

Scenes from a Nursery Rhyme Puppet Play

— Estelle Bryer and Janni Nicol

An excerpt from The Rainbow Puppet Theatre Book: Fourteen Classic Puppet Plays (WECAN, 2013). In the book, Estelle writes that this play “is most suitable for a solo theatre glove puppet play but can be done as a tabletop puppet play with two or more puppeteers. It can also be narrated. Each scene is complete in itself, and can be included or left out according to the need and the time available.” Three of the four scenes are included here.

Scene One

FOREST OR LANDSCAPE BACKDROP WITH SIDE WINGS AND TREE. NARRATOR SINGS “MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB” VERSE 1 (AND 2 IF NECESSARY) AS CURTAIN IS RAISED

MARY: Lamby, Lamby, where are you? Oh, hello, children, have you seen my little lamb? THIS CAN BE AN OPPORTUNITY TO TALK TO THE CHILDREN, IF THERE IS A BIRTHDAY, FOR INSTANCE Help me call him. . . Lamby, Lamby. . . LAMB ENTERS AND HIDES BEHIND THE TREE

Has anyone seen my lamb? A GAME OF HIDE AND SEEK, WITH LAMB APPEARING AND DISAPPEARING FOR ADDED EXCITEMENT...WHEN THE CHILDREN BECOME TOO EXCITED, MARY FINDS LAMB

Oh Lamby, were you hiding from me again? You are naughty but I love you. CUDDLES LAMB Look, the children have come to see a puppet show, now we must say goodbye to them. Come little Lamb. . . Goodbye, children.

MARY EXITS BUT LAMB RUNS BACK. SHE FETCHES HIM BY THE EAR OR COLLAR AND TAKES HIM OFF WAVING. CURTAIN DOWN.

Scene Two

SAME SCENERY WITH SMALL FLOWER TUFT. CHANGE PUPPETS WHILE SINGING “HORSIE, HORSIE, DON’T YOU STOP.” CURTAIN UP

HORSE: *Neigh.* . . Hello children! I’m hungry, has anyone got some oats and hay? No? Oh look, here comes Miss Muffet, I am sure she will have something for me to eat. ENTER MISS MUFFET CARRYING BOWL. SHE SITS DOWN ON THE SMALL FLOWER TUFT

Hello, Miss Muffet, do you have any oats and hay for me to eat?

MISS MUFFET: Oh no, I only have curds and whey in my bowl. Would you like some?

HORSE: I haven’t ever eaten curds and whey. Are they like oats and hay?

MISS MUFFET: No. I don’t think so. Here, try some. HOLDS OUT BOWL

HORSE: TRIES SOME Oh, no thank you, I much prefer oats and hay. I will go back to my stable. Thank you anyway, Miss Muffet, goodbye. HORSE EXITS WITH CLIP CLOP SOUND. MISS MUFFET SITS COMFORTABLY

SING “LITTLE MISS MUFFET SAT ON A TUFFET” WHILE SHE EATS. . . MEANWHILE A SPIDER ENTERS FROM THE OTHER SIDE AND SLOWLY GETS CLOSER THROUGH THE SONG. SHE LOOKS UP AND JUMPS UP

MISS MUFFET: A spider! I don’t like spiders. . . RUNS OFF

SPIDER: EATS FROM THE BOWL Curds and whey, my favorite! PULLS BOWL OFF STAGE

SING AND DO ACTIONS FOR “THE ITSY BITSY SPIDER CLIMBED UP THE WATER SPOUT.” CURTAIN DOWN

Scene Three

SAME SCENERY WITH STILE REPLACING TREE. SING “BAA, BAA, BLACK SHEEP.” CURTAIN UP. LITTLE BOY BLUE COMES IN AND LEANS ON STILE

BOY: Little black sheep, little black sheep, where are you? BLACK SHEEP ENTERS

SHEEP: Good morning, little Boy Blue, what can I do for you today?

BOY: My granny has asked me to come and fetch some wool. She is going to knit me a nice warm sweater.

SHEEP: Oh, yes, I will go and have a look. . . SHEEP LEAVES AND COMES BACK WITH A BAG OF WOOL, LOOKS AT THE LABEL Here you are! Oh no, this says for the Master. . . Oh dear, would you be very kind and take this to him? He lives in the house just down the lane. I will look for your wool while you are gone.

BOY: Of course I will, I am not busy today. Give it to me. LEAVES CARRYING BAG

SHEEP: FETCHES ANOTHER BAG Here we are. Oh no, this one says for the dame. . . I will put it in this corner. Now let me see. fetches another BAG, THIS ONE ATTACHED TO A WIRE It doesn't have a label. turns to audience How did it go? One for the master, one for the dame—oh yes, one for the little boy who lives down the lane. . . that must be Little Boy Blue. I will put it here by the stile.

PUTS THE BAG DOWN, AND TURNS TO LEAVE. THE BAG FOLLOWS, AND STOPS WHEN HE TURNS AROUND That's strange, I am sure I put it next to the stile. PICKS UP THE BAG AND PUTS IT BACK, WALKS AWAY

There you are, now let me get back to work. THE BAG FOLLOWS AGAIN, HE TURNS This is most peculiar, is there a mouse in this bag? TRIES TO PICK UP THE BAG, BUT IT JUMPS OUT OF REACH, TRIES TO CATCH IT AGAIN AND AGAIN. . . CATCHES IT Whew! This must be magic wool, now what on earth shall I do? I can't put it down again—who knows what might happen! BOY RETURNS Oh, at last! Here is your bag of wool, Little Boy Blue. I think it's magic, though, so don't put it down, just take it straight to your granny.

BOY: Thank you, Black Sheep, what a lovely color. Goodbye. . .

SHEEP BEGINS TO LEAVE THE STAGE, MUTTERING ABOUT GETTING BACK TO WORK, WHEN THE BAG OF WOOL SUDDENLY APPEARS AGAIN. HE TURNS ROUND AND CATCHES IT. . . GAME MAY BE GONE THROUGH AGAIN. . . BOY RETURNS, PANTING

BOY: Oh no, I only put it down for a moment to open the gate! SHEEP HANDS OVER WOOL I am sorry, Black Sheep, I won't put it down again. Thank you, goodbye.

CURTAIN DOWN ◆



Scene from The Brave Little Rabbit, another play from The Rainbow Puppet Theatre Book. Photo courtesy of Estelle Bryer