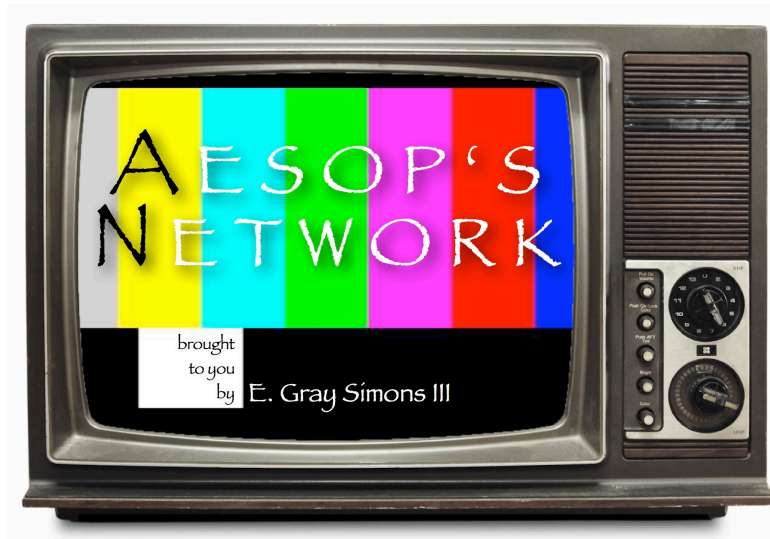


PERUSAL SCRIPT



Broadcasting Theatrical Fables

by
E. Gray Simons III
A Play
Based on Aesop's Fables



Newport, Maine

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AESOP'S NETWORK: Broadcasting Theatrical Fables

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AESOP'S NETWORK: BROADCASTING THEATRICAL FABLES

Character list

Anchor – In studio, introducing news and commercials; lead newscaster on Aesop's Network

Reporter 1 – On location in the village covering “The Boy Who Cried Wolf”

Reporter 2 – In studio, hosting the “The Forum”, which examines “The Lion and the Mouse”

Reporter 3 – Reporting from multiple locations, covering “The Ants and the Grasshopper”

Reporter 4 – On location in the garden covering the “The Tortoise and the Hare”

Villager 1 – Alarmed by reports of wolf attacks; later skeptical of Shepherd Boy's claims

Villager 2 – Alarmed by reports of wolf attacks; later skeptical of Shepherd Boy's claims

Villager 3 – Alarmed by reports of wolf attacks; later skeptical of Shepherd Boy's claims

Lion – Featured performer at the circus; annoyed by Clowns levity; Instead of eating Mouse, agrees to allow Mouse to be his body guard

Mouse – Travels with the circus as a volunteer worker; Offers to protect Lion

Grasshopper – A British pop icon; determined to throw an extravagant party and invite the whole world

Ant 1 – Member of the Association of Non-Threatening Scientists; Concerned over the ecological impact of the “world party” that Sir Grasshopper wants to host

Ant 2 – Member of the Association of Non-Threatening Scientists; Concerned over the ecological impact of the “world party” that Sir Grasshopper wants to host

Ant 3 – Member of the Association of Non-Threatening Scientists; Concerned over the ecological impact of the “world party” that Sir Grasshopper wants to host

P.T. Skeeter – Gregarious, enterprising promoter of “the race to end all races” between the Tortoise and the Hare

Tortoise – Slow, yet determined competitor; challenger in “the race to end all races”

Hare – Showy world champion of speed; defending title in the “the race to end all races”

Shepherd Boy – Animatedly asserts that a wolf is attacking sheep in the meadow; claims questioned after several false alarms

Sheep 1 – Pleasantly oblivious herbivore; compelled to follow the herd

Sheep 2 – Pleasantly oblivious herbivore; compelled to follow the herd

Clown 1 – Comic entertainer for the circus; unintentionally antagonizes Lion with unswerving jesting

Clown 2 – Comic entertainer for the circus; unintentionally antagonizes Lion with unswerving jesting

Lightning Bug – Flashy DJ; hired by Sir Grasshopper to provide music/ entertainment at the “world party”

Announcer – Energetic host of the popular television show “Aesop Idol”

Shepherd Boy's Mother – Supportive parent; suggests her son should become an actor based on his love of “drama”

Shepherd Boy's Father – Accommodating parent; defers to wife's observations

Lady Bug 1 – Insect associated with pest control; taking a break from usual work to enjoy imminent “world party”

Lady Bug 2 – Insect associated with pest control; taking a break from usual work to enjoy imminent “world party”

Attorney 1 – Litigator advertising services for wolves deprived of animal rights

Attorney 2 – Litigator advertising services for wolves deprived of animal rights

Wolf 1 – Shares testimonial on Wolf and Wolf Attorneys at Law commercial

Wolf 2 – Shares testimonial on Wolf and Wolf Attorneys at Law commercial

MULTIPLE CASTING SUGGESTIONS:

ACTOR 1 -- Anchor, Villager2, Ant1, Hare, Sheep1, Mother, Clown1, Wolf1

ACTOR 2 -- Reporter3, Villager3, Lion, Tortoise, Shepherd Boy, Attorney1

ACTRESS 3 -- Reporter1&4, Mouse, Grasshopper, Clown2, Wolf2

ACTRESS 4 -- Reporter2, Villager1, Ant2, PT Skeeter, Sheep2, Lightning Bug, Announcer, Lady Bug1, Attorney2

AESOP'S NETWORK: BROADCASTING THEATRICAL FABLES

(The set resembles a cross between a news room and a circus tent. There are three arched entryways right, left and center with curtains. There are two small raised platforms up stage right and left. ESOP "news theme" music is heard. Anchor and four reporters enter.)

REPORTER 1: Live!

REPORTER 2: From ... *Performance space!*

REPORTER 3: At... *Venue or building!*

REPORTER 4: In... *City, State!*

REPORTERS: E-S-O-P!

ANCHOR: Aesop's Network!

REPORTERS: Broadcasting Theatrical Fables!

ANCHOR: Our talented team of reporters will bring you the most up-to-date coverage of stories that you need to hear.

REPORTER 1: Late breaking news... "The Boy Who Cried Wolf."

ANCHOR: Our ongoing discussion series "The Forum" will examine both sides of the story.

REPORTER 2: Today's topic... "The Lion and the Mouse".

ANCHOR: A special report will focus on the growing environmental conflict between the worlds of entertainment and science.

REPORTER 3: The survival of the earth hangs in the balance with... "The Ants and the Grasshopper"

ANCHOR: And from the world of sports, we'll chase thrilling victory and track agonizing defeat.

REPORTER 4: From hype to highlights... "The Tortoise and the Hare".

REPORTER 1: Stay tuned!

REPORTER 2: To see stories that matter!

REPORTER 3: Right here!

REPORTER 4: Right now!

ANCHOR: It's on...

REPORTERS: E-S-O-P!

(Reporters exit and Anchor moves to studio location.)

ANCHOR: Our top story today is a late breaking report on "The Boy who Cried Wolf". Terror has gripped the occupants of a small village with the sighting of a wolf in a meadow just outside of town. We now take you live to the chaotic scene.

(Anchor exits. As air-raid and police sirens are heard, the set shifts to the village. Reporter 1 enters.)

REPORTER 1: I'm here on the outskirts of a village that, before today, was a quiet, happy place.

(3 Villagers enter talking amongst themselves, concernedly.)

But all that changed when village residents heard the hysterical shouts of a Shepherd Boy. His cry... "Wolf".

(To Villagers)

Excuse me.

(Villagers scream)

Did any of you hear the Shepherd Boy cry out?

VILLAGER 1: Yes, I heard him!

VILLAGER 2: Me too!

VILLAGER 3: It was terrifying!

REPORTER 1: And where were you when you heard his desperate call?

VILLAGER 1: Most everyone in the village was headed to the circus.

VILLAGER 2: Then we heard the shouting.

VILLAGER 3: And everyone ran to the meadow.

REPORTER 1: And what kind of shocking scene did you find when you arrived in the meadow?

VILLAGER 1: Well, the boy was there...

VILLAGER 2: And the sheep were grazing...

VILLAGER 3: And the Wolf had gone...

REPORTER 1: So none of you actually saw a wolf?

VILLAGER 1: I didn't see any wolf.

VILLAGER 2: Neither did I.

VILLAGER 3: Wait, I did see one!

(They all look at Villager 3)

At the zoo.

REPORTER 1: How can you be sure the Boy did in fact see a wolf?

VILLAGER 1: If he didn't see a wolf, then why would he cry out?

VILLAGER 2: And frighten everyone?

VILLAGER 3: He must have seen some kind of wolf-like creature.

VILLAGER 1: Like a fox.

VILLAGER 2: Or a coyote.

VILLAGER 3: Or a werewolf!

(Villagers all gasp and start to mutter amongst themselves concernedly and exit.)

REPORTER 1: Obviously, the tension here in the village has not diminished and the villagers are still on high alert. E-S-O-P will bring you updates as this chilling story continues to unfold. Now, back to the studio.

(Reporter 1 exits as Anchor enters.)

ANCHOR: Did the Boy see a wolf attacking the sheep in the meadow? Or perhaps some kind of horrific, bloodthirsty wolf-man-creature? We don't know, but stay tuned for answers to these disturbing questions. In the meantime, let's take it over to E-S-O-P's ongoing topical discussion series "The Forum".

(Forum theme music. Anchor exits as Reporter 2 enters.)

REPORTER 2: Welcome to "The Forum". By now I'm sure you've all heard that the circus is in town.

Well, today we have a bit of the circus right here on "The Forum" and our dialogue will focus on

“animal behavior”. Although our two guests travel with the circus, they originally come from the vastly different worlds of predator and prey. On one side we have the Lion – a dominant predator animal.

(Lion enters)

LION: Hello, I’m the star of the “Big Cats Menagerie”. I’m the main attraction at the circus and my performance is undoubtedly the most thrilling part of the evening for the audience members.

REPORTER 2: And on the other hand we have the Mouse – a vulnerable prey animal.

(Mouse enters)

MOUSE: Hi. I’m not officially an employee of the circus, but I do help clean up a lot of the scraps that people leave behind after the show. If it wasn’t for me, the place would be a mess.

REPORTER 2: We are all too familiar with the brutal reality of an encounter between predator and prey, but the Lion and the Mouse have crossed paths in a very different way.

(Lion and Mouse exit)

When we return we will hear each of them recount the story that brought them together and perhaps provide an answer to the puzzling question... Can predator and prey animals actually be friends? But first, we turn to an environmental story that has real entertainment value.

(Anchor enters as Reporter 2 exits)

ANCHOR: It’s not often that the worlds of pop-culture and science collide, but in a story that we’ve been following since last season, it seems that a British celebrity and several renowned ecologists have had very different opinions about the global environment and there’s a war of words being waged that include some serious warnings and potentially dire consequences. In an interview earlier today, pop sensation, Sir Grass Hopper responded to rumors about the recent feud.

(As Anchor exits, Grasshopper enters carrying a colorful drink which has a mini umbrella sticking out of the glass. Reporter 3 enters as Sir Grass waves to the audience and sits on one of the platforms, lounging as if he is on vacation.)

REPORTER 3: I am here in the palatial home of Sir Grass Hopper to get his reply to the latest allegations regarding his negligence toward the health and well being of planet earth. He has planned to throw a worldwide party and the ecological organization known as ANTS, or the Association of Non-Threatening Scientists, feel the energy usage for such an event would not only drain the world of it’s natural resources, but also will create an unmanageable amount of waste. Sir Grass Hopper, do you feel about the ANTS concerns?

GRASSHOPPER: *(With a cockney/British dialect)* I can’t believe this has gotten blown so far out of proportion. All I want is to throw a party and these ANTS act like I’m trying to exterminate the surviving members of the Beatles. Look, my comments were taken completely out of context. My mates asked me, “Grass, you doing anything special for the holidays?” and I says, “Yeah, I’m gonna party like it’s the end of the world and everyone’s invited.” I mean, honestly, I just wanted to host a little hootenanny. I’m not trying to bring the bloody world to an end! An old fashioned party would raise the spirits of people around the world and bring the world together. In my humble estimation, that’s what we need more than anything else.

(Grasshopper exits.)

REPORTER 3: The impassioned comments of Sir Grass Hopper were in direct reply to a statement from the ANTS made earlier today.

(ANTS enter.)

ANT 1: Sir Grass Hopper is acting on a whim, without really considering the long-term global implications.

ANT 2: Throwing a “world party” would cause damage to the delicate balance of the earth’s eco-systems and waste vital resources.

ANT 3: He is not only setting a bad example, but also purposefully leading people astray.

ANT 1: We are a non-threatening organization, but we feel that we must warn the general public that following this carefree course now, may lead to hardship in the future.

(ANTS exit.)

REPORTER 3: The ANTS have not only raised objections to Sir Grass Hopper’s intentions, but they also have indicated that they will protest the event and even take measures to stop it if necessary. However, Sir Grass Hopper has said he will not back down and intends to proceed with the monumental celebration. He even went so far as to declare... “I don’t care if they bring an army of ANTS. It’s party time and the people of planet earth are going to get freaky.” A hostile confrontation seems imminent and E-S-O-P will be here, reporting from both sides of the battlefield. Now back to the studio.

(Reporter 3 exits as Anchor enters)

ANCHOR: Sir Grass Hopper will be extending his invitation to the world later today and E-S-O-P will be there to give you live coverage. But now we take you out to the Garden for the kind of confrontation that everyone wants to see. It’s the sporting event of the century – the race to end all races!

(Anchor exits as a garden gate is set to represent the entrance to the arena. Reporter 4 enters along with promoter, P. T. Skeeter. P.T. sets up the scale that will be used for the weigh-in)

REPORTER 4: Hello! We are here live in The Garden for the build up to “The” Race. You’ve no doubt seen fun runs, spirited sprints and dime-a-dozen dashes, but you’ve never seen compelling competition of this nature. It will be unswerving determination versus raw speed when the Tortoise and the Hare face off and we’re here to follow the fight to the finish line. The actual start time is not until later today, but we are about to get our first look at the two worthy opponents, as they will soon be here for the weigh-in. Here to introduce the two warriors, standing alongside me, is world famous promoter, P.T. Skeeter.

P.T. SKEETER: *(Dialect is reflective of the deep south)* Hello, friends and neighbors. I’m glad to see so many people out here to watch this little old competitive shindig I’ve whipped up. I know I’m excited. I simply thrive on the masses.

REPORTER 4: Thank you, P.T.... I can tell you that everyone in the Garden is waiting with anticipation merely to catch a glimpse of these two competitors ...

(Music starts.)

And wait... just a moment... it sounds as if the Hare is making his way through the Garden gate!

(Hare enters.)

Yes, ladies and gentleman, it’s the Hare!

(The Hare enters. He hops about and showboats for the audience and the characters onstage with a brief dance, a few poses, etc... then he steps on the scale to weigh-in)

P.T. SKEETER: Weighing-in at a fuzzy fifteen pounds! Quick as a flare... First he’s here, now he’s there... The Hare!

REPORTER 4: Hare, can you share a few words with us about the upcoming race?

HARE: My impending victory is undeniable! My greatness is verifiable! If that crazy Tortoise thinks she can run with me, she's certifiable!

REPORTER 4: Well, there you have a few very confident, cleverly rhymed words from the reigning world champion of speed, the Hare. I don't believe I've seen a more self-assured athlete.

P.T. SKEETER: Well, he is the champ, so I guess he can holler all he wants 'til somebody tougher comes along.

(More music is heard.)

REPORTER 4: Well, speaking of someone else coming along, it sounds like our challenger, better late than never, is entering the garden. Yes, ladies and gentleman, it's the Tortoise!

(The Tortoise enters very slowly. She waves and smiles pleasantly at the audience then steps on the scale and weighs-in.)

P.T. SKEETER: Weighing-in at a reptilian fifteen pounds! She's shell shocking, she's road blocking, she's slow walking... The Tortoise!

REPORTER 4: Tortoise, can you share a few words with us about the upcoming race?

TORTOISE: I know I'm not too speedy, but I've got a lot of endurance and I plan on winning with steady pace.

(The Tortoise and Hare stand on either side of Reporter 4 and face each other.)

REPORTER 4: And there you have the slow, sure words of the Tortoise. A bit later we will speak with promoter, P.T. Skeeter, to find out what ignited this heated match-up of opposites. Now back to the studio.

(Reporter 4, Hare, Tortoise and Promoter exit as Anchor enters.)

ANCHOR: Coming up next, we will have an exclusive interview with the Shepherd Boy, where we will get a detailed account of his harrowing tale. But first, a commercial message...

(Anchor exits as an "Air Hare" sign is set.)

"AIR HARE" COMMERCIAL

(Music starts and the Hare enters holding a resistance exercise band. He exercises his legs, briefly.)

HARE: *(Stops exercising)* When I was a kid I was the slowest animal in school. On the playground I always got made fun of by my classmates for having big feet, and I was determined to show them that they couldn't disrespect me like that. I knew I had something special on the inside and I was sure that one day the world would see.

(Starts exercising)

I trained day and night and I worked hard to become the fastest Hare in the world. Today, I run circles around those who didn't believe.

(Stops exercising)

And just to make sure they never forget that fact, I've designed a new running shoe just to remind them... I don't need a lucky rabbit's foot. I'm fast.

(P.T. Skeeter enters holding a pair of flashy running shoes.)

And you can be, too. Ain't that right, P.T.?

P.T. SKEETER: For only one-hundred and ninety-nine, ninety nine!

HARE: Try a pair of my new shoes... "Air Hare".

(The Hare and P.T. Exit as the Anchor enters.)

ANCHOR: At the top of today's broadcast we reported an apparent wolf attack in a nearby village and we now return to the scene for a follow up interview with the Boy who raised the alarm.

(Anchor exits as set shifts to the village and Reporter 1 enters.)

REPORTER 1: We are back in the village where we had hoped to hear from the Boy who cried wolf.

However, moments before our intended interview, the relative calm was shattered by another sighting. Only this time, our camera crew was here to capture the chaos.

(The Villagers and the Shepherd Boy enter. They freeze in active positions on stage)

The alarming video footage you are about to see was recorded just a short time ago.

SHEPHERD BOY: Wolf! Help! There's a wolf in the meadow! It's attacking the sheep! Please! Someone! Anyone! Help! Wolf!

(The villagers all scream and then scramble about for a moment.)

Hey! You need to go to the meadow! You have to save the sheep!

VILLAGER 1: He's right! Come on, everyone!

VILLAGER 2: What if it's a werewolf?

VILLAGER 3: Don't worry! I have a cross, some garlic and a bottle of holy water.

(Villager 3 pulls out the items and hands them to other villagers.)

VILLAGER 1: Aren't these for vampires?

VILLAGER 2: You don't think it's a vampire, do you?

VILLAGER 3: You can never be too careful.

(The villagers all shout in agreement and exit. Shepherd Boy follows.)

REPORTER 1: Minutes after that harrowing second sighting, we followed the villagers to the meadow, but found no wolf, werewolf, or vampire and the sheep were grazing undisturbed. The villagers were relieved, but have shown some skepticism toward the Shepherd Boy's claims. However, he maintains that he did see a wolf and that no one is safe. Since we are here in the meadow we have invited two sheep to give their account of today's distressing events.

(Two Sheep, who look like hippies enter. They are wearing rose colored glasses and wearing wool vests. They smile placidly throughout the following.)

Thank you for joining us.

SHEEP 1: We're always happy to join the crowd.

SHEEP 2: Don't mind getting together.

REPORTER 1: I'm sure it won't be easy for you to relive the horror that you've experienced, but could you tell us what you were doing at the time of the alleged attack?

SHEEP 1: I was grazing in the meadow.

SHEEP 2: Me too, I was grazing.

REPORTER 1: And when the Shepherd Boy cried out, what did you do?

SHEEP 1: I stopped grazing and started to follow the other sheep.

SHEEP 2: Yeah, I stopped grazing and started following.

REPORTER 1: And were either of you chased by a wolf?

SHEEP 1: I'm not sure... I was kind of in the middle of the herd.

SHEEP 2: So was I, right in the middle.

REPORTER 1: Since neither of you actually saw a wolf, does anything lead you to believe that you are out of danger?

SHEEP 1: Well, we are easily led.

SHEEP 2: Yep, you lead, we'll believe.

REPORTER 1: I see.

(Turns to the audience as the Sheep exit.)

Well, there you have detailed accounts from two eyewitnesses and yet we are no closer to solving the mystery here in the meadow. The sheep can now go back to grazing, contentedly, but for how long? Will we hear another cry? Until that time we take you back to the studio.

(Reporter 1 exits as Anchor enters)

ANCHOR: We will continue to closely monitor the situation in the village, but for now we take you back to "The Forum" to continue our discussion with the Lion and the Mouse.

(Anchor exits as Reporter 2 and Lion enter. Each carries a small stool or stage cube. They place them and sit.)

REPORTER 2: Welcome back to "The Forum". In our introduction we met our two guests and posed the question... Can predator and prey just get along? One would think not - that it's against nature, but perhaps the story of the Lion and Mouse will present to us a wholly different perspective. Let's first hear from the Lion.

(To Lion.)

Now, you have told us that you are the star attraction at the circus.

LION: That is correct. If it weren't for me, I don't think people would attend the circus. But surprisingly some of the people I work with don't understand this and often interrupt my performance.

REPORTER 2: And which of your co-workers are responsible for the disruptions?

LION: The clowns. They seem to think that it's their right to make every moment a laughing matter and they will often steal my spotlight to do so, as it is the brightest. Ironically, my story unfolds upon one of those unfortunate occasions.

REPORTER 2: And could you recall that episode for us.

LION: Of course.

REPORTER 2: We will now flashback to the circus with a dramatic re-enactment of Lion's story.

(Reporter 2 exits, as calliope music is heard and the scene shifts to the circus. The Lion moves center and assumes a dramatic performance posture.)

LION: It was an especially busy night at the circus. I don't remember having a more attentive and enthusiastic audience. It was like the old days before television. I was halfway through my routine. It was going remarkably well. I had rarely felt so connected and the people watching hung on my every roar. I was just about to jump through a large flaming hoop, which signified the finale of the show, when suddenly a couple of those ridiculous clowns sped by in one of their little cars and threw a bucket of water onto the hoop. Not only was the fire extinguished, but the lion tamer stumbled, dropped the hoop

and I went sprawling to the ground and landed in a pile of elephant... Needless to say, I was upset and I summoned the clowns to my dressing room so I could call attention to their disruptive behavior.

(Bombastic clown music is heard. Two clowns enter. Clown 1 carries a mop and Clown 2 carries a pail filled with confetti, steamers or some other "water" material. In their dealings with the Lion, the Clowns never really break from their "schtick", constantly steering proceedings back to a comic routine.)

I suppose you both know why I have invited you here?

CLOWN 1: Yeah, to thank us for bailing you out of a dangerous situation.

CLOWN 2: You could have been seriously burned by that fire if we hadn't doused it.

(Holds up bucket)

LION: I wasn't in any danger!

CLOWN 1: You're weren't?

CLOWN 2: Looked pretty risky to me.

LION: That's the point. It looks like a death defying act, so the audience will be thrilled.

CLOWN 1: Well, at least you got a good laugh out of it... the audience was really howling.

CLOWN 2: Yeah, when you fell into that pile of elephant –

LION: They're not supposed to laugh! They are supposed to be awestruck and you fools interrupted my performance!

CLOWN 1: *(Turning to Clown 2)* This is all your fault.

CLOWN 2: It was your idea.

CLOWN 1: You threw the water.

CLOWN 2: You said the Lion needed help.

CLOWN 1: You don't deserve to carry that bucket.

CLOWN 2: But I'm the "bucket clown". It's my job.

CLOWN 1: Give me that bucket.

CLOWN 2: No!

(More bombastic music. They begin to chase each other around the stage. The Lion unwittingly is drawn into the action, trying to stop them. Eventually, Clown 2 decides to throw the "water" at Clown 1 and instead the Lion receives a face full of confetti, etc...)

CLOWN 1: *(Observes Lion for a moment)* Look at his face.

CLOWN 2: That was funny.

CLOWN 1: Lion, you're a natural! You should join our act.

CLOWN 2: Yeah, we've got this great gag where we rescue a damsel in distress.

CLOWN 1: Just before she's run over by a car full of clowns.

CLOWN 2: And since you already like danger, it's a perfect part for you.

CLOWN 1: You'll just have to put on a wig and a dress.

CLOWN 2: Is that okay?

LION: Get out, you stupid Clowns! Get out! Get out!

(The clowns quickly exit and the Lion assumes a meditative yoga position at center and tries to control his breath.)

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- AESOP'S NETWORK: Broadcasting Theatrical Fables by E. Gray Simons III

I am in my happy place... a cool jungle breeze blows through my mane... I'm enjoying a delicious zebra steak... very rare.

(The Mouse enters with a broom and dust pan starts sweeping up the confetti, etc... The Lion notices the Mouse and leaps up from his pose, furious.)

What are you doing in here?

MOUSE: A couple of clowns said you needed your dressing room swept. They said it would cheer you up.

LION: Well, I don't need cheering up.

MOUSE: No, you seem really happy.

LION: Do you know what would make me happy?

MOUSE: What?

LION: Having you for dinner.

MOUSE: Thanks for the invite, but I already have plans.

LION: I mean... I'm going to eat you.

MOUSE: Oh, please, don't do that.

LION: Why? You're small and helpless and you'd probably taste good with a dash of hot sauce. Give me one good reason why I shouldn't.

MOUSE: Let me think...

(The Lion and the Mouse freeze just before Lion attacks the Mouse. Reporter 2 enters.)

REPORTER 2: Here we have a recognizable situation between predator and prey and we can all assume the probable outcome. However, it is at this very critical, instinctual moment where the fortunes of these two animals change.

(Lion and Mouse exit.)

When we return we will continue this fascinating story. Right now, E-S-O-P turns back to its live coverage of the ANTS and the Grasshopper.

(Reporter 2 exits as Anchor enters.)

ANCHOR: As promised earlier, we now take you live to the Grasshopper's worldwide invitation to his global gathering.

(Anchor exits as Reporter 3 enters.)

REPORTER 3: Here we are once again at the palatial estate of Sir Grass Hopper.

(The ANTS enter, carrying protest signs that read "Stop the World Party" and "Keep Off the Grass".)

ANTS: Stop the World Party! Keep of the Grass! Stop the World Party! Keep of the Grass!

REPORTER 3: The scene is quite charged, as the ANTS are here in protest of Sir Grass Hopper's plans. The official announcement should be coming at any moment.

(Rock music. Grass Hopper enters. He bops around to the music, waving to the crowd. He playfully snatches one of the Ants protest signs and pretends to use it as a guitar and then hands it back.)

And here he is! The pop-icon who is now being hailed by most as the "Bling-king of planet party central"!

GRASSHOPPER: Hello, people of the world! Despite the rumpus from a few naysayers, I would now like to officially invite you to my worldwide soirée. They'll be nibbles and bebies for all provided by yours truly.

(ANTS chant slogans again.)

REPORTER 3: Sir, Grass Hopper, how do you plan to pay for food and drinks for the entire world population?

GRASSHOPPER: As you know, I am an insect of considerable resources and I will spare no expense in sharing what I've got to make sure the people of the world have a good time. In fact, I've called upon good bloke of mine, DJ Lightning Bug, to provide a bit of entertainment.

(Calling offstage.)

Come on in, Bug.

(Lightning Bug enters.)

He's going to spin a mix of nasty-fresh tracks until the break a dawn and on. Isn't that right, Bug?

LIGHTNING BUG: The peoples needs to move and I provides the groove.

GRASSHOPPER: Nobody gets busy like the Bug.

REPORTER 3: Mr. Lightning Bug, what kind of display do you have planned?

LIGHTNING BUG: I can gives you a taste if you can stands the haste.

GRASSHOPPER: Light it up, Bug.

LIGHTNING BUG: Checks out my techs-niques, whiles I freaks the geeks.

(Music. The Grasshopper, the Lightning Bug, the Reporter and even the ANTS who can't seem to resist, dance with abandon. Music stops.)

GRASSHOPPER: And that's just a tickle, right Bug?

LIGHTNING BUG: Comes party time and I makes the scene, we gonna rocks the Queen, eight ways to Greenwich Mean.

GRASSHOPPER: Now that's what I'm talking about. Ladies and gentlemen of the world, we will see you at the party.

ANT 2: Sir Grass Hopper, don't you realize that an electrical exhibition of this magnitude will be a tremendous drain on the already diminished supply of the world's energy? Not to mention creating an excessive amount of noise pollution.

GRASSHOPPER: If that's noise pollution, my lovelies, I don't want to be clean.

(Sir Grass and Bug laugh together and do an elaborate handshake.)

ANT 3: You might not care about polluting the world, but we do! And we are going to do everything in our power to put a stop to this senseless exploitation of the environment.

GRASSHOPPER: You just try and stop the people of the world from having a good time and we'll see who's on your side.

(Grasshopper and Lightning Bug exit.)

ANT 3: We are on the side of all living things and we will spread the message of awareness even if it means being unpopular.

ANT 2: Sir Hopper, may feel he has the right to simply enjoy himself in the moment, but we will continue to consider the future of our planet.

ANT 3: Hopefully the people world will come to their senses, even if Sir Grass Hopper does not.

(The ANTS exit.)

REPORTER 3: There you have a few very big statements from a few very small insects. With Sir Grass Hopper's official invitation extended to the world, we must now wait and see what humanity decides to do... Now back to the studio.

(Anchor enters as Reporter 3 exits.)

ANCHOR: To party or not to party... that is the question. And there are no easy answers when so much is at stake. We will be checking back to see which side the people of the world choose as Sir Grass Hopper continues to publicize his lavish event. In the meantime, we turn our attention back to the poetry and pageantry of pure competition between the Tortoise and the Hare!

(Reporter 4 enters.)

REPORTER 4: Hello and welcome back to the Garden for more pre-race excitement. In just a few moments we will be talking with the promoter of the race to get a sense of how the match was made between two runners with such contrasting styles. But first let's take a brief journey back in time with the Tortoise and travel the long, slow, winding road that led her to become the steady, untiring reptile she is today.

(Poignant music begins as the Tortoise enters and does a series of slow, deliberate warm up exercises that continue through her monologue.)

Her Grandfather came from the Galapagos Islands, so the Tortoise knows what it means to be an outsider – different from everyone else.

TORTOISE: When I was a young tortoise, it was hard to make friends. I wasn't really like the other reptiles. It was a long time before I really came out of my shell. But, now that I'm out and I've faced my fears, I know it's where I want to be – sticking my neck out for all the tortoises... slowly, surely and proudly. The time may come when I see the ultimate finish line and my steps falter, but I'll never give up... I will endure.

REPORTER 4: When I asked her how she could be so confident; how she managed to remain cool under such pressure, she had a simple reply...

TORTOISE: I'm ectothermic... I have cold blood.

(The Tortoise exits.)

REPORTER 4: Yes, and it's a very large heart that pumps that blood. I know as a news broadcaster I am not supposed to take sides, but you have to have a pretty thick shell to keep from being touched by the story of the Tortoise. Of course, we are now going to speak with someone who is interested in everyone taking a side,

(P.T. Skeeter enters.)

the promoter of the race, P. T. Skeeter.

P.T. SKEETER: Hello, friends and neighbors.

REPORTER 4: P.T., you have billed this contest to be "the race to end all races". Yet the competitors seem oddly matched.

P.T. SKEETER: Well, sir. I believe that's part of what makes this race so compelling. On one hand you got this here speed burnin' bunny and on the other you got a turtle that's hard as nails and just won't quit.

REPORTER 4: But doesn't the Hare have a clear advantage in a foot race?

P.T. SKEETER: Normally, yes. So we had to make the race kind of an in-between distance – a little longer than the Hare wanted to run, but not so long that the Tortoise would plain outlast him. That's how we evened the odds... and hoo-wee! There's a whole lotta folks makin' wagers on both sides.

REPORTER 4: Now that you mention wagers, I suppose you are making a tidy profit out of all of this.

P.T. SKEETER: Well, I will collect a shiny new penny or two, but for me it's mostly about the theatre of competition. And if that has to come with endless marketing opportunities, exorbitant concession receipts and rabid gambling... then who am I to argue?

REPORTER 4: There you have it folks, P. T. Skeeter, speaking for all true sports fans. Well, it won't be long before we can enjoy the actual event, as the start of the race draws near, but for now we send you back to the E-S-O-P studio.

(Reporter 4 and P.T. Skeeter exit as Anchor enters.)

ANCHOR: We will, indeed, head back to the Garden just before the start of the race. And after the break we will head directly to the village where our reporter on the scene will interview the mother and father of the Shepherd Boy. But first, a commercial message...

(Anchor exits as an Aesop Idol sign is set.)

10 more pages to end of play

ADDENDA:

(some material courtesy of Idaho Shakespeare Theatre -- Idaho Theatre for Youth, 2010 tour)

THE STORIES THEMSELVES:

“The Tortoise and the Hare”

“There once was a speedy hare who bragged about how fast he could run. Tired of hearing him boast, Slow and Steady, the tortoise, challenged and cried out, "How do you expect to win this race when you are walking along at your slow, slow pace?" Hare stretched himself out alongside the road and fell asleep, thinking, "There is plenty of time to relax." Slow and Steady walked and walked. He never, ever stopped until he came to the finish line. The animals who were watching cheered so loudly for Tortoise, they woke up Hare. Hare stretched and yawned and began to run again, but it was too late. Tortoise was over the line. After that, Hare always reminded himself, "Don't brag about your lightning pace, for Slow and Steady won the race!”

“The Boy Who Cried Wolf”

There once was a shepherd boy who was bored as he sat on the hillside watching the village sheep. To amuse himself he took a great breath and sang out, "Wolf! Wolf! The Wolf is chasing the sheep!" The villagers came running up the hill to help the boy drive the wolf away. But when they arrived at the top of the hill, they found no wolf. The boy laughed at the sight of their angry faces. "Don't cry 'wolf', shepherd boy," said the villagers, "when there's no wolf!" They went grumbling back down the hill. Later, the boy sang out again, "Wolf! Wolf! The wolf is chasing the sheep!" To his naughty delight, he watched the villagers run up the hill to help him drive the wolf away. When the villagers saw no wolf they sternly said, "Save your frightened song for when there is really something wrong! Don't cry 'wolf' when there is NO wolf!" But the boy just grinned and watched them go grumbling down the hill once more. Later, he saw a REAL wolf prowling about his flock. Alarmed, he leaped to his feet and sang out as loudly as he could, "Wolf! Wolf!" But the villagers thought he was trying to fool them again, and so they didn't come. At sunset, everyone wondered why the shepherd boy hadn't returned to the village with their sheep. They went up the hill to find the boy. They found him weeping. "There really was a wolf here! The flock has scattered! I cried out, "Wolf!" Why didn't you come?" An old man tried to comfort the boy as they walked back to the village. "We'll help you look for the lost sheep in the morning," he said, putting his arm around the youth, "Nobody believes a liar...even when he is telling the truth!"

“The Ant and the Grasshopper”

In a field one summer's day a Grasshopper was hopping about, chirping and singing to its heart's content. An Ant walked by, grunting as he carried a plump kernel of corn. "Where are you off to with that heavy thing?" asked the Grasshopper. Without stopping, the Ant replied, "To our ant hill. This is the third kernel I've delivered today." "Why not come and sing with me," said the Grasshopper, "instead of working so hard?" "I am helping to store food for the winter," said the Ant, "and think you should do the same." "Why bother about winter?" said the Grasshopper; "we have plenty of food right now." But the Ant went on its way and continued its work. The weather

soon turned cold. All the food lying in the field was covered with a thick white blanket of snow that even the grasshopper could not dig through. Soon the Grasshopper found itself dying of hunger. He staggered to the ants' hill and saw them handing out corn from the stores they had collected in the summer. Then the Grasshopper knew: It is best to prepare for the days of necessity.

“The Lion and the Mouse”

A small mouse crept up to a sleeping lion. The mouse admired the lion's ears, his long whiskers and his great mane. "Since he's sleeping," thought the mouse, "he'll never suspect I'm here!" With that, the little mouse climbed up onto the lion's tail, ran across its back, slid down its leg and jumped off of its paw. The lion awoke and quickly caught the mouse between its claws. "Please," said the mouse, "let me go and I'll come back and help you someday." The lion laughed, "You are so small! How could ever help me?" The lion laughed so hard he had to hold his belly! The mouse jumped to freedom and ran until she was far, far away. The next day, two hunters came to the jungle. They went to the lion's lair. They set a huge rope snare. When the lion came home that night, he stepped into the trap. He roared! He wept! But he couldn't pull himself free. The mouse heard the lion's pitiful roar and came back to help him. The mouse eyed the trap and noticed the one thick rope that held it together. She began nibbling and nibbling until the rope broke. The lion was able to shake off the other ropes that held him tight. He stood up free again! The lion turned to the mouse and said, "Dear friend, I was foolish to ridicule you for being small. You helped me by saving my life after all!"

VOCABULARY WORDS

Hootenanny—noun. A social gathering or informal concert featuring folk singing and sometimes dancing.

Chaotic—adj. Completely confused or disordered.

Ballyhoo—noun. A clamor or outcry.

Awestruck—adj. Filled with awe.

Ecologist—noun. Someone who deals with the interactions between organisms and their environment.

Gloat—verb. To look at or think about with great or excessive satisfaction.

Feud—noun. A bitter quarrel or contention.

Wager—noun. Something risked or staked on an uncertain event.

Menagerie—noun. A collection of wild or unusual animals.

ABOUT AESOP!

Aesop was famous for his Fables, and supposedly lived from about 620 to to 560 B.C. Aesop's fables are still taught as moral lessons and used as subjects for various entertainments, especially children's plays and cartoons. Aesop's place of birth is uncertain—Thrace, Phrygia, Aethiopia, Samos, Athens and Sardis all claim the honor! Very little is known about Aesop's life, and some people even believe he never actually existed. But scholars who do believe he was real are quite certain that he spent a large part of his life on the island of Samos and was actually a slave. It is

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generally agreed that Aesop's fables were not all created by him; his fame became so great that many other fables were eventually put to his name. Whether or not Aesop was a real person, we will never know. But someone out there helped to contribute to over 200 listed fables known today!