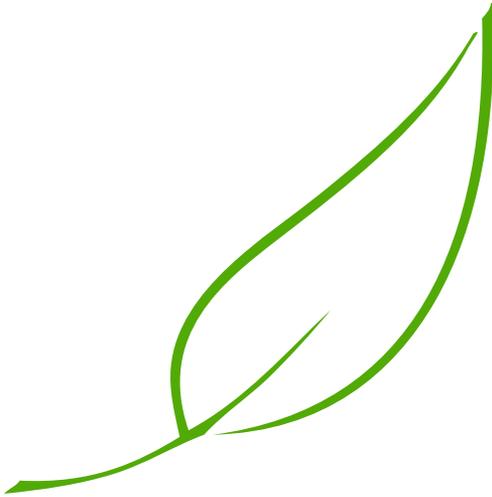


TOUGH-IT, MUFFET!

by Ken Bradbury



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(M. Muffet, a lovely young girl, enters the area, takes a deep and glorious breath, carefully brushes off her tuffet and sits on it.)

MUFFET: My, but what a glorious day! The birds are singing out my name! The bees are buzzing! The flowers are ... flowering. The dainty little insects are doing ... uh ... whatever dainty little insects do. *(sighs and smiles)* What a simply wonderful day to simply be me.

SPYDER: *(standing from where he's been hiding behind Muffet's tuffet)* Oh good grief!

MUFFET: *(jumping up in horror)* Oh! Who are you? Whatever are you doing here?

SPYDER: Getting sick. That was the most nauseating speech I've ever heard.

MUFFET: Who are you?

SPYDER: My name's Spyder. Seymour Spyder. You know ... *(flaps his arms and legs)* Spyder. Legs, arms, ugly face. Boo.

MUFFET: That was awful.

SPYDER: Huh?

MUFFET: I quote, "Little Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet, eating her curds and whey ..."

SPYDER: What's that?

MUFFET: Don't interrupt. It's a classic line. "When along came a spyder and sat down beside her and frightened Miss Muffet away."

SPYDER: That doesn't rhyme.

MUFFET: It doesn't have to. It's a classic.

SPYDER: And it doesn't make sense. Why should I do such a stupid thing as that?

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MUFFET: As what?

SPYDER: Frighten you away. Why should I?

MUFFET: Look, you are ruining this entire scene.

SPYDER: I'm not the one makin' the audience sick
with the Shirley Temple routine.

MUFFET: Frighten me away.

SPYDER: *(thinks a moment, then)* No.

MUFFET: I said, "Frighten Me Away!"

SPYDER: No! That's crude. It's ... I don't know ...
Violent. Sexist.

MUFFET: I told you, it's a classic!

SPYDER: It's classic garbage. I've got better things to
do. See ya ... *(begins to exit)*

MUFFET: *(one tough Mama)* Hold it right there,
bubba! If you ever wanna see another fly, you'll get back there
and play your part.

SPYDER: No flies?

MUFFET: Not a maggot.

SPYDER: You're a cruel woman, you know that?

MUFFET: Get under the tuffet!

SPYDER: What's a tuffet, Muffet? *(he laughs ... she
frowns ... he notices her frown)* Geesh. My one good line and
you don't like it. *(grudging, he returns to behind the tuffet)*

MUFFET: *(seating herself again)* My what a gorgeous
day to simply be me! To commune with my little friends the
birds and the bees and the flowers and the insects and ... and
insects and ... *(irritated, looking behind her)* ... and INSECTS!

SPYDER: Arachnid.

MUFFET: What?

SPYDER: I'm not an insect. I'm an arachnid.

MUFFET: *(exploding)* Well, you look like bug to me!

SPYDER: Oh ... tactful aren't we? Miss Charm and
couth. And do I call you names? Have I?

MUFFET: I don't have to be charming. I'm Miss
Muffet! Now get back behind that tuffet and try it again!

SPYDER: *(to the audience)* Some people have no
regard for a real artist. *(he again gets behind her tuffet)*

MUFFET: (*losing most of her charm and innocence, but still going through with her lines*) My what an unbelievably gorgeous ... and UNUSUAL day. Sitting here, drinking in the joys of creation, with absolutely nothing in the world to upset me.

SPYDER: (*a silence, then ... quietly, still behind the tuffet*) Boo.

MUFFET: What?

SPYDER: (*another silence, then*) I said, "Boo."

MUFFET: (*imitating him*) "Boo?" That's it? "Boo?"

SPYDER: (*poking his head up*) I prefer to be subtle.

MUFFET: (*exploding again*) That's not subtle, that's ridiculous!

SPYDER: Sorry. But that's my interpretation.

MUFFET: Of what?

SPYDER: Terror. (*rising*) That subtle little terror that begins first as a gnawing doubt, then grows into a rising anxiety before it turns full-force into a hysterical gale-storm of stark, bone-chilling terror!

MUFFET: (*a long pause as she simply looks at him in disbelief*) I don't believe it. Out of all the spiders in all the webs in all the world, they send me you. Play it again, Seymour.

SPYDER: What?

MUFFET: I said do it again. The script calls for me to be frightened away, not bored into the next county. Do it again, and this time like you mean it.

SPYDER: But I don't.

MUFFET: You don't what?

SPYDER: I don't mean it. Nothing could be further from my mind.

MUFFET: Why do I bother?

SPYDER: Because you care, that's why. (*taking her in his many arms*) Because it's important to you. Oh, not for your own selfish reasons but for the sake of posterity ... those thousands of future generations of children who will be forced to five their entire wretched fives, deprived of this classic of world literature ... who will be condemned to walk back and forth upon this weary earth without the benefit of knowing that



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