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**Itsy**

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# Itsy

by Dirk Joseph

for a String Theory Theater crankie performance

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[Note: The person referred to as the CRANKER operates the crankie and has been Azaria. In our last several performances of *Itsy* she operates a hand puppet called GREENLY, who talks to the audience and initiates the Itsy Bitsy Spider song. Dirk does dialogue for SPIDER. Audio track plays during the SPIDER's journey through the city with voices pre-recorded by Dirk. Shadow puppets are performed by Dirk and Koi.]



Fig. 1. Cranker and Greenly. Photo courtesy of Dirk Joseph.

CRANKER: Hi everyone and welcome to our show. Before we start I would like to ask anyone with severe arachnophobia to please move to the front row, because for you, this is going to be particularly therapeutic.

So, I would like you to sing a song with me. It is a popular enough song and I'm gonna guess that most of you know it. It's called The Itsy Bitsy Spider. It's a song about determination and not giving up. Ready? Let's go!

The Itsy Bitsy Spider climbed up the water spout...

*Finish song while shadow puppets enact the story, using SPIDER, SUN, and RAIN props.*

One more time! Sing it with me... The Itsy Bitsy Spider climbed...

*Finish song while shadow puppets enact the story.*

One more time! The Itsy Bitsy Spider climbed...



Fig. 2. Itsy approaches the spout. Photo courtesy of Dirk Joseph.

*SPIDER interrupts song.*

SPIDER: Wait, wait. Hold on a second. Just... stop for a moment. What am I doing here? Climbing up the spout over and over again, getting washed out over and over again. Is this it? Is this what life is all about? Am I just supposed to chase a dream that never... Wait, are you enjoying this? Do you get pleasure out of seeing the little person's pointless struggle? What kind of sadistic... hrump!... Wow, I've got no friends here. Not the rain. Not gravity. Not even the sun that dries up the rain. If it was merciful it would let me drown in a puddle. Where am I trying to get to anyway? Do you know what's at the top of a water spout.? A rain gutter. So even if I defy everyone's vision of my destiny, break the cycle of futility, and I manage to ascend the slippery slope of life that is this water spout, my reward for beating the odds is to arrive at a gutter! And whose house is this anyway?... But you know what really gets me? It's that you sing it with such enthusiasm... Ha ha ha... You... People, don't you see what you are doing to yourself... by making this recursive dead-end loop of a song into a mantra? Let me guess, it's a sparkling example of dedication. Who sold you this? You better get out while you can. I'll tell you one thing, I'm done here.

*Cue audio track. SPIDER crawls off screen. CRANKER looks confused, then slowly cranks some more to see SPIDER still crawling away. CRANKER keeps cranking, looking interested in seeing where the SPIDER is going. The feet of two men come into view.*

MAN 1: Hey, What's up man?

MAN 2: Hey buddy, long time no see.

MAN 1: What? We saw each other last week. Speaking of which, uh, you got that \$20?

MAN 2: What \$20?

MAN 1: The \$20 you borrow from me last week.

MAN 2: Nah man, I didn't borrow \$20, I said, can I have \$20. But look man, I got somewhere else I have to be right now (*walks off*).

MAN 1: Oh heck no man. Where are you going? You better come back here and settle up.



Fig. 3. Man 1 and Man 2 with Itsy. Photo courtesy of Dirk Joseph.

*MEN's voices fade as they walk off stage. SPIDER continues walking. Crank until garbage can is centered in frame, then stop. SALESMAN and WOMAN enter frame.*

SALESMAN: Hi there Ma'am, could I interest you in a new product? How would you like to have the purest and freshest water you can find, guaranteed!? All you do is buy one of our dehydrated water containers, then add the purest and freshest water you can find to activate a refreshing drinking experience... Uh, no? You are not interested. Ok then. But you are missing out. It's going to be the next big thing.

*SALESMAN'S voice fades as they walk off stage. SPIDER continues walking. Crank until garbage can is out of frame and only the brick wall can be seen in frame, then stop. GIRL enters frame.*

GIRL: Oooh! It's a cute little insect. Do you want to be my friend? I can take you home and take care of you. I love insects. I love ladybugs, and butterflies.... Ahhhh. It's a spider. Ahhh! Ahhh! Ahh!



Fig. 4. Girl and Itsy. Photo courtesy of Dirk Joseph.

*GIRL shrieks and briefly tries to stomp on the spider, then she runs away. SPIDER continues walking.*

*Crank to meadow and trees, then stop as the main tree reaches the center of the frame. The SPIDER crawls along the ground and stops in the grass.*

SPIDER: Whoa, what is this place? Everything feels ... right ... here. Everything feels alive.

*BIRD enters frame and starts hopping aggressively towards the SPIDER.*

SPIDER: Uh oh. It's very alive.

*SPIDER backs up as BIRD starts pecking at it.*

SPIDER: Hey ... wait ... what are you doing? Are you some kind of crossroad guardian?  
Well, I deserve to be here, gatekeeper!

*SPIDER repeatedly lunges at the BIRD, pushing it back and out of the frame. SPIDER then runs back to the center.*

SPIDER: Well, what do I do now? I guess I better follow my instincts.



Fig. 5. Itsy climbs a tree. Photo courtesy of Dirk Joseph.

*SPIDER meanders around for several seconds, then climbs the main tree and makes a web. Present web prop.*

CRANKER: The Itsy Bitsy Spider made a web up high.  
It sat very patiently until it caught a fly.

It ate up the fly, cause that's what spiders do.

Be glad the Itsy Bitsy Spider is too small to eat you.

*GREENLY bows; then ITSY shadow puppet moves up the screen as if it is climbing higher on the tree.*

*Switch to large hand-held SPIDER puppet. It climbs over the top of the crankie frame (stage left) and makes its way to the (stage right) side of the crankie stage.*

*GREENLY continues bowing but suddenly sees the large SPIDER and lets out a startled scream.*

GREENLY: Don't scare me like that! Come here buddy.

*Azaria operates GREENLY to embrace the SPIDER and carries them both offstage, with GREENLY looking back and saying:*

GREENLY: Thank you folks.