

JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

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Act One Scene One – By the duckpond in the village of Little Snoring in the Meadow

The pond, edged with bullrushes, etc, and a handy tree stump in front of it for sitting on, is up left. It also has a prominent sign declaring “no fishin’”. On the right is Jill Jolly’s Garden Centre with appropriate signs and goods in the windows and on the doorstep, and a practical door – around it some flower tubs or hanging baskets. A finger post with directions to village amenities: Dame Durden’s Dairy, Garden Centre, Duck Pond, Village Green, Car Park etc. There is bunting out and a general air of festivity. The Chorus is on stage as villagers and children.

Song A – Oh What a Beautiful Morning

During the number Jack enters with his fishing rod, which he deposits by the tree stump.

Villagers (*variously*): Here’s Jack. Hello Jack. Nice to see you. How you doing, Jack?

Jack: Good morning everyone! And what a simply splendid morning it is.

(The song continues. At the end of the number Jack comes down centre and villagers break up into groups.)

Jack: Yup – it’s a real ding dong Doris Day.

1st villager: It sure is, Jack.

2nd villager: It’s beautiful weather.

3rd villager: Perfect for the Royal visit.

4th villager: Have you ever seen the Princess, Jack?

Jack: No – and to tell you the truth, I’m not really all that bothered about seeing her today, either.

5th villager: They say she’s very beautiful.

Jack (*with a laugh*): Have you ever heard of a princess who wasn’t? I expect she looks a perfect fright – but nobody dare say so!

1st villager: But aren’t you excited about the Royal visit, Jack?

2nd villager: We’ve never had a real princess come to Little Snoring before.

3rd villager: Yes, I’ve lived here all my life and never had so much as a sniff of ANY royal visitor.

Jack (*shrugs*): Sorry, folks, but I really can’t get worked up just because some toffee-nosed princess is celebrating her 21st birthday and her dad’s sent her on tour so we can all put on our best clothes and line up to tug our forelocks to her. No, none of that bowing and scraping for me, thank you very much.

Villagers (*scandalised*): Jack!

4th villager: How can you say such things!

Jack: Very easily – I just open my mouth and out they pop! (*groans from villagers*).

Seriously though – I am pleased. (*Pause while villagers make approving murmurs*)

Yes, it’s given me an excuse to give Mum the slip and bunk off from the dairy!

Honestly all day long it’s Jack do this, Jack do that! Have you churned the butter?

Have you separated the curds and whey? Have you got the cheese ready for market? I tell you, life's too short for that kind of stuff.

Song B – I've got a lot of living to do

Jack: Yes, there's certainly too much to see and do out there in the big wide world to be wasting my time in Mum's dairy. So first – first - *(he casts a longing glance across at the pond. Then strides purposefully towards it and picks up his fishing rod)* – yes, first, I'll put my feet up by the pond here and get on with a nice, relaxing bit of fishing. *(Villagers talk among themselves as he takes his jacket off and drapes it across the "no fishin'" sign. Suddenly there is a commotion off right).*

1st villager: Listen!

2nd villager: Someone's coming!

3rd villager: It must be the princess!

4th villager: But she's early!

5th villager: Never mind that – bow everyone, bow! *(They all bustle into places and bow and curtsy. Titch, Marsh and Dimmock enter right, Titch pushing Jill in a wheelbarrow, with Jill Jolly's Gardening Service painted on the side, Marsh carrying his gardening catalogues under his arm and Dimmock bringing up the rear, laden with gardening tools.)*

Marsh: Right, left, right, left, right, oh whoops no, left a bit, left a bit and mind the pansies! *(Villagers leap aside as Titch navigates the stage with the wheelbarrow barely under control.)*

Jill: Wheee!! This is great fun! Oh, whoops. Sorry, Violet! Didn't see you there, Petunia. Ooooh, steady Titch. Whoa!!! Oh ohhhhhh..... *(Her journey comes to an abrupt halt as Titch tips the barrow and she rolls out.)*

Titch *(clapping a hand to his mouth):* Whoops a daisy!

Marsh: Now look what you've done you clumsy clot! *(He emphasises his words by hitting Titch with a catalogue)*

Titch: Ow! Gerroff you big bully!

Jack *(coming forward to help her up):* Are you all right, Jill?

Jill *(dreamily):* Hello Jack.

Jack: That was quite a tumble you took there!

Jill *(with a big sigh):* Yeah – Just like that time we fell down the hill together Jack. Do you remember?

Jack *(uncomfortable):* Well, that was a LONG time ago.

Jill: You took me back to your house and your mum bandaged us up.

Jack *(laughing):* Yes, but she didn't have any bandages so she just tore up some old brown parcel paper. Yours still had the stamps on! Ooh, you did look silly, Jill! I've never laughed so much! *(He creases up with laughter at the memory and moves off to sit on the tree stump.)*

Jill *(resigned):* Yes, Jack, I remember. *(She spots the audience)* Oooh I say! Look lads – a whole theatre full of potential new customers. Better introduce ourselves. *(She steps forward, tucking her thumbs under her dungaree straps.)* I'm Jill Jolly.

Band: Hello Jill!

Jill *(a hand to her ear):* Eh? I didn't quite catch that!

Audience *(encouraged by band):* Hello Jill!

Jill: Sorry?

Audience: HELLO JILL!

Jill *(stepping back and curtsying):* Hello everyone. As I say, I'm Jill Jolly and I run JILL JOLLY'S GARDEN CENTRE! Everything you need for the garden, large or small, Jill Jolly's Garden Centre can supply it. Bespoke gardening a speciality. These

are my gardeners. Titch (*he steps forward and makes a small curtsey.*) He's the brawn. Marsh (*he steps forward and bows with a flourish.*) He THINKS he's the brains. And Dimmock (*he stands looking vacant.*) He don't say a lot. (*Dimmock taps his forehead with his finger*) But he thinks it.

Marsh (*confidentially*): And he certainly knows his onions!

Titch: And he's got lovely big – marrows. (*Dimmock looks smug.*)

Jill: Now, down to business. You've seen those adverts on the telly for garden claws, those things you can get down at (*she lowers her voice*) B and Q – you know, a twist of the wrist and your garden's all dug over before you can say Polly put the Kettle On? Well, we're not going to try to sell you one of those! (*She looks left and right, leans forward*) Useless! I don't know anyone who's fallen for that gimmick! (*Dimmock gives a little cough and indicates himself*)

Jill, Titch and Marsh: Oh, you great Dimmock – you didn't? (*He nods*).

Jill: No, I'm sorry, folks, but there's no way round it - gardening involves a lot of hard graft.

Titch: That's right, Jill. And if I could just elaborate on that point. Getting down to basics, first you've got to put in some real, good, solid, back-breaking digging. Then, most important, you need to fork in some organic matter and when it comes to organic matter, you can't beat a good old-fashioned bit of crumbly, well-rotted manure –

Marsh (*butting in*): Yes, yes, Titch – old-fashioned as you say, but what the modern gardener is looking for is to make his garden an extension of his living area. And to create the perfect ambience may I suggest (*he displays one of his catalogues*) - a water feature. Perhaps a few strategically placed cobbles, with the sound of water bubbling gent-

Jill: If I could drag you back to more mundane matters, you three need to get your skates on down to Dame Durden's to do her garden. (*to audience*) She's my best customer –

Marsh: She's your only customer –

Jill: - all right, my only customer - and she'll have my guts for garters if they're late. And I must get the garden centre open and ship-shape before this Princess Wotsername turns up. Just think what it would do for business if I could put “by royal appointment” above the door. I might even get my own gardening programme on the telly! (*There is a commotion off right and a buzz of excitement runs through the villagers.*) Oh drat! Looks like I'm too late!

1st villager: She's coming!

2nd villagers: It's the Princess!

3rd villagers: Three cheers for the Princess!

All: Hip hip hooray! Hip hip hooray! Hip hip hooray! (*All bow and curtsey. Buttercup trots on right, followed by Dolly, who carries two pails which have cloths over them and are full of milk cartons*)

Dolly: Milko! Milko! Get your lovely fresh creamy milk here! Oh, I say - do get up everyone, do get up! (*Villagers straighten up, laughing among themselves at the mistake. Comments such as “It's only Dame Durden!” “Might have known” “Ooh I do feel silly” “Morning Dolly” etc. Jack, who has been quietly getting on with his fishing, jumps up in alarm*)

Jack: Ooer! I'm off – it's my Mum! (*He exits hastily*)

Dolly: Well, hello everyone. I must say that was quite a welcome!

1st villager: We thought you were the princess, Dame Durden.

Dolly: Oh, my! I've never been mistaken for Royalty before dear. Though Buttercup here is quite my little princess – aren't you precious? (*Buttercup nestles up against*

Dolly, nuzzling her head against her shoulder.) Ahh! Isn't she lovely? (*Buttercup moos in agreement. Dolly does a double take as she spots the audience.*) Oooh – we've got company! Hello! I expect you've all turned out to see the princess. (*Aside*) Honestly Jill, the slightest hint of a regal visitor and it brings the riff-raff pouring out of the woodwork. (*Back to audience*) Now then, I'm Dame Dolly Durden, and I run the dairy. Can I interest anyone in some nice fresh milk, straight from the cow? (*Suddenly indignant*) Who said that? What sauce! I meant THIS cow. (*She indicates Buttercup with a flourish – but Buttercup has gone, and is upstage, with Titch, Marsh and Dimmock and the villagers making a fuss of her. Dolly spins round looking for her.*) Oh, there you are, Buttercup you naughty girl. Come and say hello to the boys and girls. (*Buttercup trots obediently downstage, curtsies and moos to the audience.*)

Band: Hello Buttercup.

Dolly: Oh, louder than that, dears – she's a bit hard of hearing.

Band, villagers and audience: Hello Buttercup.

Dolly: Much better. But I've had an idea. Just to make it even more friendly – do you think you could try it in her own language? You could? Oh, you are kind! Now, when Buttercup says hello this time, you say hello back just as if you were another cow.

Buttercup: Moo!

Audience (*encouraged by band and villagers*): Moo!

Dolly: By George, Buttercup, I think they've got it! (*to audience*) One more time, just to make sure.

Buttercup: Moo!

All: Moo!

Dolly: Fabulous! I bet when you all paid your sixpences to come in you didn't expect to get to learn a foreign language as well. Right, I can see we're going to be great friends, and so Buttercup knows you're all her friends too, you won't forget to shout hello right back every time she says hello to you, will you?

Audience: No!

Buttercup: Moo!

Audience: Moo!

Dolly: Ahh, she's just testing you, bless her! Now, we can't stand chatting all day. We've got to get the milk round finished, and then hurry home so I can make myself beautiful in time to meet the princess. Yes, I do know the Royal Visit's today and not next week! Cheek! I'll need to check up on those gardeners too – it's my day for having my garden done, and I have to watch them like a hawk. Just because I'm a poor widow woman they think they can take all kinds of liberties with my herbaceous borders. Only last week would you believe they wanted to put manure on my strawberries? I told them! Well, don't you prefer cream on yours? (*She catches sight of Jill flapping her arms and gesturing to Titch, Marsh and Dimmock, who continue to chat to the villagers unconcerned, to clear off*) Jill? I say, Jill, are you all right?

Jill: Yes Dame Durden. (*She sidles across the stage, having finally succeeded in gaining their attention.*) Perfectly all right thank you Dame Durden. (*She gestures upstage and Titch, Marsh and Dimmock begin to tiptoe off. Buttercup heads them off, pawing the ground. They cower back.*)

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