

## Jack explains himself to a bird while stuck climbing from *The Beanstalk* by Tara Meddaugh

**Jack:** Please don't poke my eyes out! Wait—don't leave! I mean, unless that's what you were going to do, poke my eyes out—were you? But otherwise, just, just stay. I—I—I mean, you understand my worrying about that, right? But—well, you don't seem like those other birds. So. It's just—I really am happy to see you. I'm getting a little, well, maybe a little anxious. I don't know if you can tell, but, I'm kind of a little bit stuck up here.

See, I didn't...really...think that I'd make it this far up. I didn't really think it through at all. My mom keeps telling me that's my problem, and I guess it is. I just...saw it, and I've always been a bit of a climber, my mom said. When I was nine months old, she found me sitting on top of the brown cow in the barn one morning. I guess we all have our strengths. I've never really considered myself afraid of heights before, but, it's not really the climbing up that scares me. It's the getting down, Black Crow. It seemed so easy getting here—just put one foot on the branch—if you can call it a branch. They sure don't seem like branches now— looking down. Oh, and, I've tried going down already. I put my foot on a branch, but it seems slippery now. See? It's like the sludge at the bottom of the pig trough. And you do not want be climbing down from the clouds on pig sludge! I'm not a bright boy. They all tell me that, but that is one thing I do know. And see, that's why this is so, so, kind of tough to swallow. Maybe I was proving something.

Maybe I was running away. I don't know. But I was doing something. You know? Climbing up something. Something that wasn't there before, but then suddenly was, and it made me feel powerful and strong and, and, smart. And I liked that feeling. So I kept on going, because the feeling kept on going. And, I'd never felt that way before. I mean, strong maybe, but— not smart. But now I'm here. And I don't feel very smart. Because a smart person would know how to get down. I can't gain any footing on the sludge branch. I tried sliding down, but the few feet I did it, well, it hurts an awful lot, and I'm not even sure I wouldn't fly off of it and land down there in a broken bone pile. And, then

everyone would just say, Well, that's Jack. He doesn't know how to climb down, poor slow boy. And I guess they'd be right.