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Jack and the Beanstalk

Libretto by Marcy Telles

Music by Jason Sherbundy

Characters:

Actor 1 Jack

Actor 2 Friend, Second Buyer, Giant

Actress 1 Old Woman, Harp, Mother

Actress 2 Friend, First Buyer, Giant's Sister

Act 1 (Outside Jack's house)

Onstage is Jack's house (stage right). A sign, pointing stage left, says "To the Fair."

Jack enters from stage right, stretching, as the day begins. A wooden Cow on wheels is pushed out from from stage left.

Jack: Good morning, Blossom! The county fair starts today. Not that you or I will have time to go and see it!

Jack's friends enter from stage right, singing:

Jack, Jack, come to the fair
We'll see puppets and clowns
And merry-go-rounds
And tumblers who leap in the air.
Where?
At the fair!

Jack, Jack, come to the fair
We'll see traveling shows
And fabulous clothes
The Mayor himself will be there
Where?
At the fair!

For only a penny a magical gypsy
Surrounded in mystery
Will tell you your future

Jack:
I'd hear nothing new, sir
My future's my history
I'll work harder and harder
Grow poorer and poorer

But don't let me spoil your fun.
Be off with you now, and run
Perhaps I shall see you there

Friends:
Where?
At the fair!

The friends exit and Jack waves goodbye. Mother enters.

Mother: Well, Jack I have some good news
and some bad news.

Jack: It's been a while since I've had
any good news Mother. Tell me that
first.

Mother: The good news is that you *will* go
to the fair today.

Jack: Um...what's the bad news?

Mother: Now, Jack, don't be upset -- and
don't argue. I've thought it all
out and there's no other solution.
You must go to the fair and...sell
the cow.

Jack: Sell Blossom?

Mother: I'm sorry Jack. But there's just
no other way. Now get her ready
and get on your way. And mind you
get a good price for her -- she's
all we have left.

Mother exits. Jack puts his arms around the Cow and sings:

How can I sell
My very best friend
The one I've known better
Than anyone else

How can I stay
As she's hauled away
My comfort in sorrow,
Companion in play

First Buyer:

Perhaps she was healthy and fat in her time
But I fear your cow is ... far past her prime
I can count every rib underneath her old hide
I'd dispose of her mercif'ly if she were
mine

Jack:

Please sir, dear Blossom's my very best
friend

I'm looking for someone to keep her content
Could you feed her and pasture her out in the
sun?

It's true that she's old, but she's still
lots of fun

First Buyer:

I don't look for fun in the cows that I buy
For I am a tanner, I deal in cowhide
I'll give you ten coins, it's the best I can
do

Perhaps her old hide would make one pair of
shoes

Jack:

One pair of shoes!

Buyers:

One pair of shoes!

Jack:

You can't have sweet Blossom for one pair of
shoes!

Second Buyer:

I am a purveyor of fine cuts of food
I won't be specific, for that might be rude
Your cow's a bit thin for what I have in mind
Why there's not enough meat to keep two cats
alive

Jack:

Please sir, my Blossom is not a meat cow
Though you would not think it to look at her
now

She once gave the finest of milk and rich
cream
She's too old for that, but she's sweet and
serene

Second Buyer:
It doesn't help me if she's ever so sweet
For I am a butcher and I deal in meat
I'll give you ten coins, that's as high as
I'll go
Perhaps I can use her for soupstock and bones

Jack:
Soupstock and bones!

Buyers:
Soupstock and bones!

Jack:
You can't have sweet Blossom for soupstock
and bones!

Buyers:
Oh me, oh my
Too skinny to buy
She's nothing but bones and a raggedy hide

Oh dear, oh well
Too puny to sell
She's a rickety wreck, she's a muckety mess!

Now then, now now
Good luck with your cow
We hope you can sell her, but we can't see
how.

The buyers exit.

Jack: Don't be discouraged, Blossom.

Oh me, oh my
Too skinny to buy
If they could just see you with my loving
eyes

Oh dear, oh well
Too puny to sell
But I'll find somebody who will treat you
well

The Old Woman enters.

Jack: Good morning, madam. Are you going to the fair?

Old Woman: I am indeed. I am hoping to find a fine cow.

Jack: Perhaps I can save you a long, dusty trip! I have a lovely cow. See?

Old Woman: Ah, yes. A noble beast. She looks quite friendly.

Jack: Oh, she's very friendly! And gentle too!

Old Woman: I could use a nice friendly cow to keep the lawn neat around my cottage. A kind of "lawn-mooer."

Jack: Why, she'd be perfect for that! Blossom loves to eat grass.

Old Woman: Well, what are you asking for your cow, young man?

Jack: We have nothing, madam. Only this cow to sell. So I must ask a good price. Whatever I get for selling Blossom must feed my mother and me through the long winter.

Old Woman: You want a good price? Well, name it.

Jack:
If I asked for 20 coins
Would that be too much?

Old Woman:
If you said a hundred coins
It would not be enough

Jack:
If I asked for twice as much,
Is that too high a sum?

Old Woman:
You could multiply that sum
It would not be enough

For I'm prepared to offer you
The fortune of your life
And all that I ask you to do
Is name your price

Jack:
Any price is paradise
When we are so poor
A purse of silver would suffice
I would not ask for more

Old Woman:
A simple purse, what could be worse?
Let's try a different tack
Use your wits, and tell me first
Your heart's desire, Jack

Jack: (spoken)
My heart's desire? I've never had
time to think what *that* might be. I
don't know.

Old Woman:
Don't you, now? Well I do. I can
see into your heart, Jack.

Jack:
What do you see?

Old Woman:
I'll give you a hint. You have it
in you to be a hero. A real hero,
Jack.

Jack:
A hero ...

Jack:

I've never had the nerve to show it
Doin' chores, when I want to save the world!
If I could only be heroic
Well, that would sure impress the girls

Working the farm and gathering hay
That could be done by anyone.
I want some death-defying escapade:
That would demonstrate that I'm someone

I want to show my friends and neighbors
That I'm not an ordinary lad
Like Hercules, with all his labors
Stronger than the average man

So if I had my heart's desire
I'd be a brave adventurer
I would be a fearless conqueror
The hero of a daring drama
That's my deepest heart's desire
Can you help me with my quest?

Old woman:

Jack, you're in luck. I have the
answer to your heart's dearest
prayer! Here they are, Jack --
the keys to your destiny!

(sings)

You can climb a stairway to the clouds
And find your fortune where the eagles play
There's a star far above the crowds
Just follow that star for all your days

All you need is a ladder
High enough to scrape the sky
All you need is a staircase
Taller than a bird can fly

In the cloud is a castle made of wind
With golden sunbeams for a chandelier
There are riches waiting there within
For a valiant lad who knows no fear

All you need is a ladder
High enough to scrape the sky
All you need is a staircase
Taller than a bird can fly

Jack: I don't like the sound of this at all. You want me to fly into the sky like a bird and break into somebody's house and take his riches? What kind of fellow do you take me for?

Old Woman: Don't you want to fly into the sky like a bird?

Jack: Well, being a bird might be fun—but I don't want to be a magpie, stealing from the other birds' nests.

Old Woman: What if I told you that those treasures are really yours?

Jack: You're crazier than I thought! Haven't I just been telling you that my mother and I are poor as peasants?

Old Woman: It wasn't always that way.

Jack: We've been poor as long as *I* can remember.

Old Woman: Well, my memory goes back a little further than yours, Jack. Give me the respect that's due to my years and I'll tell you a story that will open your ears!

Old Woman:
Way back when your father was young
He was adventurous and brave like you
Captain of a ship that chased the sun
The leader of a bold and loyal crew

Jack: Right. Follow a star. I'll do that between chores. Look, what I need are some silver coins, and what I've got is a cow...

Old Woman: Jack! This may be the only chance you ever get in this life to be a real, live hero. Think of it Jack! Climbing a ladder to the stars!

Jack: (To himself) What if this is my only chance? What if wishes really can come true, and I give up my only opportunity? (To the Old Woman) Alright! Yes! I'll do it! Where's my ladder?

Old Woman: Here you are -- 3 magic beans!

Jack: Beans? But you said...

Old Woman: Plant them now, Jack, and before you know it, your "ladder" will be waiting for you.

Jack: (Whirls around and tosses beans angrily away to stage right, as the old woman exits behind his back, pulling the Cow behind her. Jack faces away from her, unaware that she's left and trying to be reasonable.)

I've thought it over and I think I'll go the fair after all. These beans are no good to me. I really think silver coins would be better and more useful. I want... (he turns back, but she's gone) Wait! Oh, Blossom! Oh, Mother! What have I done?!

Mother (from offstage): Jack -- what are you shouting about?

Jack: Oh, mother! I've traded Blossom for some worthless beans! An old woman told me a story about a ladder to the sky and then, the next thing I knew, she handed me three little beans and snuck off with Blossom!

Mother enters from the house

Mother: What old woman? What beans?
What...what's that?!

(The beanstalk begins growing rapidly.)

Jack: Well, I'll be! She...it's...oh!
Mother -- I have to go!

Mother: Go? Where?

Jack: (Begins climbing beanstalk)
To find my fortune!

Mother: Jack! Come back!

(end of Act 1)

Act 2 (In the Giant's house)

Onstage are a fireplace, a rocking chair, a cupboard, and a table. The cupboard has one side cut away, so we can see its contents, but it is empty. A young woman is seated in the rocking chair, facing stage left. At stage right is a large window frame, through which we can see the beanstalk.

Jack appears in the window frame, climbing up the beanstalk. He steps through the window and stands gazing about him. For the first few lines, Jack and the Giant's Sister manage to just miss seeing each other as they move and turn around.

Jack: The castle in the clouds!

Giant's Sister: Ah, me. Another boring day.

Jack: No sign of the giant.

Giant's Sister: If only something would happen!

Jack: This looks easy! I'll find the
treasure and make my escape, with
no one the wiser.

Giant's Sister: If I didn't have to guard that
darned treasure, I could at least
go for a walk.

Jack: The trouble is, I don't know what
the treasure is, or how to find it.

Giant's Sister: I don't know who the Giant thinks
is going to steal his precious
treasure, up here in the middle of
the air. A bird, perhaps!

Jack: If only I had someone to help me...

Giant's Sister: If only I had someone to talk to...

(They suddenly catch sight of each other and shout at the
same time)

Jack: Who are you!

Giant's Sister: Who are you!

Jack:
You can't be a fly, 'cause you have no wings
You can't be a bird, 'cause you're not
singing
You can't be the Giant—you're not that tall
I find I can't explain you at all!
Who are you? And tell me why
You live up here in the middle of the sky

Giant's Sister:
You can't be a dream 'cause I'm wide awake
You can't be a ghost 'cause you're quite
opaque
You can't be a neighbor – that's for sure
So I'll just have to ask you, sir
Who are you? And tell me why
You came up here to the middle of the sky

Jack:

I can't help feeling we've already met
Though you're not someone I would forget
I shouldn't trust you, not at first sight
But something tells me that it's all right
And so perhaps I'll tell you why
I came up here in the middle of the sky

Giant's Sister

How could I know you – there isn't a chance.
How can I trust you, in just a glance?
Yet I feel something I can't explain
Am I still dreaming? Am I awake?
So tell me now exactly why
You came up here to the middle of the sky.

Jack: I come here seeking a treasure. A
Giant stole it from my father.

Giant's Sister: Oh, no! You're the thief that the
Giant told me about! You'd better
run away while you can, for he's
sworn to kill whoever tries to
steal his treasure.

Jack: I can't run away. The treasure
doesn't belong to the Giant. And
mother and I are so poor and
hungry...

Giant's Sister: Well, at least I can feed you.
Tell me how you managed to climb up
here to the clouds.

(She ladles out soup from a kettle near the fireplace as
they continue talking)

Jack: A strange old woman told me a story
about a castle in the clouds and
told me I could be a hero.

Way back when my father was young
He was adventurous and brave and true
Captain of a ship that chased the sun
The leader of a bold and loyal crew

A jealous giant from the castle in the clouds
Smashed the valiant ship so viciously
Though they fought, the giant threw them down
And took the treasures that were meant for
me.

So I climbed up a ladder
High enough to scrape the sky
Up, up, up on a staircase
Taller than a bird can fly

Giant's Sister: You built a ladder that tall!

Jack: Well, actually, my "ladder" was a
magic beanstalk. Look -- you can
see the top of it right here
outside your window...uh, oh -- I
see someone coming this way! It
must be...

Giant (offstage): Fee, fie, fo, fum!

Giant's Sister: It's my brother, the Giant! Quick,
hide here in this cupboard. I'll
see what I can do to help you.
Don't come out til I open the
cupboard door!

Jack goes "into" the cupboard, but we can see him through
the cut-away cupboard wall. The Giant enters and looks
around suspiciously.

Giant:
Fee, Fie, Fo, Fum
I smell the blood of an Englishman
Be he live or be he dead
I'll grind his bones to make my bread
I'll make him into Jack cheese soup

I'll sprinkle his fingernails on my stew
Where is he now! Bring him around!
He can't hide from me so he'd better come
out!

Giant's Sister:
Fee, Fie, Fiddledee Dee
What you smell is my fricasee
There's no one here but me and you
Quit stomping 'round like a stupid fool
I made your favorite meal today
Elephant stew and moose souffle
Stop your rant! And just relax!
You'll give me a headache, shouting like that

Giant:
Fee, Fie, Fo, Fum
I smell the blood of an Englishman
Be he live or be he dead
I'll grind his bones to make my bread
I'll eat his ears like apricots
I'll drizzle his ankles with Parmesan
Where is he now! Bring him around!
He can't hide from me so he'd better come
out!

Giant's Sister:
Fee, Fie, Fiddledee Dee
What a tasty anatomy
But who on earth would be dropping by
Way up here at the top of the sky?
I hate to break the news to you
But you'll have to settle for elephant stew
So just sit down! Stop running 'round
You have still got all your treasure to
count.

Giant: I'm sure I smell something tasty
and succulent...

Giant's Sister: You must have a cold in your head.
Have you been playing in the storm
clouds again?

Giant: Aw, Sis. Can't a giant have any
fun at all?

Giant's Sister: If you think it's fun to be sick...
Now just put your feet next to the
fire and I'll take care of you.

Giant: I do feel a little sniffly...

Giant's Sister: I'll bring you your treasure if you're a good Giant.

The Giant calms down and sits down heavily in the rocking chair.

Giant: And my dinner!

Giant's Sister: And your dinner.

The Giant's Sister hands the Giant a big bowl and goes off, stage right, to get the treasure.

Jack: Aha! Now we'll see what this fabulous treasure is!

Giant: Boy, I could swear I smelled a...mmm good dinner. Now I want my treasure. (Starts chanting) Treasure! Trea-sure!

The Giant's Sister comes back with the Harp, a big purse, and a large goose (this can be a stuffed goose on wheels).

Giant's Sister: Here's your darned treasures. Now, tell me about them. That always cheers you up.

Giant:
When I think of my treasures, my knees get
weak

I feel so happy, I can barely speak
For each of them is quite unique
And no one else can have them

There's a bottomless purse that is filled
with gold
And though the coins are lifeless and hard
and cold

Still I'll be rich until I'm old
And no one else can have it.

There's a magical goose, right here by my leg
Each day it lays me a golden egg
And though the peasants may cry and beg
[rest] No one else can have them.

Oh that's what I like about riches!
That's what I like about wealth
I can be so mean and vicious
And I am the envy of everybody else!

And of all of my treasures, the last is best
A harp that sings all by itself
When I feel tired, it brings me rest
And no one else can have it

Oh that's what I like about riches!
That's what I like about wealth
I can be so mean and vicious
And I am the envy of everybody else!

Hide my purse out of sight on a shelf nearby
Put my goose in the barn tonight
And have the harp play a lullaby
For that is how I'd have it

The Giant's Sister takes the goose and the purse over by the window and motions the goose to be still.

Giant's Sister: Well, Harp -- you heard the master.
 Play a soothing tune. And make
 sure he doesn't wake too soon!

The harp sings a lullaby as the Giant's Sister tiptoes over to the cupboard and leads Jack to the window. The Giant falls asleep, snoring noisily at first, and then becoming quiet. There can be several "false alarms" as the Giant threatens to wake. The Giant's Sister, anxious to get the Giant off to sleep, can conspire with the Harp, reacting nervously each time he stirs.

Harp:
The sun has found his rosy bed
The moon is floating overhead
Time to rest your sleepy head
On softest cloud
Of eiderdown

While the swallows dip and fly
In the purple evening sky
I will sing a lullaby
I'll string the moon
And pluck a tune

Lulla-lulla-lullabye
The butterflies
You're closing your eyes
Lulla-lulla-lullabye
Let the day
Slip away

Silver streams will gently flow
'Neath a sky of indigo
Time to nestle sweet and low
To nestle deep
In sweetest sleep

As the lullaby comes to an end, Jack and the Giant's Sister hold a whispered conversation.

Giant's Sister: Jack, are you sure you want to go
 through with this? The Giant will
 come after you, you know -- it's
 very dangerous.

Jack: Well, I wanted to be a hero.

Oh, I must act brave, though I'm scared
 inside
For I know what that treasure can provide
What warmth and pleasure it could buy
If I could only have it.

Oh that bottomless purse that is filled with
 gold
Could build warm homes when nights grow cold
And care for all of the weak and old
If only I could have it.

And that magical goose, she's something to
 see
Her eggs would bring us a handsome fee
To get real eggs for us all to eat
If only I could have them.

Oh that's what I like about riches!
That's what I like about wealth
You can use them to get all your wishes
If you don't keep them all to yourself

And the harp is a treasure that's worth more
than gold
For music's a gift that can feed the soul
And pour the joy back into our home
If only I could have her

Oh that's what I like about riches!
That's what I like about wealth
You can use them to get all your wishes
If you don't keep them all to yourself

So I'll stick to my plan, though it's
dangerous
And bring back the treasures for all of us
Won't you come too? For that is what
I'd truly like to happen.

Giant's Sister: Are you sure you want me to come?

Jack: I've never been surer of anything.
Bring the harp and we'll make our
getaway.

The Giant's Sister moves the Harp, but it makes a sound and
the Giant begins to stir.

Giant's Sister: Oh, no! He's waking up! Save
yourself, Jack -- don't worry about
me.

Jack: Nothing doing! Climb down the
beanstalk and tell my mother I'll
be there in a cat's whisker!

The Harp climbs out the window, Jack hands the purse to the
Giant's Sister and she disappears down the beanstalk, just
as the Giant wakes up and sees Jack holding the goose.

Giant: Fee, Fie, Foe, Fum! Come here to
me, you little dum-dum. Steal my
goose? I'll cook yours! I'll use

your hair to sweep the floor! I'll break apart your finger bones and make a set of dominoes!

Jack: Come and get me!

The Giant makes a clumsy swipe at Jack and falls back, winded.

Giant: Oh, don't think you'll get away. I just need to wake up a little. Sister! Bring me coffee!

Jack: She's gone, Giant. You're on your own.

Giant: Harp! Play me a wake-up song!

Jack: The Harp is gone, too. Don't you think you've done enough bullying for today? Stand up and fight like a man!

Giant: Fight?

The Giant begins backing away.

Jack: Why, you're just a big coward!

Giant: So I'm a coward...so what? At least I'm a rich coward.

Jack: Not any more.

Giant: Wait! Let's make a deal. You could leave me the purse and I could...I could...spare you.

Jack: Spare me! Do me a favor and spare me your deals!

Giant: How about the goose? You don't need the purse *and* the goose, do you?

Jack: You're being a goose, Giant. Look at all the harm you've done -- just hoarding these treasures where they can do no good at all.

Giant: Oh, and I suppose you're going to do all kinds of good with them. Right.

Jack: That's my intention. And with...with...that beautiful girl to help me...I don't even know her name!

Giant: Wait! You're taking Sister too?

The Giant finally finds his courage and starts after Jack.

Jack: Watch out behind you!

Giant: What?

He swings around and Jack climbs out of the window.

Giant: Oh, boy. I've been a baaaad giant. And a dumb one, too.

Jack: (from the windowsill) See you 'round the clouds, Giant!

Goose: (Raspberry -- maybe a duck call)

Jack: That's tellin' him, Goose!

They disappear down the beanstalk.

Giant: Mommy!
(End of Act 2)

Act 3 (Outside Jack's house)

The set looks as it did at the end of Act 1, with the beanstalk rising behind Jack's house. Jack is descending the beanstalk with the Goose under his arm, and no one else is in sight.

Jack: Well, Goose here we are. Mother!

The Giant's Sister runs in.

Jack: Hurry! We must cut down the beanstalk before the Giant figures out that he can climb down it and get his treasures back! Where's my mother?

Giant's Sister: She's inside.

Jack (into the house): Mother! Come quickly and bring the axe!

While the following conversation takes place, Actor 2 takes the ladder offstage as inconspicuously as possible.

Giant's Sister: Did he hurt you very badly?

Jack: Oh, it wasn't too bad.

Giant's Sister: You were so terribly brave!

Jack: (embarrassed) It was really a lot easier than I thought.

Giant's Sister: And modest, too!

Mother comes in carrying the axe.

Mother: Stand back and I'll cut down the beanstalk.

She swings the axe as they sing:

Mother:
All we needed was a ladder

Jack and Giant's Sister:
One!

Mother:
That was high enough to scrape the sky

Jack and Giant's Sister:
Two!

Mother:
All we needed was a staircase

Jack and Giant's Sister:
Three!

Mother:
That's taller than a bird can fly

Jack and Giant's Sister:
Four!

Mother:
Now it has served our purpose

Jack and Giant's Sister:
Five!

Mother:
Magical beanstalk, goodbye!

Jack and Giant's Sister:
Down she goes!

The beanstalk falls to the floor.

Giant: (from offstage)
Curses! Foiled again!

Mother: This lovely young lady has been
showing me the treasures -- oh,
Jack! We'll never be poor again!

Jack: If only poor Blossom were still
here. She stuck with us through
all the lean times -- she deserves
to share the good times too.

He sings:

Blossom
We've come
so far together

And some
day when
Things become better
You'll come
Home and
We'll be together again

Giant's Sister (jealous): Who's Blossom?

Jack: My best friend! (sees her face) A
cow!

Giant's Sister (relieved): Oh, a cow!

Mother: Well, Jack, it's very strange, but
just before you both arrived,
Blossom came wandering through the
gate, as if she'd never left!

Mother gets the Cow.

Jack: Blossom!

He embraces her and finds a note stuck to her collar.

Look, Mother! A note. (He reads)
"A true friend for a true hero.
Guess I'll have to buy a lawn mower
to replace my lawn-moo-er." Oh,
this is great.

The friend comes running in.

Friend: Jack! You're back!

Jack: Yes! Now we can all go the Fair!
(he puts his arm around the Giant's
Sister.)

Friend: But who is this?

Mother: I've been wondering the same thing.
What is your name, dear?

Giant's Sister: I don't know. The Giant always
called me "Sister." But I think...

Mother: Yes?

Giant's Sister: I sometimes dream of a sailing ship, and a kind father. I dream that we are on the ship's deck, and he is showing the beautiful night sky. In the dream, he points to the brightest one and says, "That's your namesake, dear. That's why you are called Star."

Mother: Star! Why, I think you are the daughter of the brave first mate, who died trying to save Jack's father. Alas, they were both lost in the fight with the Giant. I thought you had been lost too! You were just a baby at the time.

Star: Then it wasn't a dream? And I'm not really the Giant's sister?

Mother: It wasn't a dream. Your name is Star. Your father named you for the faithful North Star that guides the sailors home.

Star: Star!

Jack: Then you're the star that the Old Woman told me to follow!

Star: Me?

Jack: And I'd gladly follow you 'til the end of our days.

They all sing:

Jack, Jack, let's have a song
You're safe and you're sound
You're on solid ground
And nothing will ever go wrong
For
Evermore

Jack, Jack, open the door
To fam'ly and friends
To joy without end
To all that sweet life has in store
For
Evermore

For only a penny
We'll find that old gypsy
And see, through her mystery,
A glimpse of your future

Jack:
She'll see something new, sir!
And I'll tell you that for free.
For I see a picture
That's richer and richer,
A life we can celebrate
I'm glad to accept my fate
And nothing will ever go wrong

All:
For
Evermore!

End

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