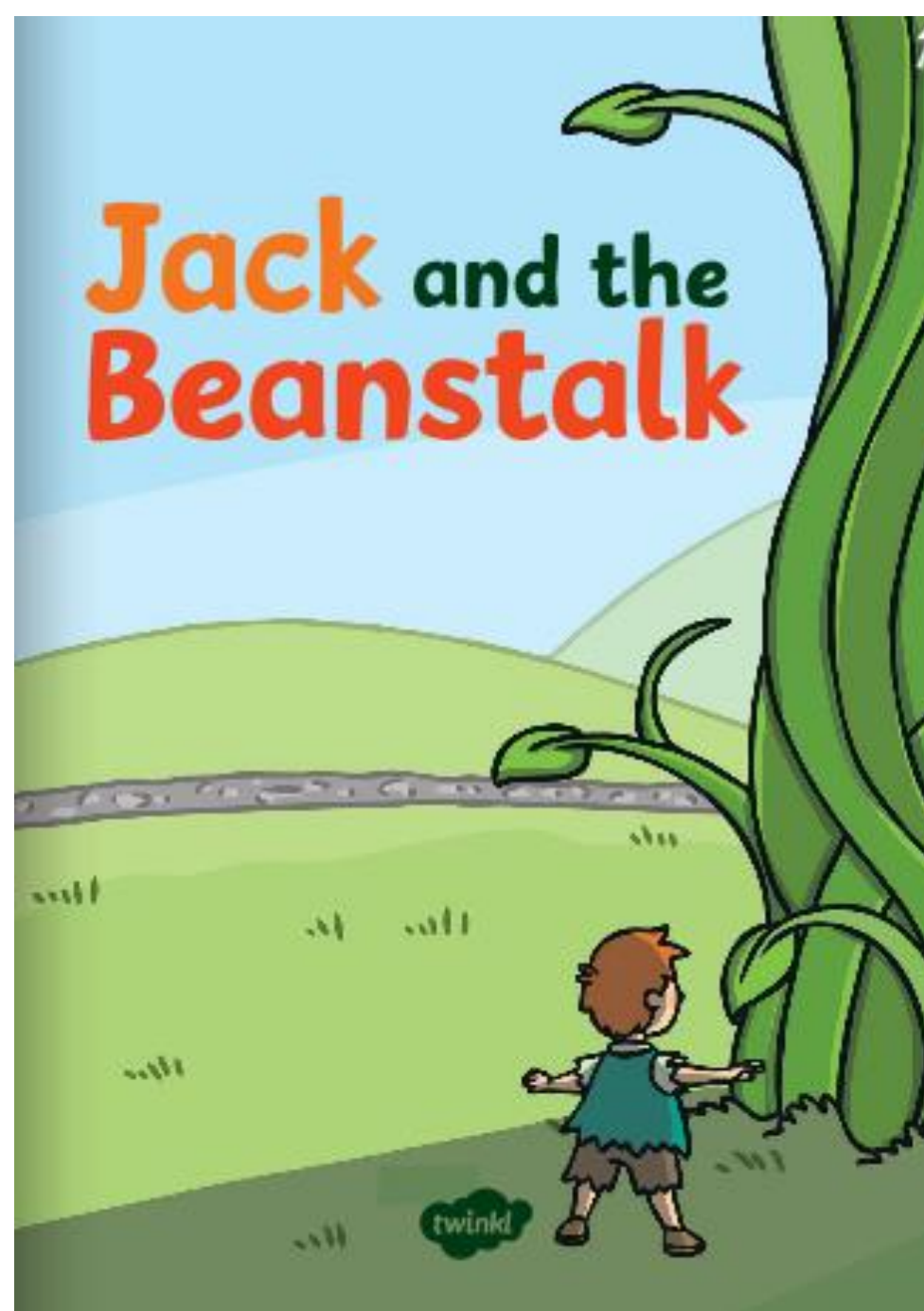


Jack and the Beanstalk

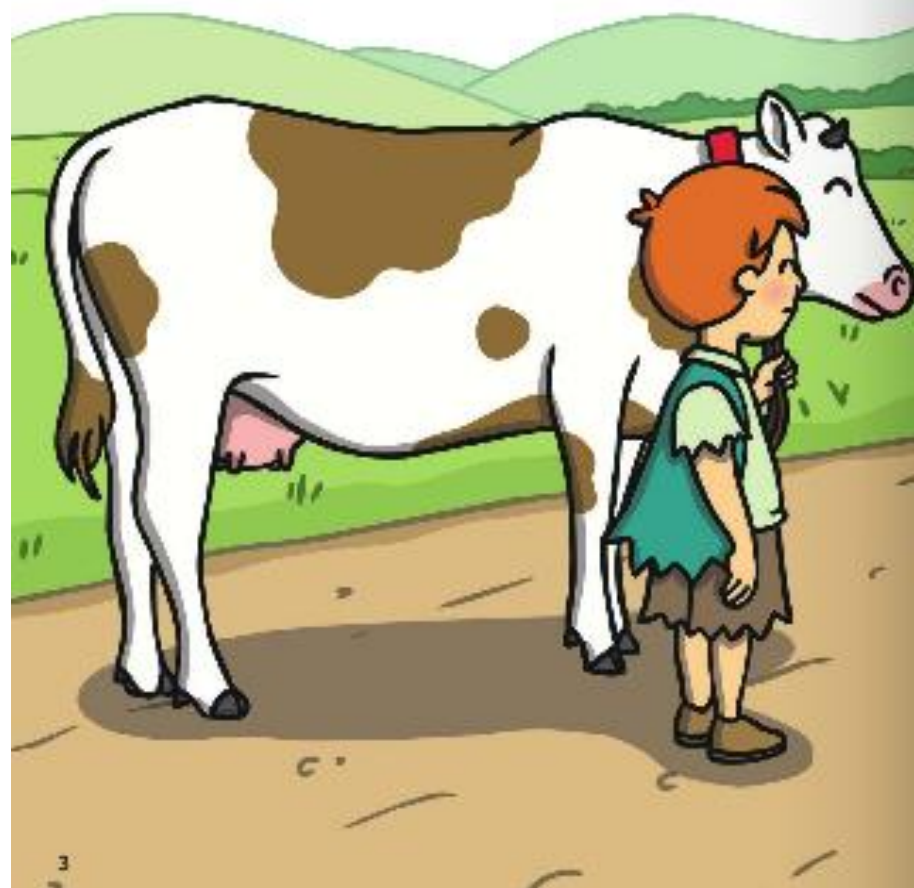


Once upon a time, there lived a boy called Jack. He lived in a cottage with his mother and their most valuable possession was a cow called Daisy. Daisy provided fresh milk for Jack and his mother every day. They loved her very much.



Sadly, the day came when Jack and his mother had no money left. Jack's mother told him that he would have to take Daisy to the market to sell her. Jack was distraught but he knew that they had no choice. He set off to market with Daisy, feeling very sorrowful.

On the way to market, Jack met a man. The man had a large, curly moustache and was wearing a sparkly yellow cloak. He stared with interest at Daisy and then said, "What a fine cow you have there, Jack!"



"How do you know my name?" asked Jack, confused.

"I know a lot of things," chuckled the mysterious man. "For example, I know that these beans that I hold in my hand have magical powers."

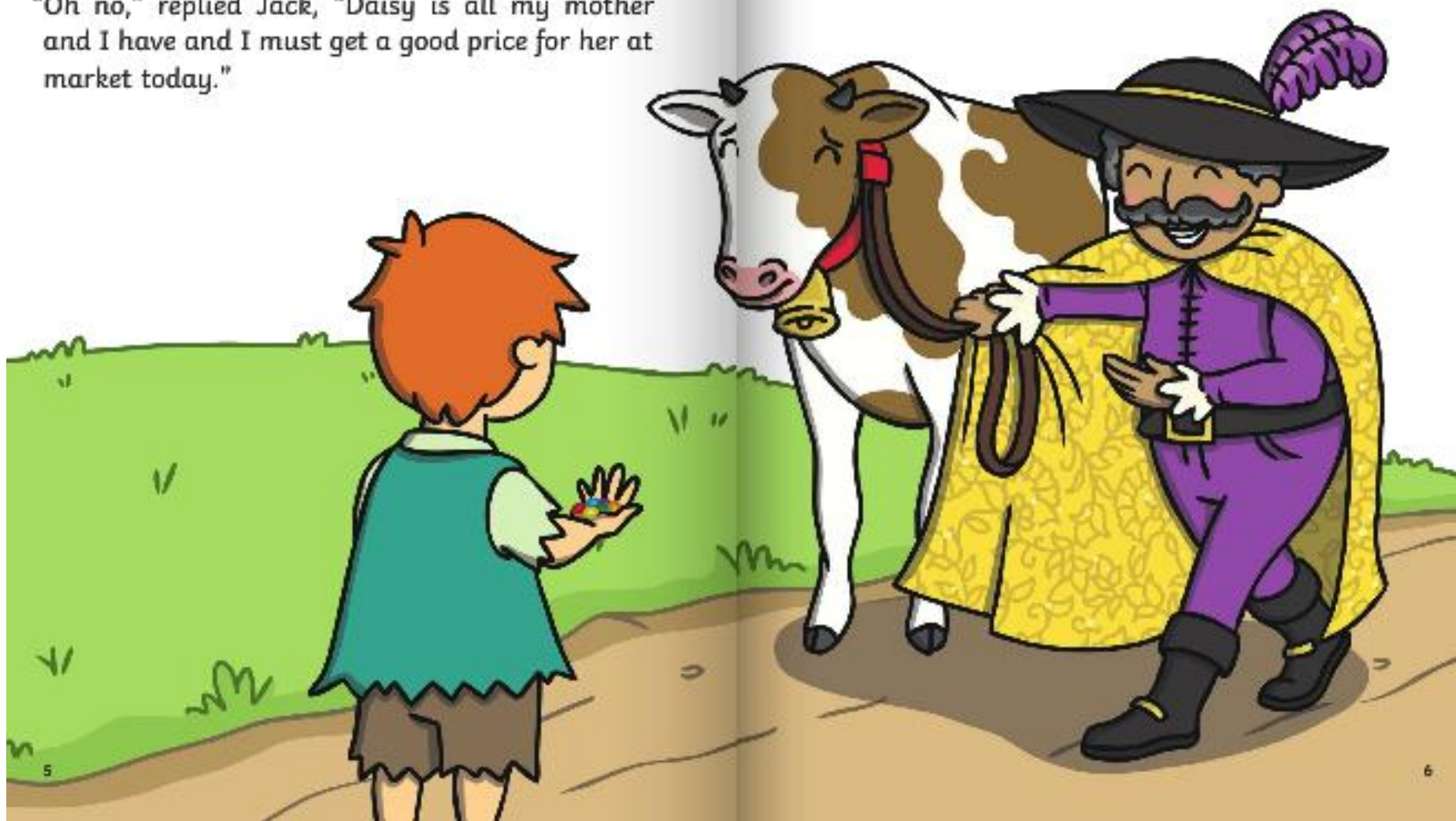


"I will give you these incredible beans in exchange for your cow," suggested the man. "When you plant them, they will grow right up to the sky within just a few hours!"

"Oh no," replied Jack, "Daisy is all my mother and I have and I must get a good price for her at market today."

"With these beans, you will never have to worry about money again," said the man persuasively.

At last, Jack gave in and swapped Daisy for the beans.



When Jack arrived back at his house, he skipped excitedly into the kitchen.

"Are you back already, Jack?" asked his mother. "I do hope you got a good price for Daisy."

"Better than that, Mother," sang Jack. "I have magical beans!"



He started to explain about the man he had met but his mother was not listening. She was extremely angry. She took the beans and threw them out of the window.



Jack was sent to his bedroom. He lay down on his bed and cried himself to sleep.

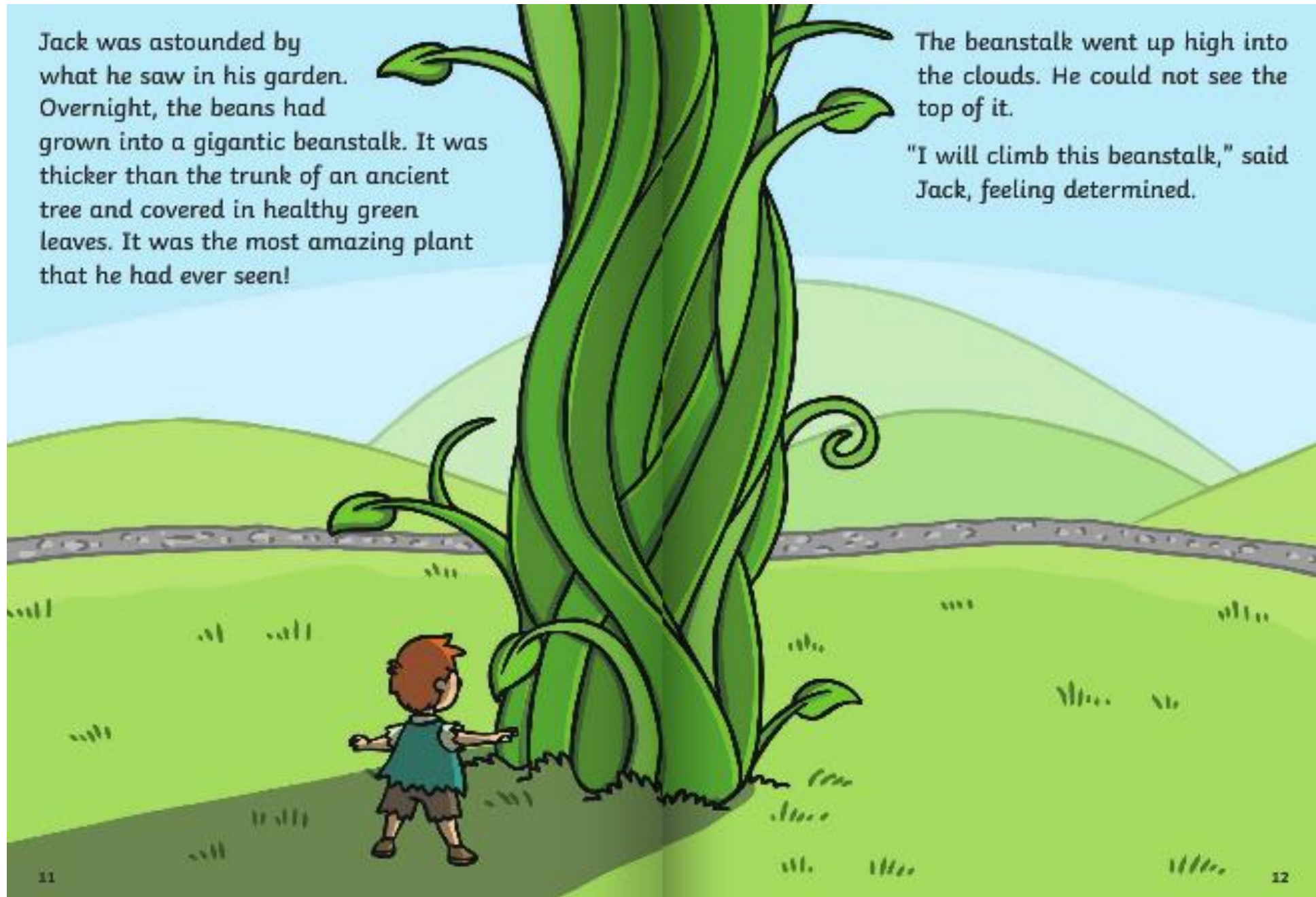
The next morning, Jack woke up and noticed that his bedroom was much darker than usual. A shadow fell across the room. He ran outside to investigate.



Jack was astounded by what he saw in his garden. Overnight, the beans had grown into a gigantic beanstalk. It was thicker than the trunk of an ancient tree and covered in healthy green leaves. It was the most amazing plant that he had ever seen!

The beanstalk went up high into the clouds. He could not see the top of it.

"I will climb this beanstalk," said Jack, feeling determined.



Jack was fit and strong and started to climb the beanstalk with ease. However, the higher he climbed, the harder it got to find things that he could grab on to. Soon, his limbs started to tire. "I must go on," he said to himself firmly. He grasped the beanstalk and climbed higher up into the clouds. Eventually, he reached the very top.



Jack saw an enormous castle. As he stepped closer, he realised that even the door was far bigger than any he had ever seen before. It had been left slightly ajar and Jack was able to sneak inside.



Jack stared in amazement. All of the furniture was huge! The chairs and tables towered above him like skyscrapers. There was a bowl of water on the floor for a cat or a dog to drink from but it was so big that Jack could have bathed in it!



Suddenly, the floor beneath Jack's feet began to shake and Jack heard a loud rumbling noise. His heart was beating loudly in his chest as he scurried quickly inside a cupboard to hide.

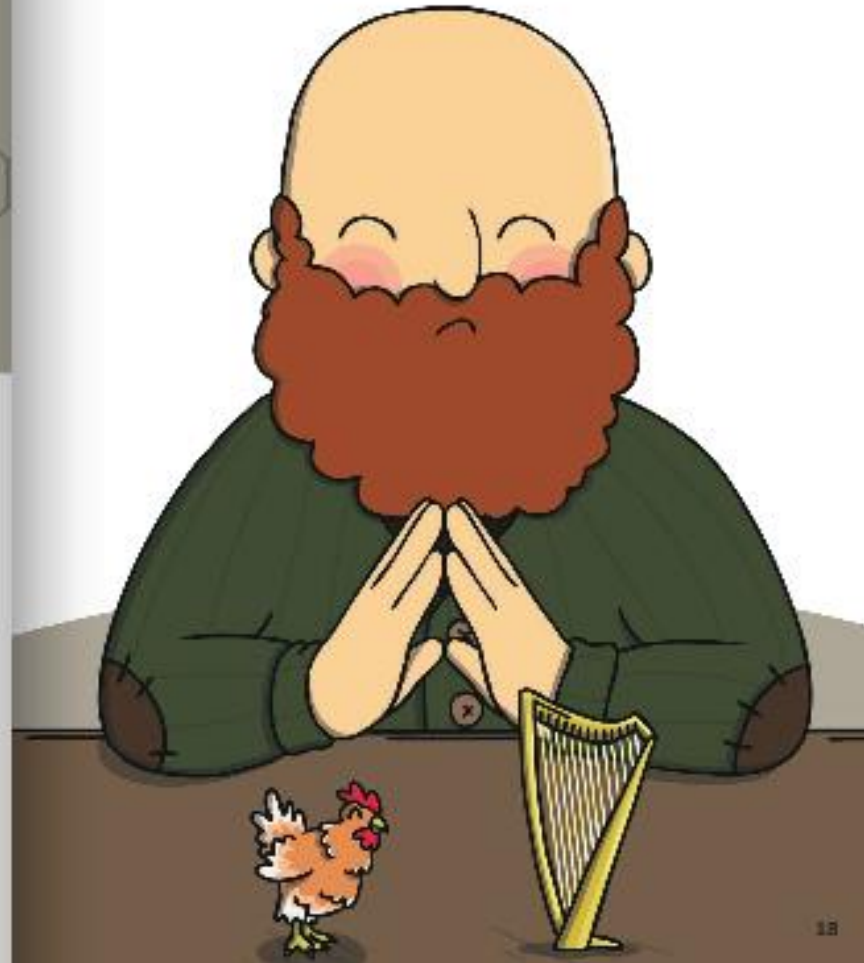


A colossal giant marched into the room. Jack peered nervously through a hole in the cupboard door. The giant's face was covered by a bushy brown beard. He had rosy cheeks and there was not one single hair on the top of his head.

"Fee! Fi! Fo! Fum! I smell the blood of an Englishman," bellowed the giant menacingly. Jack shivered with fear.



The terrifying giant sat down at the table. On the table was a hen and a golden harp. The glittering harp caught Jack's eye and, although he was petrified, he watched with fascination.



"Lay," said the giant and the hen laid an egg. The egg was made of solid gold. Jack was mesmerised by the bright, shining egg as he watched through the hole in the cupboard door.

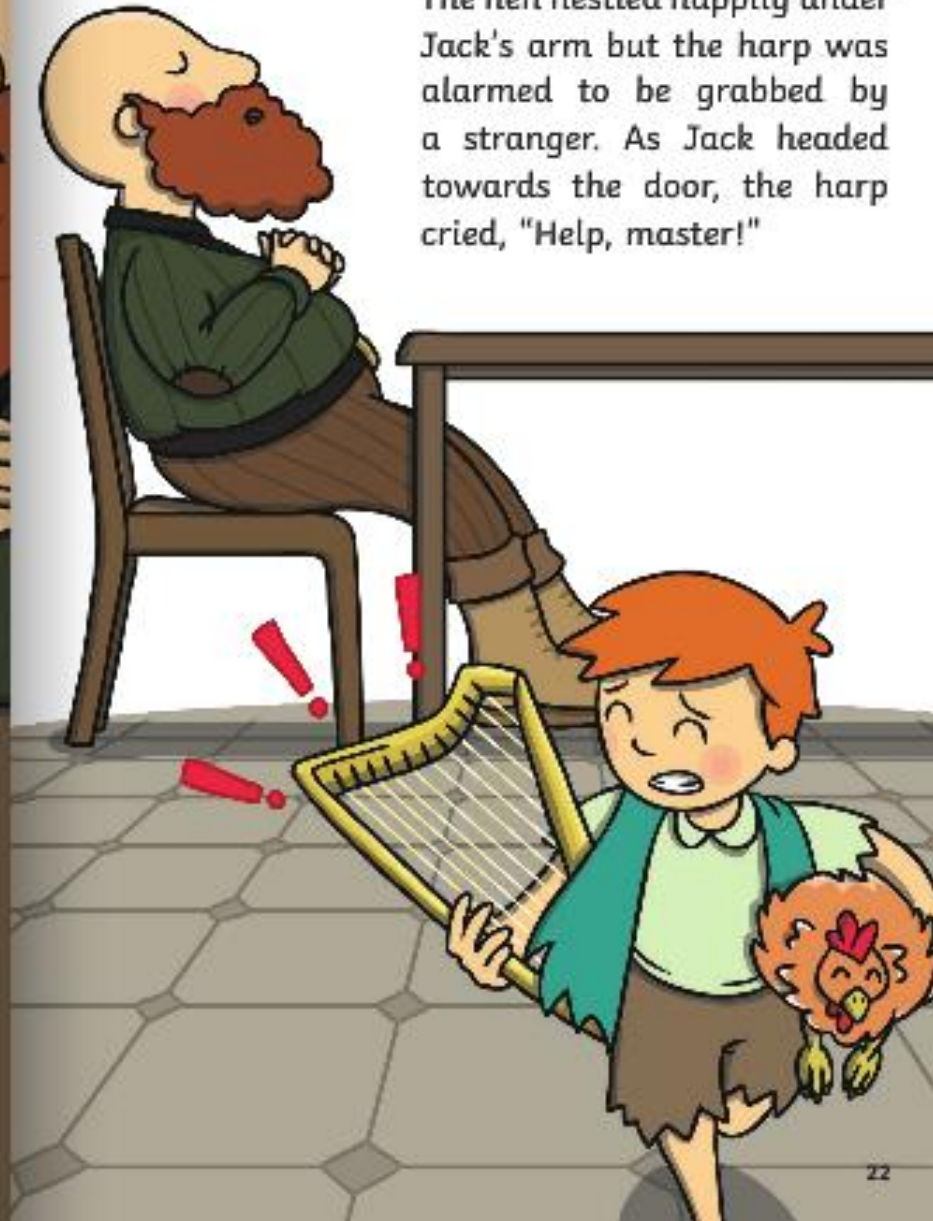


"Sing," said the giant and the harp sang. A beautiful, calming song came out of the harp and it seemed to cast a sort of spell over the giant because he soon fell asleep.

When Jack was certain that the giant was fully asleep, he crept out from his hiding place and skilfully climbed up the table leg and onto the table top. He grabbed the hen and the harp and made a daring leap down to the ground.



The hen nestled happily under Jack's arm but the harp was alarmed to be grabbed by a stranger. As Jack headed towards the door, the harp cried, "Help, master!"



The harp's shouting woke up the snoozing giant. He jumped up from his chair and spotted Jack. "Fee! Fi! Fo! Fum! I smell the blood of an Englishman!" he roared.



The giant started to chase Jack. Jack didn't stop to look behind him. He ran with all his might. The giant got closer and closer. The giant's strides were vast so he was able to catch up with Jack quickly.

Jack reached the beanstalk and started to climb back down it. He was breathing very quickly and his heart was racing. It was not easy climbing down the beanstalk while holding on to a hen and a harp. The beanstalk shook. Jack looked upwards. The giant had got onto the beanstalk and was climbing down after him!



When Jack reached the bottom of the beanstalk, he stumbled onto the ground, utterly exhausted. "Help!" he shouted at the top of his voice. He knew that the giant wasn't far behind him.



Jack's mother came rushing towards the beanstalk with an axe in her hands. Without hesitation, she sprinted to the base of the beanstalk and began chopping at it frantically.

The beanstalk began to wobble and a loud cry came from above them. The giant fell and crashed to the ground. He was never seen again.



Jack hugged his mother. "Thank you," he smiled, still out of breath and shaking all over.

"I'm so glad to have you back, Jack," she whispered, looking at him lovingly.



Jack's mother was delighted to see the golden harp and the hen. The harp now seemed happy to call Jack his new master and the hen quickly started to lay golden eggs on Jack's command. In fact, Jack was able to sell the golden eggs to buy Daisy back. They didn't have to worry about having enough money again and they all lived happily ever after.

