down  
Angels up above who hear the prayers of men  
Touch the Earth and make her green once again*

JACK                      And my Da was alive! What was he like?

WIDOW                    *(She takes a besom and sweeps up chips)* . I've told you a thousand times!

JACK                      Tell me again!

WIDOW                    *(Sung) Your father was tall  
You father was strong  
He whistled and laughed*

*All the morning long  
He was staunch as a stick of ironwood  
He was brave and bonny and golden and good*

JACK I know all that! But what happened to him, Ma?

WIDOW *(darkly)* There's some things too terrible, too savage, too brutal, for a young lad to hear about.

JACK That's what youf re always tellin' me! I 'm a man now! I've got to know!

WIDOW A man, are ye? *(With a bitter laugh, she bundles kindling into the house.)*

*The WIDOW goes to the window seat and takes out an old sword. It has a jeweled hilt and scabbard. The scabbard is covered in runes. It is wrapped in piece of old oiled silk. Reverently, she unwraps it.*

WIDOW *(Getting a grip)* This was the caliber of man your father was. This was the sword belonged to himself.

JACK The sword of my father.

WIDOW It is the great sword Mananaan Mac Lir--they say it once belonged to great Cuchulainn himself. This sword, son, is your birthright.

JACK It's heavy!

WIDOW The power to kill is no light thing.

JACK Look! One of the jewels is missin'!

WIDOW Lost in battle.

JACK *(Picks up the sword)* If we was to sell another jewel from this sword, we'd be rich.

WIDOW Never think it! Your father s sword! You'd be sellin' it over my dead body. *(BOSSIE ambles onstage)*

BOSSIE                    Moo.

WIDOW                    The cow.

JACK                      The cow?

WIDOW                    The cow. Wefve got to sell the cow.

JACK                      Sell Bossie? You can't sell Bossie!

BOSSIE                    You can't sell me!

WIDOW                    She's all we've got left.

JACK                      Please, Ma! I've known her all my life! I promise I'll give up milk!  
I'll drink tea for breakfast!

WIDOW                    We've got no choice. I'm taking her to market.

JACK                      It's a terrible cruel hard thing you're doin'.

WIDOW                    It hurts me more than it does you. (*She takes BOSSIE's lead rope*).  
Come along, darlin' Bossie.

BOSSIE                    Please don't send me away!

WIDOW                    Jack, stop.

JACK                      Let me take her then!

WIDOW                    No! You're goin' nowhere by yourself!

JACK                      You can't make me stay here. I'll follow you.

WIDOW                    All right. Take her. (*WIDOW takes some medallions against evil and  
hangs them about his neck.*) But don't stop in the dark wood outside  
town. You want no doin's with the Wee Folk. These charms'll keep  
the worst of 'em away.

JACK                   Ma, these are for babbies and old folks!

WIDOW                The Wee Folk are not to be under-reckoned. You'll wear those charms or I'll go myself!

JACK                   Okay, okay, Ma. I can take care of myself, you know.

WIDOW                And Jack. Bossie's worth at least five shillings. There's scoundrels out there who will flim flam you six ways to Sunday if you give them a chance. Remember, five shillings, no less.

JACK                   All right, Ma.

WIDOW                *(She runs to JACK and hugs him fiercely)* And come directly back home! Do you hear me, lad? *(JACK & BOSSIE exit.)*

*WIDOW slumps onto a stump, Then she takes a turnip, takes a reflective bite of it, and sings.*

REPRISE: JACK SONG

WIDOW                *And he'll wear a crown upon his hair  
And he'll buy his ma a sparklin' diamond ring-o*

*(Lights down)*