

**BAKER**

THE SPELL IS ON –

*(BAKER'S WIFE, seeing JACK at other side of stage, puts her hand across BAKER'S MOUTH)*

**BAKER'S WIFE**

A COW AS WHITE AS –

*(BAKER sees JACK takes BAKER'S WIFE'S HAND away)*

**BAKER, BAKER'S WIFE**

– milk.

*(BAKER'S WIFE pushes BAKER in JACK'S direction, then follows)*

Hello there, young man.

**JACK**

*(Looks at BAKER, scared)*

Hello, sir.

**BAKER**

What might you be doing with a cow in the middle of the forest?

**JACK**

*(Nervous)*

I was heading toward market – but I seem to have lost my way.

**BAKER'S WIFE**

*(Coaching BAKER)*

What are you planning to do there – ?

**BAKER**

And what are you planning to do there?

**JACK**

Sell my cow, sir. No less than five pounds.

**BAKER**

Five pounds!

*(To BAKER'S WIFE)*

Where am I to get five pounds!

**BAKER'S WIFE**

*(Taking over)*

She must be generous of milk to fetch five pounds?

**JACK**

*(Hesitant)*

Yes, ma'am.

**BAKER'S WIFE**

And if you can't fetch that sum? Then what are you to do?

**JACK**

I hadn't thought of that... I suppose my mother and I will have no food to eat.

*(BAKER has emptied his pocket; HE has a few coins and the beans in hand)*

**BAKER**

*(To BAKER'S WIFE)*

This is the sum total...

**BAKER'S WIFE**

*(Loudly)*

Beans – we mustn't give up our beans! Well... if you feel we must.

**BAKER**

Huh?

**BAKER'S WIFE**

*(To JACK)*

Beans *will* bring you food, son.

**JACK**

Beans in exchange for my cow?

**BAKER'S WIFE**

Oh, these are no ordinary beans, son. These beans carry magic.

**JACK**

Magic? What kind of magic?

**BAKER'S WIFE**

*(To BAKER)*

Tell him.

*(MYSTERIOUS MAN enters behind a tree)*

**BAKER**

*(Nervous)*

Magic that defies description.

**JACK**

My mother would —

**MYSTERIOUS MAN**

... You'd be lucky to exchange her for a sack of beans.

*(BAKER'S WIFE and BAKER hug, frightened by MYSTERIOUS MAN'S VOICE. MYSTERIOUS MAN EXITS before anyone sees him)*

**JACK**

How many beans?

**BAKER**

Six.

**BAKER'S WIFE**

Five! We can't part with all of them. We must leave one for ourselves. Besides, I'd say they're worth a pound each, at the very least.

**JACK**

Could I buy my cow back someday?

**BAKER**

*(Uneasy)*

Well... possibly.