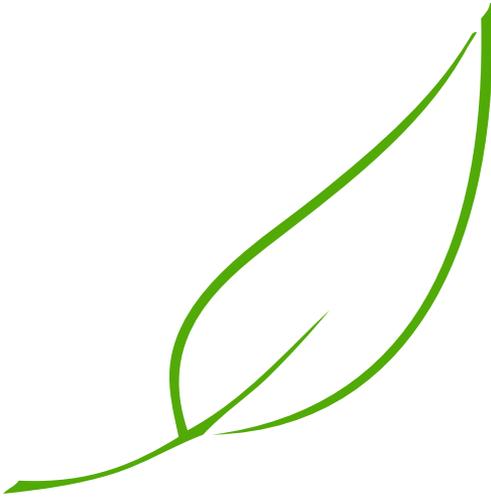


**OPENING  
TONIGHT:  
MOTHER GOOSE**

by Ken Bradbury



**GREEN ROOM PRESS**

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*(to an imaginary actor)* It's a stump! It's just a stupid stump! Now, get down on your hands and knees and be a stump! Okay, I know it says that Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet but nobody knows what a tuffet is and Jennifer is crying all over her Miss Muffet costume because she doesn't have anywhere to sit! All right, a tuffet is a footstool but we don't have any footstool costumes. All we have is a stump.

*(turning to an unseen character)* Mrs. Clinton, I can't do this. Nobody's cooperating. I don't care if the program is today and all the pre-school parents are coming, these kids just aren't into it. Nobody does Nursery Rhymes anymore! I can't get Bo Beep's sheep away from the Coke machine and the Three Blind Mice keep sending text messages to each other while we're rehearsing! Yeah, I know I'm getting class credit for this but it's impossible ...

*(turning to others)* Get down from there! Jason, Humpty Dumpty doesn't do ladders! *(to another)* Down, stump! Down! *(turning to another)* Mrs. Clinton, this is ridiculous! I can't ... Where'd she go? Coward!

*(shouting)* Everybody listen up! This is your director speaking! Your mommies and daddies are going to be here any minute and we only have one dress rehearsal! I know it's a stupid play and you're wearing stupid costumes and I'm stupid for agreeing to direct this stupid idea but get in your places right now or I'm gonna bust some stupid little heads! Uh ... I mean, with love ... and affection. Now move it!

Okay ... Scene one! Jack and Jill enter stage left! *(a pause, then)* Okay Jill, what happened to Jack? *(a pause)* That's ridiculous, he just went ten minutes ago. I saw him go to the restroom. He's nervous? I'm nervous! I've got a right to be nervous! He just has to climb the dumb hill. *(seeing Jack)* There you are, Jack. Wanna zip it up, Bubba? You've got a hill to climb. Okay ... action!

*(a pause, then)* What's the matter? You don't want to climb the hill? You're, afraid of heights? It is papier-mâché and it is

only 12 inches high! You what? You had an argument backstage and you're not speaking! Are you out of your minds? You have lines! You speak to each other. That's what actors do! Okay, look. Just talk to the sheep. Huh? Those sheep over by the Coke machine ... maybe the one who just spilled the Orange Pop all over his .... (*to the sheep*) What are you doing!? Orange sheep! Who's gonna believe orange sheep? Quick, take off that sheep outfit and I'll try to ... You're in your underwear. Sheep don't wear underwear. No! Don't take them off! You were supposed to wear your gym shorts. Look, just put it back on. We'll have an orange sheep.

Everybody listen up! We're going to skip Jack and Jill and go right to the Hickory Dickory Dock scene. Mice! Get off those cell phones and get over here! Now! Okay guys, as soon as the narrator says, "Hickory, dickory dock, the mice ran up the clock," you come running in stage left and run up the clock. The clock's not here? Then run up the stump. Hey stump! Tuffet! Whatever you call yourself! Come here! You're a clock! No, I don't care if your mommy expects you to be a tuffet, tonight you're a clock. Get down on your hands and knees and start ticking. Do it! (*moves a bit, then*) Okay ... Mice run in stage left! Go! (*watches, then walks to center*) Jimmy, you crushed the clock. You're not supposed to jump on him, just step up. (*getting down on hands and knees*) You okay, clock? (*looks around*) Anybody wanna be a clock? (*helping the kid up*) Go over there and sit awhile. How long? How should I know? You're the clock!

Okay everybody, forget that. Scene three! Jack Be Nimble! Jack! Got your candlestick? A flashlight? You couldn't find a candlestick? Afraid of fire? That's why the kid does dumb things like jumping over candlesticks! He's not afraid of anything! Oh, who cares? Get over there...stage right. Hey clock! Come over here and hold the flashlight for Jack. You're still dizzy? (*holding up two fingers*) How many fingers do you see? Four? Close enough! Grab the flashlight, Bubba. Okay Jack, come running in when I say, "Jack be nimble, Jack be quick..." (*watching him run in*) "... Jack jump over the ...flashlight." (*a beat then*) You stepped on your candlestick.

*(bending down to the kid)* Hey candlestick, you okay? You want your mommy? I do too. Look, just go sit over there again. You're having a rough day. *(to everyone)* Do we have any scenes where nobody gets climbed on or jumped over?

*(shouting off)* Mrs. Clinton, I need help! *(a pause, then)* She deserted me. She knew what this was going to be like. *(looking toward the rear of the room)* Oh, no. They're coming. They're here! Your parents are here! Quick! Everybody back stage! Somebody pick up the stump and drag him backstage. *(herding them along)* Oh great ... not even a dress rehearsal. Come on, guys. We've only got one shot at this. He's what? That's impossible. Stumps can't die. *(leaning in close to him)* You aren't dead are you? See! He's breathing! He answered me! What'd he say? I can't say that. Okay! Places everybody! Cue the piano! House lights down! Everybody at your entrance! Stage lights on! And ... and ... go!

*(a very long pause, then)* Nobody's moving. Why is nobody moving? What are you doing just standing there? Stage fright? *(holding up the fingers of one hand and leaning into a child's face)* See these little rascals? *(wiggling fingers)* Separately they're nothing, but when they come together *(draws the fingers into a fist)* they become a force to be reckoned with. *(smiles)* I thought you'd see it my way. Little Bo Peep, you're on! Cue the orange sheep! Action!

*(a long pause, then)* They did it right. The sheep actually came in on time! And Little Bo Peep is crying real tears. *(looking out into the audience)* And her mother's crying real tears. She's lost her sheep *(beginning to cry him/herself)*. This is heartbreaking! It's beautiful! Okay! Jack and Jill ... you're on! Jack, get your finger out of your nose! Climb that hill! And speak to her! Please speak to her! Hill? Where's the hill? You! Tuffet! Be the hill! Okay, so you're the clock! Just get out there!

*(a long pause as he/she listens)* The hill ... is ticking. Great. *(looking at the audience)* They love it! They're clapping. *(shouting out to the stage)* Click on, hill! Tick tock, brother! Wait! Don't jump on the .... *(a pause)* They crushed the hill again. He's just lying there. But he's still ticking! Yes! Way to



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