Those Beans

(or: One morning on the orthopaedic ward…)

Jack and his Mum were poor.

Really poor.

So poor they had to sell their beloved cow.

Jack sold her to a bloke he met, for a handful of beans.

A handful of beans!

You can bet his Mum was cross!

She threw those beans straight out the back.

Onto the compost heap.

But they were magic beans.

We all know that.

One of them was, anyway.

Because, overnight, a huge beanstalk grew from the compost heap.

It reached right up above the clouds.

Jack climbed it, of course.

We all know that.

Up there, above the clouds, lived a nasty giant.

A really nasty giant.

He liked to eat children.

Fee, fie, foe, fum and all that.

We all know that, too.

But the nasty giant also had marvellous things up there above the clouds.

Among these was a golden harp which played and sang to itself.

A goose which laid golden eggs.

Oh, and a bag of gold.

Jack got away from the giant, and got back down with all these things.

I think we all know all that as well.

Jack only just got away from the giant.

He did this by chopping the beanstalk down just before the giant reached the ground.

We all know all that.

What we don’t know is what happened next…

*Tutor: Hello, Jack.*

Student: Hi, Mum.

*How are you this morning?*

OK. Bored! You know.

*You’re looking better.*

I feel fine.

*Good.*

I feel ready to go home!

*Well, let’s wait and see.*

Wait and see?

*Wait and see what the doctors say.*

Mmmm…

*I brought you some grapes.*

Thanks, Mum.

*The doctors say you might be allowed home today.*

Brilliant!

*If they’re happy with you.*

They will be.

*They’ll be round soon.*

That’s good.

*They’ll tell us if you can go home.*

I’m sick of hospital.

*I know.*

It’s really boring.

*Let’s wait and see, Jack.*

I’ve been thinking, Mum.

*Mmmm?*

Do you still have that magic harp?

*The one that sings and plays by itself?*

Yes.

*It’s locked in the shed.*

Good*.*

*Sometimes you can hear it in there.*

What?

*Playing and singing to itself.*

I hope nobody else hears it.

*I’ve covered it with sacks.*

That’s good.

*But you can still hear it sometimes.*

I think we should get rid of it.

*Really?*

Give it to a museum or something.

*Well …*

Get rid of it somehow.

*I suppose it’s a risk.*

Yes. If people hear it they’ll talk.

*You think so?*

Of course they will.

*That Mrs Williams, for one.*

Yes. That Mrs Williams. She would!

*She’s nosy. She’s a real gossip.*

If she ever finds out, everyone will know.

*They will.*

Everyone!

*This is all because of those beans, Jack!*

I remember when I brought them back.

*You sold our cow for some beans!*

You were so cross!

*Of course I was cross!*

You threw them onto the compost heap.

*I was cross, Jack.*

You can say that again!

*To sell our old cow for some beans …!*

But they were magic beans!

*Well, I didn’t know that, did I?*

We soon found out, though.

*We soon found out.*

Yes.

*It was really weird, wasn’t it?*

The next morning it was way up in the clouds.

*This enormous beanstalk.*

Straight up into the clouds.

*And you went straight up it. Like a little monkey.*

Well, yes.

*I should never have let you do that.*

It must have fallen straight down.

*When you chopped it down?*

Yes.

*Of course it did.*

Onto the compost heap.

*And you, Jack. Onto the compost heap and you.*

The whole enormous beanstalk.

*And that giant.*

He was right behind me.

*He was.*

He must have fallen right on top of me!

*He did!*

I don’t remember it.

*That’s what put you in hospital.*

Was it?

*Everything falling on top of you.*

Was it?

*Don’t you remember?*

I remember climbing down.

*I saw you.*

As fast as I could.

*You and the giant were so high up to begin with.*

I could hear him.

*Nasty thing.*

Cursing and swearing, he was.

*He was right above you.*

Enormous.

*Yes. He was. Enormous and very angry.*

Said he was going to kill me.

*Well, he nearly did when you chopped the beanstalk down.*

He was enormous, wasn’t he?

*Yes, and he fell right on top of you.*

I remember running for the axe.

*The giant was high above you.*

I remember chopping and chopping.

*Yes. As fast as you could.*

Then I suppose it all just fell on top of me.

*All I could see were your boots.*

I must have been out cold.

*You were lying so still.*

I don’t remember any of that.

*Just as well, really.*

I’ve been thinking, Mum.

*Yes?*

We’ve still got the goose, right?

*The one which lays golden eggs?*

Yes.

*She’s still laying.*

That’s good.

*An egg a day.*

That’s good.

*Most days, anyway.*

That’s good.

*All gold.*

That’s good.

*Yes.*

I’m surprised nobody has been asking questions.

*The neighbours did ask about the beanstalk.*

What did you say?

*I said it was a magic bean.*

And what did they say?

*Oh?*

Just “Oh”?

*Yes, “Oh?”*

Oh*.*

*I don’t think anyone suspects anything.*

That’s good.

*About the giant, for instance.*

That’s good.

*Or the goose.*

That’s good too.

*Not yet, anyway.*

I’ve been thinking.

*Mmmm…?*

About what we should do now.

*How do you mean?*

Well, if we suddenly have loads of money.

*Mmmm…?*

People will talk.

*Well...*

That Mrs Williams…

*She will. She’ll talk to everyone.*

If we suddenly start spending loads of money, they all will.

*Why would we spend a lot of money, though?*

Well, the house needs a lot of work.

*That’s true. The roof needs fixing, for one thing.*

There you are, then.

*The house needs painting.*

Exactly.

*And new windows.*

People will notice.

*Wonder where the money comes from.*

Exactly.

*Especially that Mrs Williams.*

Nosy thing.

*Once she knows, everyone will know.*

There’ll be no end to it.

*No.*

But I’ve got an idea, Mum.

*Have you?*

I think we should move.

*Move?*

Yes.

Oh…

Move where everyone has a bit of money.

*Move somewhere posh?*

Not too posh.

*No.*  *Not too posh.*

I think we need a bank account as well.

*Do we?*

Well, we need somewhere to keep the money.

*Oh.*

If that goose lays an egg a day.

*Do you think they really are gold?*

We’ll get someone to check.

*I wonder how long it will go on?*

Laying golden eggs?

*And I wonder where you go to sell them?*

I don’t know.

*I wonder how much we would get for an egg?*

They must be worth quite a bit.

*Yes.*

There’s a lot to think about.

*Maybe we should keep some.*

Eggs?

*Yes.*

For a rainy day?

*Well, she might stop laying one day.*

I suppose she might.

*I was thinking last night.*

Were you?

*I was thinking about Bess.*

Our cow?

*I was thinking how sad it was.*

Sad?

*Sad that we sold her.*

If I hadn’t sold her we’d never have had that beanstalk.

*No bag of gold.*

No goose.

*No golden eggs.*

No silly harp.

*No.*

Have we got any left?

*Pardon?*

Beans. Have we got any left?

*I don’t know.*

On the compost heap?

*There’s nothing much growing out there.*

Probably just as well, really.

*Oh?*

I’m not sure I want to climb another beanstalk!

*No way, Jack.*

Although we’ve done well out of it.

*Mmmm…*

Well, we have, Mum!

*Well, but you nearly died, Jack.*

Well…

*I thought you were dead.*

Mmmm…

*When I saw you on the compost heap.*

With an enormous beanstalk on top of me.

*Yes.*

Not to mention an enormous giant.

*It wasn’t funny, Jack.*

No.

*Not at all funny.*

No, I suppose not.

*You’ve been in here for weeks.*

Feels like years!

*It’s not a joke!*

Sorry, Mum.

*Well…*

I know.

*All because of those beans!*

Here come the doctors now.

*Oh, good.*

They’ll say I can go home today.

*Let’s hope so.*

Of course they will, Mum.

*I’ll go to the canteen, then.*

O.K.

*For a nice cup of tea.*

O.K.

*Back in a bit.*

Yes.

*When the doctors have seen you.*

Yes.

*Good luck, Jack.*

Thanks, Mum.

*See you later!*

Bye, Mum.

*Bye.*