

## **The Straw, The Coal, and The Bean**

Based on "The Straw, The Coal, and The Bean" by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm

Cast (in order of appearance):

Coal

Extra Coal (approx. 2)

Narrator

Old Woman

Straw

Extra Straw (approx. 5-10)

Extra Beans (approx. 5-10)

Bean

Tailor

Location: Old Country House

Time: Early 1900s

*A note on costuming: The clothes of the Old Woman and the Bystander are going to be in the 'Little House on the Prairie' style; long and flow-y. The clothing of the other characters resembles their earthly appearances. For example, coal wears dark gray or black outer garments with orange undergarments to show when lit. Straw wears yellow or cream outer garments and the bean wears brown ones.*

#### ACT 1

*At rise is the interior of an old cabin's kitchen area with a hearth, as well as an 'open door' to the exterior near stage right.*

*(All of the Coal are huddled next to the hearth. The Narrator enters through the "door" at stage right.)*

#### NARRATOR

This is the Tale of The Straw, The Coal, and The Bean. We start our story in a small cabin in the countryside where an Old Woman is starting to prepare herself a nice evening meal.

*(The Old Woman enters Stage Right holding hands with all of the Straw and all of the extra beans with the main bean at the back of the chain. All characters have a very positive disposition.)*

#### NARRATOR

She decided to make some beans for he meal. She decided to build a fire on her hearth.

*(The Old Woman grabs the coal in their group and throws them down on the hearth. They all topple and groan in pain, some of them cursing the Old Woman. She grabs matches from next to the hearth and holds one, after striking, to the group of coal.)*

#### COAL

Ahh! Lady! What in God's name are you doing! Stop it! That Hurts!  
*(The Extra Coal scream and curse the lady as well. All the coal strip out of their gray and black outer garments to show orange undergarments, as if they are on fire. The other characters are horrified.)*

EXTRA COAL (together)

We're burning! We're burning!

NARRATOR

So that the fire may burn quicker, she lit it with a handful of straw.

STRAW

Wait, what?

EXTRA STRAW (together)

No don't!

*(The Old Woman gets up and walks towards the straw. The Straw all try and escape the Old Woman but are not quick enough. She grabs the straw as they struggle and she throws them on top of the coal.)*

STRAW

OH MY GOD, NO!

*(The Coal breaks away from the extra coal as all of the straw are thrown on top of the pile, and The Straw does the same.)*

NARRATOR

She then grabbed a pan and started emptying the beans into it.

*(The extra beans and The Bean collectively start to move away from the Old Woman as she grabs the pan, but can not escape. The Old Woman grabs them all and tosses them onto the pan in the fire. The Straw and Coal are still all screaming.)*

EXTRA BEANS (together)

NO! STOP!

BEAN

I can't believe it's ending like this!

NARRATOR

But as she was doing so, one bean slipped away from the rest and tumbled onto the floor next to a rogue lump of coal and strand of straw.

*(All three stand up together.)*

COAL

Dear friends, from whence do you come here? I fortunately sprang out of the fire, and if I had not escaped by sheer force my death would have been certain. I would have been burnt to ashes!

BEAN

I, too, have escaped with a whole skin! But if the Old Woman had got me into the pan, I should have been made into broth without mercy! Look at my comrades!

STRAW

But would a better fate had befallen *my* lot? The Old Woman has destroyed all my brethren in fire and smoke! She seized 60 of them at once and took their lives in fire and smoke! I, luckily, slipped through her fingers.

COAL

But what are we to do now?

*(The three turn to their brethren, still screaming because of the fire, and turn back to each other.)*

BEAN

I think, since we have escaped death, that we should stick together like good companions. We must leave this place and repair to a foreign country.

NARRATOR

The proposition pleased the other two and they set out on their way together.

*(The three nod in unison and exit. Lights down, the rest exit.)*

ACT2

*[It must be noted that a simple backdrop change can be completed by flipping the new background over top of the old one.]*

*(At rise is a luscious countryside with a small brook running through it.)*

*(The Narrator enters.)*

NARRATOR

Soon about their journey, they came to a little brook.

*(The Bean, the Straw, and the Coal enter. They stop at the brook and stare at it.)*

COAL

Well, this isn't good.

STRAW

Is there a bridge or a foot plank?

BEAN

It doesn't look like it.

COAL

Then how will we get across?

NARRATOR

The Straw then had a great idea.

*(The Straw motions to a 'eureka' moment.)*

STRAW

By jove, I have it! I'll lay down over the brook and you can cross on top of me, as on a bridge!

BEAN AND COAL

I like it!

NARRATOR

The Straw then stretched itself across the length of the brook.

*(The Straw laid down over the brook for the others to cross over.)*

The Coal, who was of an impetuous disposition, tripped quite boldly onto the newly built bridge.

*(The Coal walked on top of the straw, feeling confident.)*

But when it had reached the middle, and heard the water rapidly rushing underneath it, it was afraid. The Coal stood still and ventured no further.

*(The Coal stopped right in the middle of the bridge.)*

STRAW

Coal! Go! You're too hot!

NARRATOR

The Straw then begin to burn and break into two pieces due to the heat from the coal, and fell into the stream. The Coal fell right after the straw and hissed when it fell into the stream, both breathing their last.

*(The Straw bows downwards and both the Straw and Coal fall into the brook below. The Coal lets out a loud hiss as she hits the water.)*

*[It must be noted that the brook can be padded for the actors, but the actor playing the straw must be strong, as the coal must walk on top of him/her and then fall onto the padding at the cue. Fog machine may be used for added effect as the coal hits the water, emitting steam.]*

NARRATOR

The Bean, who had prudently stayed behind on the shore, could not but laugh at the event and was unable to stop.

BEAN

HAHAHAHA! *(Doubled-over in intense hilarity.)*

NARRATOR

The Bean laughed so heartily that it burst.

*(The Bean then lets out a scream and “explodes” by releasing actual size beans onto the stage from the abdominal/ stomach area. The Bean falls to the floor.)*

It would have been all over with it, likewise, if not, by good fortune, a tailor had come along.

*(The Tailor enters and sees the bean, immediately springing into action with a sewing kit he had brought with him.)*

With a compassionate heart, he pulled out his needle and tread and sewed the Bean back together.

*(The Tailor leaves the stage. The Bean now has a black patch on the area where it “burst” a few moments ago.)*

*[Let it be known that the Bean’s costume should have the ability to have something stuck to it with tape. Inside the Tailor’s sewing kit should be a piece of black felt with tape not he back of it, which he can stick to the Bean’s costume.]*

The Bean thanked him with all its heart.

BEAN

Thank you, kind sir!

NARRATOR

But, as the tailor used black thread, all beans since then have a black seam on them.

**END**

## Mood Board



### Mood Board Explained:

First, for the background I used a smoky texture to symbolize the fiery situation that all three escaped at the beginning of the story, as well as the bold, fiery nature of the Coal's mannerisms (a foreshadowing to the story's conclusion).

Secondly, the IRONY ALERT! sign. Obviously, the sign is also a foreshadow to the end of the tale as well as the smoke.

Thirdly is the group of friends standing in front of the rest of the elements, looking upon them together. They obviously symbolize the friendship you need to traverse the obstacles in front of you, which the characters in the story exemplify.

