

Lazy Jack: An English Fairy Tale

CASSIE: What do I find in this bag of stories? Let's see. Oo! A penny. This penny may not look like much, but one small penny like this one can be awfully important. Why, you might even say that without one small penny like this, an entire kingdom might have fallen into despair and desolation! For this penny takes us to the country of England, to a small, run-down house where a poor and weary woman lives with her very lazy and very silly son.

(She flips the coin to the FARMER)

MOTHER: All day long, I sit here at this spinning wheel, spinning and spinning and spinning. I spin my life away, and what do I have to show for it? Aching bones, tired fingers, and a basket of wool that doesn't stop! Now, where's that lazy son of mine? Lazy Jack!

JACK: Uh, yes, mama?

MOTHER: Lazy Jack, it is high time you earn your keep around here. You are so lazy that you do nothing but sit in the sun in hot weather and sit by the hearth in cold! I tell you, if you do not begin to work for your porridge, I will turn you out cold! Do you understand me?

JACK: Uh, yes, mama. Tomorrow, I will go find work.

(QUEEN holds up and reads a "MEANWHILE" sign)

QUEEN: Come on, dear, please! This moping has to stop!

PRINCESS: *(sighs)*

QUEEN: I know you miss your father, but you have to start enjoying yourself again!

PRINCESS: *(sighs)*

QUEEN: Come on, love. One smile, that's all I ask. One teensy, tiny smile.

PRINCESS: *(sighs)*

QUEEN: Oh, I give up! I've a good mind to marry you off to anyone who can make you smile! If he makes you laugh, I'll give him the whole kingdom right now!

(QUEEN holds up and reads a "MEANWHILE" sign; we shift to JACK walking and looking for work)

JACK: Gotta find work, gotta find work, mama sent me out, so I gotta find work . . .

FARMER: Hello, there, boy!

JACK: Uh, who, me?

FARMER: Yes, you! Are you looking for work?

JACK: Uh, uh huh.

FARMER: Come with me. I've got hay that needs baling.

(QUEEN holds up and reads "A FEW HOURS LATER")

JACK: Wow, a whole penny! Won't mama be pleased! *(He walks along, tossing the penny up in the air and catching it, tossing in the air and catching, tossing in the air, etc, until finally, he doesn't catch it. He watches it fall and land in a river with a splash)* Uh, oopsie.

MOTHER: Jack! Haven't you finished work yet!

JACK: Uh, yes, mama.

MOTHER: And? Did you get paid?

JACK: Uh, yes, mama, a whole penny!

MOTHER: Excellent! Where is it?

JACK: Uh, I kinda dropped it in the river.

MOTHER: How?

JACK: I was tossing it up and catching it.

MOTHER: You silly boy! You should have put it in your pocket and left it there!

JACK: Uh, okay, mama. I'll remember tomorrow.

(QUEEN holds and reads up "THE NEXT DAY" sign)

JACK: Gotta find work, gotta find work, mama sent me out, so I gotta find work . . .

FARMER: Hey, you there! Boy! Still looking for work?

JACK: Uh huh.

FARMER: I've got cows that need milking. Come on.

(QUEEN holds up and reads "A FEW HOURS LATER")

FARMER: Good work, boy. But I'm afraid I don't have another shiny penny to give you. Here's a jar of milk for your trouble.

JACK: Uh, thanks! *(JACK begins to carry it home, then stops)* Wait. What did mama say? Oh, yeah! I should put it in my pocket. *(He pours the milk into his pocket and continues home)*

(*QUEEN holds up and reads "AT JACK'S HOUSE"*)

MOTHER: Well, Jack, did you get paid today?

JACK: Yes, mama, a whole jar of milk, and I put it in my pocket, just like you said! (*Reaches into pocket, but the milk is, of course, gone*) Oh.

MOTHER: You silly boy! You don't put milk in your pocket! You should have carried it on your head!

JACK: Uh, okay, mama. I'll remember that tomorrow.

(*QUEEN holds up the "THE NEXT DAY" sign*)

JACK: Gotta find work, gotta find work, mama sent me out, so I gotta find work . . .

FARMER: Hey! You there, boy! Still looking for work?

JACK: Uh, yep.

FARMER: Well, come on. I've got butter to churn.

(*QUEEN holds up and reads "A FEW HOURS LATER"*)

FARMER: Good work, boy. Here's a pat of butter for your work.

JACK: Uh, thanks! (*JACK begins to carry it home, then stops*) Wait. What did mama say? Oh, yeah! I should carry it on my head! (*He does*)

(*QUEEN holds up and reads "AT JACK'S HOUSE"*)

MOTHER: Jack! Did you – what on earth happened to you! Is that – melted butter all over your head?

JACK: Yep, mama! The farmer paid me in butter, and I carried it home on my head, just like you said!

MOTHER: Jack, you silly, silly boy! You don't carry butter on your head! You should have carried it very carefully in your hands!

JACK: Okay, mama. I'll remember that tomorrow.

(*QUEEN holds up "THE NEXT DAY" sign*)

JACK: Gotta find work, gotta find work, mama sent me out, so I gotta find work . . .

FARMER: Hey, you boy! Still looking for work?

JACK: Uh, yep.

FARMER: Well, come on. I've got chores for you to do.

(QUEEN holds up and reads "A FEW HOURS LATER")

FARMER: Good work, Jack. Here's a tom-cat for your pay.

JACK: Uh, thanks! *(He starts to lead the cat home, then stops)* Wait. What did mama say? Oh, right! I should carry it carefully in my hands. *(He continues for a few steps)* Wait, kitty, wait! OW! *(He drops the cat, who runs away)* Oh, dear. Mama will be so angry.

(QUEEN holds up and reads "AT JACK'S HOUSE")

MOTHER: Oh, you silly, silly, silly boy! You should have tied a piece of string around its neck and led it home behind you!

JACK: Yes, mama. I'll remember that tomorrow.

(QUEEN holds up "THE NEXT DAY" sign)

FARMER: Jack! I've been waiting for you. Let's get to work!

JACK: Yes, sir!

(QUEEN holds up and reads "A FEW HOURS LATER")

FARMER: Here's a shoulder of mutton for you, boy. Good work.

JACK: Uh, thanks! *(He starts to carry it home, then stops.)* Wait. What did mama say? Oh, yeah! That I should tie a piece of string around it and lead it home. *(He does)*

(QUEEN holds up and reads "AT JACK'S HOUSE")

MOTHER: Jack! Oh, no, Jack, you silly, silly, silly, silly boy! What am I going to do with you? You don't drag meat on the ground; it's ruined! You should have carried it on your shoulders!

JACK: Yes, mama. I'm sorry, Mama. I'll remember tomorrow.

(QUEEN holds up "THE NEXT DAY" sign)

FARMER: Jack! I hoped you'd come back today. We've got a lot of work waiting.

(QUEEN holds up and reads "A FEW HOURS LATER")

FARMER: Well, Jack, you've worked for me a whole week. You deserve a great payment, so, I'm giving you one of my donkeys. Take care, son, and I'll see you next week. *(FARMER exits)*

JACK: Okay. I'm gonna get this right today. Mama said to carry it home on my shoulders, so that's what I'm going to do. (*JACK struggles with the donkey, but eventually gets it into position, awkwardly. He stumbles home*)

PRINCESS: (*sighs*) (*Then, she sees JACK, and her eyes go wide*) Oh, my goodness! (*A smile*) Is that what I think it is? (*A giggle*) That man is carrying a donkey home – on his back! (*She bursts out laughing and cannot stop. The QUEEN runs in*)

QUEEN: What! What is it – my daughter? Laughing? (*The PRINCESS can only point. The QUEEN rushes out to JACK*) My dear boy! You have done it! You have made the princess laugh, and now, you shall marry her and become king! How you ever came up with the idea of carrying a donkey on your back! It's so ridiculous! You must be the cleverest boy in the world! How lucky we are! (*JACK shrugs*)

ALL: The end!