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Jack and the Million Dollar Barbecue House Gift Card

by Daniel Tang

Jack sneaked back home, tightly clenching a small leather bag. He walked into his room, careful not to tread on the creaky floorboard. He untied the bag and dumped the seven glowing beans onto the bed.

“This better be worth it,” grumbled Jack as he examined the beans. “Cost me an entire cow.”

Jack scooped up the beans and walked through the crumbling three room cottage.

Creeeaaaaak.

Jack cursed inwardly. He had forgotten about the floorboard. His mom ran out of her room, glaring at him.

“Did you sell the cow?” she asked angrily. She didn’t like anyone disrupting her sleep.

He nodded, slipping his hands into the pockets of his decade-old coat. “Give me the money!” she demanded.

“Well,” Jack started. “I didn’t sell her for money....I got something even better!” Jack said, pulling the bag out of his pocket.

Her initial skepticism soon gave way to a glimmer of hope, reaching out to accept the bag. “Oooh, is it gold or something? Maybe we can finally buy a window!” said Jack’s mom, gesturing toward the hand-carved hole in the wall.

Jack handed her the bag. She pursed her lips together, frowning, as she held the light leather bag in her hands. Jack’s mom opened the bag and gasped, her confusion morphing into cruel rage.

“You sold Bessie for... for a couple of beans?!” Jack’s mom screamed. “If we had kept Bess, we could have lived on spare ribs and steak!” Jack’s mom paused, licking her lips at the thought of a juicy steak. “But noooo, you had to trade the cow for a couple of beans! BEANS! If we had kept old Bess we could have at least had a few pork chops to fry!”

“But pork chops are from pigs! Bessie was a cow!” Jack protested.

“SILENCE!” Jack’s mom screamed. “To your room!” Jack’s mom walked over to the glassless window and before Jack could protest, threw all the beans out into the night.

Jack lay on his bed, staring at the ceiling.

He knew his mom was probably right. He had been foolish to trade the cow for some stupid glowing beans. But there was something about the beans that intrigued him. He couldn't shake the feeling that they were as magical as the sketchy man on the side of the road had promised they were.

Jack got up and went to the window. He looked out into the night, and his eyes widened in amazement.

A giant beanstalk was growing out of the ground, reaching up into the clouds, illuminated by the soft glow of the moon.

And before Jack even knew what he was doing, he was outside and sprinting towards the titanic growth bursting through the uncut grass of Jack's ugly yard.

"Amazing!" Jack said to himself. His mind racing, he reached out to touch the smooth green surface of the beanstalk.

Jack ran back inside, bursting through the sheepskin "door" of his mom's room.

"Mom! Mom!" Jack shouted, shaking his groggy mom awake.

"What is it this time?" Jack's mom asked, glaring at him with sleepy eyes. "Please tell me that it was all a dream, and you've come to tell me that you've sold the cow for real money this time," she said, rubbing the last bit of sleep from her eyes.

"No, but come look! The beans! The beans...the beans, they...just come look for yourself!" Jack turned back around, running back outside to admire the huge beanstalk.

His mother joined him a moment later, still in her patched pajamas.

"What is it?" she asked irritably.

Jack didn't answer, just pointed at the humongous beanstalk jutting out of the cracked and uneven dirt of the lawn.

Jack's mom gasped, her jaw nearly stretching to her feet.

"What...the...." Jack's mom stammered, unable to take her eyes off the towering plant.

Jack walked over to the thick stem, grabbed the shiny green plant tightly, and started slowly shimmying up the stem.

"What are you doing?" Jack's mom demanded, having finally gotten over the fact that there was indeed an extremely oversized bean plant growing out of her lawn.

"What does it look like I'm doing? Climbing! Who knows, maybe there'll be a pot of gold at the top! Isn't that the saying?"

Jack's mom murmured something about leprechauns and rainbows before disappearing back into the cottage.

Climbing the beanstalk was hard work. By the time Jack had climbed hundreds of feet up the slippery stalk, the sun was already setting, and he was hot and tired. He wished that there would be a nice comfy bed—one that wasn't made of hay—at the top of the plant.

But Jack pressed on, still feeling guilty about selling the cow for the beans, feeling determined to reap some benefit from the deal.

After an utterly exhausting journey up the titanic beanstalk, Jack's muscles ached, his clothes were drenched in sweat, his body was covered with bruises from geese attacks, and his skin stung from countless mosquito bites. Each step had been a torturous battle against exhaustion, hunger, and the burning sun.

But finally, after what felt like an eternity, he had reached the summit.

With trembling legs, Jack collapsed onto a gigantic leaf, gasping for breath. His heart pounded in his chest, and his lungs burned with the effort of the climb. The cool breeze at the top of the beanstalk washed over his body, bringing a sense of relief.

As he lay there, trying to catch his breath, Jack took in his surroundings. To his left lay a vast stone castle.

And to his right stood a giant carrying a large club, and behind him...wait. A giant?!

Jack spun back around and came face-to-toe with a giant that could only be described as well, giant.

"FEE-FI-FO-FUM, I smell someone who hasn't used deodorant in a long time!" the giant exclaimed, pinching his nose.

"You're one to talk," Jack muttered, eyeing the countless flies swirling around his stinky frame.

"What'd you say?" the giant said, cupping his hand around his ear.

"Nothing," Jack muttered.

"That's what I thought," the giant said with a smirk. "So, what brings you here to my castle? Is it to steal my riches?" the giant asked.

"No," Jack said, gulping. "But just out of curiosity, are you?"

"Yeah, and you definitely want to steal them," the giant said, raising his wooden club high above his head.

"Wait!" Jack yelled. "I wanna make a deal! You see that house down there?" Jack asked desperately, wildly pointing at his shaggy old cottage down below. "I'll sell it to you! Just don't hurt me! And preferably give me just a little bit of your riches."

The giant squinted at the cottage, his eyes scanning Jack's crumbling home. After a few minutes of silence, the giant finally said something. "Is that a cat?" he said pointing at an orange

speck next to the cottage. “Yes, that’s our cat, Patches,” Jack said, nodding. “Why?” He asked, tilting his head to one side.

“Well, I’ve lived here for many years alone,” The giant said distantly. “And all the visitors I get come to rob me. So I have to crush them. I want a pet or something to keep me company,”

“Ok, so the house and the cat for some of your riches and not hurting me? Do we have a deal?”

“Deal,” the giant said. “Pinky promise?”

“Ok,” said Jack, extending his pinky. The giant extended his giant pinky and shook Jack’s. “Should I climb down and get the cat or...?” Jack asked.

“No need,” the giant responded, grinning. “I’ll come down and get it myself. It’s been a while since I left the castle.” He walked into the castle and came back out holding a leather sack very much like the original leather bag that Jack had gotten the magic beans from.

The giant tossed the bag to Jack, and walked to the edge of the leaf.

The giant grabbed Jack and stuffed him down his pocket and started climbing down the beanstalk. Since the giant was so much bigger than Jack, he was able to climb down in less than ten minutes and landed in Jack’s yard with a loud *thump*. The giant picked up his shovel, scooped up his house and Patches, and flung them back to the top of the beanstalk before climbing back up himself.

Jack’s mom ran over and started screaming at him.

“It was already bad enough that you sold the cow for beans, but now our entire house for... whatever *this* is?!”

She snatched the bag out of Jack’s hands, opening it and taking out a tiny piece of paper. A \$20,000,000 gift card for Jim’s barbecue. Jack’s mom screamed, crying tears of joy and hugging and kissing Jack.

And so, Jack and his family lived happily ever after indeed, gorging themselves on barbecue for many happy years.