**A Job for Everyone**

[Slim]

All the fruits and vegetables in the pink paper-lined box on the shelf of

 the shop with the green and yellow door were wide awake now and

ready for more stories.

Mr. H. Appy had so much enjoyed the story about Lady Anna that he

started singing again. As soon as he had sung his song once Paula

and Peter called out,

“Let’s have another story please, Pa Snip.”

“Who haven’t we heard about?” asked Pa Snip. He looked round the

box. The runner bean turned on his side.

“We haven’t had a bean story yet,” he said.

“Just what I was thinking,” said Pa Snip. “We have not had a carrot

story either, but as you have asked it will be a bean story about a

bean like you, called Slim.”

There was a long silence while Pa Snip collected his thoughts once more. Then he took a deep breath and he began ….

At the bottom of the garden there was a long row of tall sticks. They reached right up as high as the hedge behind them. At the bottom of the sticks, some green plants were growing. Some of them were already winding themselves around the sticks. Everyone of them wanted to climb up into the sky. As they grew higher and higher, little green leaves grew out from them. At first the leaves were a beautiful bright green colour and then as they grew bigger they turned dark green and flapped in the wind.

When the beans had grown half way up the sticks, bright red flowers came out all over them. Then, as soon as the flowers faded away, tiny green beans took their place. Down nearer the ground one of the beans grew longer and slimmer than the rest. The other beans called that one SLIM - because he was so long and thin!

Slim looked up as the bean plant climbed higher and higher. More red flowers came out; the bees buzzed round them; the flowers faded; and lots more little beans took their place. All the while Slim hung down and grew even longer. When the wind blew and lifted him up he watched through the leaves. He saw that the bean had climbed right to the top of the sticks and had jumped across to the hedge and climbed right to the top of that as well. On the top of the hedge was a new bright green bean.

Among the leaves Slim could not see much now but he listened. All the other beans were so busy growing bigger they did not notice Slim, near the ground, at the bottom of the beanstalk. He heard the new bean right at the top of the bean stalk calling down to the other beans,

“I can see right over the top of the hedge,” he shouted down. “I can see the whole world. I can see the clouds. I can see the children playing in the garden next door. There’s goes a red balloon. I can see houses and churches and hills far away.”

Slim felt so sad. “I wish I could see those things,” he said to himself. “I wish I could see the world. I wish I was at the top of the beanstalk. I wish I was even an ordinary bean with the others. If I keep growing, perhaps I could get up to see all these things.” He puffed himself out as much as he could but the more he grew, the more the plant and leaves grew around him, and the less he could see . His world became darker and darker

One evening the sun went in very early. It disappeared behind some huge black

clouds. The first big drops of rain began to spot down. Slim shuddered as he heard the thunder followed by a great downpour of rain. The bean leaves began to drip with rainwater. They drooped down over Slim. The wind blew stronger and wilder until it tore some of the bean leaves right off and flung them on the ground.

Slim felt the whole bean plant moving. Every plant, every leaf, and every bean

started groaning. The rain had pulled the top of the bean plants away from the

hedge. Slim could see more between the leaves now. He watched as the whole

world of beans came hurtling past him. All the beans which he had seen high up now lay on the ground. Some of them were broken in pieces. The rest of the bean plant landed with a crash on the ground just below Slim. He caught sight of the bean he had seen at to top of the hedge. She lay on the ground, broken into three pieces.

When the rain stopped and the air warmed up, Slim watched as three snails and a big slug slid slowly towards the top bean. He heard an awful crunching sound as the snails bit into the top bean.

Next day was sunny again. The gardener came to tie up the bean stalks again and to pick some of the beans. He kept putting his hand inside the plant to feel for more beans. Slim heard *‘click’*, as each bean was broken off the bean stem. The gardener didn’t seem to notice Slim. Slim kept shouting, “I’m down here! Pick me! I am big. I’m green and ready and tasty!” The gardener picked many beans from all around Slim and put them in boxes. Next day he came again and picked more beans. And the next day, and many days after that.

“Why won’t he pick me? Slim moaned.

As the days went by the beanstalks began to change. The leave that had been bright green were changing to be dry and wrinkled. The gardener did not come any more. The bean’s leaves turned black in the cold frosty air. Other beans, like Slim, who had been forgotten too were hanging so low they were getting mud on their tails.

Slim, like the leaves was turning brown and hard too. The blue and purple beans inside him were getting round and plump.

“I look dreadful,” he kept saying to himself. “I am getting so fat. They won’t call me Slim anymore!”

It seemed ages until the gardener came again. This time he put out his hand

specially for Slim . He had to pull very hard to take Slim from the beanstalk because he was hanging on so tight. Then, all Slim’s thoughts about not feeling or looking good slipped away as he heard the man say, “You’re a wonderful bean!”

“Me?” wondered Slim. “Me? Wonderful?”

The gardener took Slim into his shed and laid him in a tray. Then with a sharp knife he split Slim open at the side. It did not hurt. The gardener shook the beans out of Slim.

“Wonderful,” said the gardener again. “You will grow into fine bean plants next

year.”

Slim lay on the top of the bin. He was thinking. He had not seen the whole world, like the bean at the top of the plant. He had not been picked as a lovely green bean for someone’s special dinner, but he had been chosen to make the seeds for new beans next year. He felt so pleased and proud.

“I like that story,” said Mr. H. Appy when Pa Snip had finished. All the others said the same, even Tatti.

“It just goes to show,” he said. “Everybody matters. There are special

things for everyone to do - even potatoes like me.”