

Jack & the Ghost

Jack lived at home with his mother, his brother and his three sisters – who weren't very well. Jack had to look after and care for them all – so Jack tends the garden, Jack grows the vegetables, Jack does the fishing, Jack does the cooking – Jack does everything for his mother, his brother and his three sisters who weren't very well.

After years of tending for his home and family, Jack decides that it's all too much. The only way he can really care for them is to go out and seek his fame and fortune. He had often heard how fortune is waiting just around the corner – so he decided to set off and look for it.

He waited till late one night when he could hear the snores from his mother, his brother and his three sisters who weren't very well. He sneaked into the kitchen and took himself a loaf of bread and a piece of cheese. He wrapped them in a cloth and tied them to a walking stick that he carried over his shoulder. For company, he took his old teddy bear with patched arms and crossed eyes and so he set off with Gladly, his cross eyed bear.

He walked around the corner – and the next – and the one after that. In fact he walked all that night, through the next day and into the next evening. But he never found that fortune. He had walked so far and so long that he had walked through the thin soles of his boots and he was now limping on, blood shod. He just couldn't go any further. He could walk no more. He settled himself on the ground with a fallen tree at his back. He hugged Gladly and thought of home – of his mother, his brother and his three sisters who weren't very well. He had to find fame and fortune soon. The bread in his pack had gone soggy and his cheese had turned mouldy. He was so hungry he could hear his stomach growling. He decided to try and get some sleep. He lay on the floor and tried to cover himself with dried leaves to keep warm – but they just blew away. He turned and twisted – but he couldn't get comfortable. A stick would poke him in the eye, a stone would poke him in the back, or the rumbling of his stomach would wake him each time he dropped off. So he gave up trying to sleep. He hauled himself up on the fallen tree and looks over it and down into the valley. There he saw a tiny little cottage. Maybe whoever lived there would take pity on him and help him to find his fame and fortune. Although it was getting very late he set off through the gloomy forest and down into the valley. He got to the little cottage just as the moon came up. He knocked. The door creaked open and a little wizened old man with grey hair stood there.

What do you want?

I'm sorry to bother you so late. My name's Jack. I'm seeking my fame and fortune to help my mother, my brother and my three sisters who aren't very well. I wondered if you could help me. Perhaps you could give me something to eat, a place to sleep and maybe a little money.

The door slammed in his face.

Perhaps I shouldn't have asked for the money just like that. Jack mumbled to himself

Jack knocked again.

Now what do you want?

I'm sorry to bother you again. My name's still Jack and I'm still on my quest to find my fame and fortune. I wondered if there were any odd jobs that you might need doing – and then you could repay me by giving me something to eat and a bed for the night. And, I could always do more jobs tomorrow, if you like.

I aint got no jobs for you to do – now be off with you or I'll set me dog on you.

Jack was very upset. The door slammed in his face and he turned away – but he'd only got half way down the garden path when the door opened again....

What did you say your name was?

Jack

Well, Jack, you've knocked upon the wrong door! I'm just a poor old hill farmer. I've nothing to give the like of you. – But look over there – towards the crest of the hill. Now that's the sort of place a boy who's looking for his fame and fortune should try!

And Jack looked where he pointed. There he saw a great big house standing alone in the darkness.

You see, the Lord of the manor here has decreed that any young man who can spend a night in that house shall own for ever more – and all the land around it.

Jack was amazed! He looked at the house, then he looked at the man.

Well, I'll stay there – What's the catch?

Oh, there's no catch – except, of course, its haunted.

Haunted?

Are you afraid of ghosts?

I aint afraid of no ghosts!

And the little wizened old man smiled a crooked smile at him and sent him on his way with a plate of beans on toast. Jack walked up the hill to the big house. Next to the door was a sign that said The Warren House. He knocked upon the door, but no one answered. He tried the door – and it opened. He went in.

The house may have been haunted – but it was clean. Big rooms led on to even bigger rooms, there was expensive furniture that gleamed in the moonlight from the open door. Behind the house there were great rabbit warrens. In those days rabbits were bred for meat that gave the tin miners in the valley a little comfort and supplied all the great ships that sailed out of Plymouth. But even the warrens were deserted. Jack searched the house upstairs and down and found room after room – all just as clean. The room he settled on to spend the night was furnished as a library. It had no windows, only the one door and a locked cellar door. There was a great big fireplace and a leather sofa to sleep on.

No ghost is going to find me in here!

Jack went back outside and collected three great armfuls of dry fallen wood to light a fire. He lit a small fire in the fireplace and set his beans on toast to warm. Then he locked and bolted the library door – and – to be on the safe side – he slid a bookcase across the doorway. He dragged the sofa in front of his small fire and picked up the plate of warmed beans on toast.

As he began to eat, he heard a noise – it was like wind in the chimney – and then the wind in the chimney seemed to sound like a human voice!

Help me. Help me. I'm falling!

And bang, crash, down into the grate fell – two legs! Just legs – cut off at the hip. The legs dragged themselves out of the fire, shook the ashes and burning embers from their boots and walked across the floor to Jack! They sat on the sofa next to him. Jack looked at the soggy ends of the cut off legs and said:

You want to be careful – you nearly got ashes in my beans on toast!

And the wind whistled in the chimney again – and the voice came again:

Help me. Help me. I'm falling!

And down into the fireplace fell a body – just the torso – no arms, no legs, no head! It squiggled out of the fire like a giant slug and slid bloodily across the floor. With a contraction of its stomach muscles, it jumped up and joined itself to the legs!

Oh, argh – you want to be more careful – you nearly made me spill my beans on toast!

And the voice came again –

Help- me, help me – I'm falling

Come on down and join the party shouted Jack, hysterically.

Down into the fireplace – crash, bang, wallop - fell two arms! They pulled themselves from the fire on their fingertips, propped themselves up on their elbows, interlocked their fingers and galloped across the floor to Jack! They leapt up and joined themselves onto the body! So now there was a full body – all bar the head.

The body twisted to face Jack and a voice came from where the head should have been.

So you are Jack. Come to spend a night in my house and seek your fame and fortune for your mother, your brother and your three sisters who aren't very well.

Jack nodded – and the hollow, ghostly voice went on to tell its tale. It told how some three years ago, when its body was still in one piece and drew breath and lived it had been an old man, a miser. It told how three robbers had broken into the house and demanded to know where the miser kept his money – but the miser had said not a word – not even when the robbers had tortured him and cut up his body. The ghost told how for three years he had wandered all over the house in search of the missing bit – his head.

But if you find my head for me, Jack. I will tell you where I stored my little treasures.

Well, of course, I'll look for it. Where was it the last time you saw it? No, I suppose that doesn't work! I'm sure I will find your head... but, sort of.. just in case... 'cos I'm sure I will find it.. what would happen if I didn't

That's easy, Jack. If you don't find my head – I'll take yours.

OK. I'd best start looking for it right away. Is there anywhere you haven't searched?

And the ghost pointed a bony finger at the locked cellar door in the corner – and the door creaked open. Jack walked over and looked down the flight of wooden steps that disappeared into darkness. Jack gulped.

I'm not too keen on the dark!

The spectre reached out with his right hand and took the middle finger of his own left hand and simply pulled it off! He held it to the fire and the finger burned like a ghostly candle – but without a flicker. He handed the flaming digit to Jack!

Oh, there was no need to bother. But thanks.

And so Jack began his journey down those long dark steps. Now he found where the dirt and muck of three years emptiness had gone! There were rustlings and scrabbings in the dark. Clammy spider webs wrapped across his face. There were spiders as big as his hand – rats as big as cats and bats as big as eagles. He moved around in the clammy dinginess and suddenly – the ghostly candle went out! He backed to the wall and began to feel his way back to the stairs. He reached down and touched something round – and smooth – like a bowling ball – with ears!

Arggh

And he was off. He ran and he rushed up the stairs with the ghostly baldhead in his hand. The cellar door closed and clicked locked behind him. He reached forward and placed the ghostly head on the spectre's body – taking great care that the nose pointed to the front. The ghost smiled at him and explained that the third stair from the bottom was a secret drawer – and it was there that he had kept all his treasures. If Jack were to hit the right hand side of the stair riser, the drawer would open and the treasure would be revealed.

Excellent. That's just the sort of fame and fortune that I need for my mother, my brother and my three sisters who aren't very well.

Jack gave back the ghostly finger. The ghost placed it back on his hand, adjusted his head and just disappeared. Jack went back to look down the cellar steps.

I'll go and get that treasure – in the morning when its light.

Jack settled in to the sofa to eat his beans on toast. He banked up the fire – just to save himself from any more visitors – and went off to sleep.

In the morning he went to the cellar, hit the drawer as instructed and was amazed by the treasures he found there. Diamonds as big as his fists – long lost gold coins – emeralds that sparkled like an

explosion. There came a knock at the front door. Jack opened the door to discover the Lord of the Manor standing there – arrayed in his finest garments:

So you are Jack – the lad who has rid me of my ghost. As promised, I declare that this house, the warrens and all its land now officially belong to you. Congratulations!

Jack thanked him. He moved in with his mother, his brother and his three sisters – who fully recovered and got quite well. They opened an Inn on the site.

You can still find it there today – and you'll also find Jack's fire still burning. No one has ever let it go out – just in case!

[Find out more about The Warren House Inn here:](#)