

Jack has come to a crossroad in his life. He needs to decide on next steps. It was just three years ago that his life changed dramatically. Jack had made a bold decision which although criticized by his mother, had brought him a small fortune – a bag of gold. However, he now has only one coin left and must decide how he will support himself, his mother, and Jill – the girl he intends to marry.

For those of you who do not know the story, here is what occurred. Milky-white, the best milking cow, suddenly stopped producing milk, which meant Jack and his mother had just lost their primary source of income. Jack had previously sought employment but the economy was bad and no one showed any interest in hiring Jack. In desperation, Jack's mother told him to take Milky-white to the market and sell her to come up with some money to start a new venture. So, Jack headed off to town. Thirty minutes into his Two hour walk to town, Jack came across an old man. They had a conversation, as people in these parts were known to do, and the old man learned of Jack's intentions. The old man told Jack he would trade him 5 magical beans for the non-producing cow. The old man said the magical beans would change Jack's life. Jack had always been fascinated by magic and could not resist the transaction. He made the trade and headed back home.

His mother, however, was quite pragmatic and had no interest in magic. When Jack told her what happened, she scolded the young man, threw the beans out of the window, and sent him to bed without supper. Jack laid down on his lumpy straw bed and stared at the ceiling worried about the future – no cow, no beans, and no immediate prospects. Hours later, he fell into a fitful sleep. When he woke up the next morning, he felt that it was late, yet the sun was not lighting up his room as he expected.

Jack went outside to determine what was going on. It was very foggy and cloudy, which was somewhat unusual for the area. When Jack walked into the mist he suddenly saw something tall and thick that had not been there previously. Five enormous beanstalks twined together and rising high into sky. They were so high that the fog and clouds prevented Jack from seeing where the plants ended. Since Jack had no plans for the day, no money, no food, and didn't want to face his angry mother, he decided see where the beanstalks led. Fortunately for Jack, the beans were magical and the plants had twined together in such a way that they resembled a colossal staircase. He began climbing. About 10 minutes into his climb, Jack passed some large beans. As he continued on his way, the climb required some stamina and effort but took less time and work than he had anticipated. Climbing the beanstalks required some effort and stamina, but after just Two hours, they curved to the right and five minutes later Jack walked onto the side of the mountain. .

Jack fought through some thick brush and stepped into a large clearing. As he glanced back, he noticed that not only had the fog disappeared but a large Pine tree, still living, had partially fallen and resembled an arrow pointing towards the bean stalks he had just climbed. As he walked to the edge of the clearing he began to realize that he was at the top of Mount Gargantuan. He was excited but also somewhat terrified. He had heard many stories about the giant people who lived at the top of Mt. Gargantuan (commonly referred to as Mt. G). Some stories talked about a magical kingdom where people were over ten feet tall while others recounted that whenever anyone, from peasants to lords, attempted to climb Mt. G, they were never seen again. Anxious

parents never went near Mt. G because the mountain giants were notorious for eating any child who trespassed into their kingdom.

Despite his trepidation, Jack was hungry and had no plan to support himself back down in the valley, so he decided to explore the magical kingdom. He moved slowly through the woods and saw many things that reminded him of the farms and town Two hours from his home in the valley. Along the way, Jack saw some tall healthy people, but none that looked as though they ate children. As he continued on his path through the woods, he was surprised to see some caves in the side of sloping earth. He ventured into one and, to his amazement, found a cart full of shiny nuggets. Hearing hammering in the distance, he decided to go hide in the woods until dark. From his hidden vantage point, he saw people coming and going, working, moving carts, eating lunch, until, at dusk, it started to get dark and they people slowly began to leave

Jack silently trekked back to the cave and followed the cart path to a large building. He found an unlocked window, opened it a crack, pushed it up and crawled through. He found himself in a large room, in the middle of which was a large machine next to what appeared to be a blacksmith's forge. By the forge were carts full of the shiny nuggets. He also spotted some small bags stacked on shelves just past the large machine. Jack grabbed a bag and was about to open it when he heard a door open and close somewhere nearby. He stuffed a handful of nuggets into the bag, crammed the bag into his pocket, moved as quietly as possible back to the window, crawled out, and started running for the woods. A voice called out from behind him demanding that he stop, but he kept running. He did not stop until he found his way back to the clearing. He could not see the beanstalk, but spotted the fallen pine pointing toward it. He fought through the brush again and found the top of the bean stalk staircase. Going down was much easier than going up and it took him half the time to descend as it had to ascend. As he passed the large beans growing on the stalk, he grabbed a couple and safely reached the ground just a few minutes later.

Jack was famished as he had not eaten in more than 24 hours. He went into his family's small hut where a fire was burning in the fireplace. He poured some water into their iron cookpot. He took one bean and sliced it into small pieces. Cut up, the bean slices almost filled the two liter pan. As he waited for the beans to cook, he pulled out the burlap sack in his pocket. He opened the sack and found 30 golden coins. Staring at the coins, amazed and excited, he did not notice his mother come into the room. She saw the coins in his hands and asked him where he got them. They sat down at the table and he told her the story as they feasted on the best beans they could ever remember eating.

The next day Jack took one of the gold coins to town. He went to the tool makers and jewelers. Both told him the gold coin was worth more than one month's wages. It was also at the jewelers that Jack had first met Jill, the jeweler's daughter. After a two year courtship, Jill's father had given his blessing for them to marry. The wedding was planned for the following summer, just three years after the young lovers met.

Back to the present, with the wedding fast approaching, Jack was down to his last gold coin. Knowing his expenses would go up after his wedding in two months, he decided he must share his tale with Jill and ask her advice. Jill listened carefully to Jack's adventure. She was very wise for her age and asked a few questions. She learned from Jack that the beanstalks were still

by his family's hut, shrouded in fog. They had not been discovered by the mountain people, the plants were healthy and continued to produce a good supply of beans. She was a little nervous though to discover that in Jack's mind it was OK to steal from the mountain people because they ate little children. What advice should Jill give to her future husband to ensure a long, happy and prosperous life together?