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CHAPTER 1

THE ABBOT, THE KING AND JACK (AND THE SHEEP)

There are three people in this story, and some sheep. And a dog.



The first person is the Abbot of Canterbury.



The second person is Jack Shepherd. He's the hero.



The third person is King John. He's the baddy. Boo! Hiss!



King John lived in London. Jack and the Abbot lived far away from London, in Canterbury. They lived very near to each other, but they never met.

The sheep lived in a field and Jack lived in a shed at the end of the field. He looked after the sheep – that's why he was called Jack Shepherd.

There was a stone wall down one side of the field. On the other side of the wall was the Abbey of Canterbury. It was a huge house where



monks lived. They were good men who worked hard and prayed to God. They lived like poor men and didn't mind getting their hands dirty.

The top monk was called the Abbot. He prayed to God but he never worked hard. He never got his hands dirty. He was very rich.



People told Jack that he looked like the Abbot. Jack didn't know if this was true because he hadn't got a mirror. But he thought it was a good joke and he liked a laugh. The Abbot was the richest man in Canterbury and Jack was the poorest.

The Abbot had servants and horses and gold and jewels. Jack had nothing but his dog. It helped him look after the sheep.

Jack and the monks waved to each other over the wall. They said "Good morning" and "Nice day, isn't it?" to each other.

Sometimes Jack saw the Abbot ride by on his fine horse. He wore silver rings on his fingers and shiny leather boots on his feet. The Abbot never waved to Jack. Jack didn't say, "Nice day, isn't it?"

Instead he ran to move his sheep in case

they got in the Abbot's way. They weren't really Jack's sheep. They belonged to the Abbot. Jack worked for the Abbot and the Abbot paid his wages. They were very small wages. In fact, Jack was the poorest man in Canterbury.

When his work was done, Jack opened the gate in the stone wall and went into the Abbey church. He liked to hear the monks singing.

Sometimes the Abbot got up and talked about God and Jesus. At Christmas he told how Jesus was born in a stable. Poor shepherds came to see him. At Easter he told how Jesus was sold to his enemies for thirty silver pennies.

This made Jack angry when he thought about it. Thirty pennies was more money than he had ever seen in his life.

Most of the time Jack did his thinking in

the field. He was on his own with the sheep and they didn't say much. He talked to his dog. The dog didn't say much either.

"The Abbot is very rich," Jack said to the dog.

The dog looked at him.

"But Jesus was a poor man like me," Jack said. "I don't suppose he ever had thirty silver pennies either, do you?"

The dog didn't answer.

Jack started work when the sun came up and went to bed when it set. Sometimes he wondered where the sun went at night and hoped it would come back in the morning.

He thought that the sun went round the Earth and he thought the Earth was flat. So did the monks. So did the Abbot. Even the King

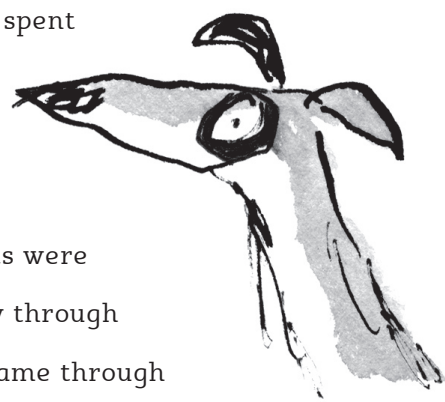
thought the Earth was flat. Everyone did. This all happened a long time ago. In those days, some people thought the moon was made of cheese.

In summer the sun rose early and set late. The days were long and warm, and Jack and his dog sat in the sunshine and watched the sheep.

"Where does the sun go at night?" Jack said to the dog.

If the dog knew the answer, it didn't tell him.

That was why Jack spent so much time thinking. He never got answers to his questions.



In winter the nights were long and cold. Wind blew through holes in the shed. Rain came through

holes in the roof. Jack shivered. He curled up with the dog to keep warm.

Then Jack thought of the Abbot sitting by the big fire in the Abbey. His servants were bringing him hot food and drink.

"We could do with some of that," Jack said to the dog.

Jack didn't know that someone else was thinking about the Abbot. Far away in London, the King had heard about the Abbot of Canterbury.

King John was hopeless with money. He never had enough, and when he did have it he spent it. He was always trying to think of ways to get more.

When someone told King John about the rich Abbot his eyes shone. He smiled a nasty smile. He twiddled his thumbs.

That night he thought of a cunning plan.