



Thoughts at the Bottom of a Beanstalk

Once upon a time there was a little boy named Jack who was about to climb his very first beanstalk. He had a fresh haircut and a brand-new backpack.

Even though his friends in the neighborhood had climbed this same beanstalk almost every day last year this was Jack's first day and he was a little nervous. So was his parent.

Early in the morning his parent brought him to the foot of the beanstalk and talked encouragingly to Jack about all the fun he would have that day and how nice his giant would be. His parent reassured him that he would be picked up at the end of the day. For a moment they stood together, silently holding hands, gazing up at the beanstalk. To Jack it seemed much bigger than it had when he had seen it on the way to the store last week. His parent thought it looked big, too, and swallowed. Maybe Jack should have been held back a year...

Jack's parent straightened his shirt one last time, patted his shoulder and smiled down at him, while promising to stay and wave while he started climbing. Jack didn't say a word.

He walked forward, grabbed a low-growing stem and slowly pulled himself up to the first leaf. He balanced there for a moment and then climbed more eagerly to the second leaf, then to the third and soon he vanished into a high tangle of leaves and stems with never a backward glance.

His parent stood alone at the bottom of the beanstalk, gazing up at the spot where Jack had disappeared. There was no rustle, no movement, no sound to indicate that he was anywhere inside.

"Sometimes, it's harder to be the one who waves good-bye than it is to be the one who climbs the beanstalk."

Jack's parent wondered how Jack would do. Would he be lonely? How would he behave? Did his giant understand that sometimes little boys acted silly when they felt unsure? His parent fought down an urge to spring up the stalk after Jack and maybe duck behind a bean to take a peek at how he was doing.

"I'd better not. What if he saw me?" His parent knew Jack was really old enough to handle this on his own.

After all, this was thought to be an excellent beanstalk and everyone said that his giant was not only kind but had outstanding qualifications.

"It's not that I'm worried about him, it's just that he's growing up and I'm going to miss him."

Jack's parent turned to leave. "Jack's going to have lots of bigger beanstalks to climb in his life. Today's the day he starts practicing for them...and today's the day I start practicing something too: cheering him on and waving good-bye."