

THE KING OF COMEDY

# Jeremy STRONG

My Brother's  
Famous Bottom  
Takes Off!



Illustrated by Rowan Clifford



PUFFIN

## 1. Finders Keepers

My dad came home with a sheep yesterday. He says it followed him. 'I was on my way home and there was this sheep standing in the road.'

Mum was unimpressed. 'Sheep don't just follow you,' she told him.

'This one did,' said Dad. 'I think it was because I said hello.'

'That's ridiculous.' Mum turned to me. 'Have you ever heard of a sheep following anyone, Nicholas?'

'Er, Little Bo Peep?' I suggested.

'That's a nursery rhyme,' Mum pointed out.

'Little Bo Peep went beep beep beep!' shouted Cheese. Mum and Dad both ignored him.

'BEEP BEEP BEEP!' echoed Tomato before bursting into giggles. Mum and Dad ignored her

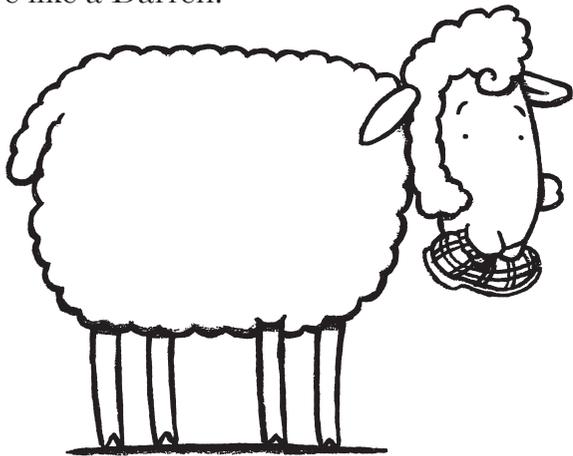
too. (In case you're wondering why the twins are called Cheese and Tomato, it's because they were born in the back of a pizza van. It was Dad's idea, of course. But that's *another* story!)

'Look,' said Dad, 'I didn't ask the sheep to follow me. He just did. His name is Elvis.'

'Dad! How do you know that?' I asked.

'Just look at him, Nicholas. Doesn't he look like an Elvis to you?'

The sheep was trying to eat Cheese's slipper, which was lying in the middle of the floor. The other one was probably out in the garden or up a tree, anywhere except where it should be – on Cheese's left foot. Anyhow, I thought he looked more like a Darren.



Mum heaved a very large sigh. 'He'll have to go in the garden,' she said, scowling at Dad.

'Well, I wasn't thinking of putting him in our bedroom,' he grunted.

'Ron, what you are thinking is often a complete mystery to me AND the rest of the world.'

They stared at each other until Dad gave a big grin and burst into song:

*'You are the love of my life. And you are the reason I'm alive . . .'*

'Stop it!' laughed Mum. 'You're such a clown!' She began pushing him out of the house, along with the sheep.

So it looked like Elvis was here to stay, at least for a while.

'He must belong to someone,' Mum said as she came back in. 'Sheep don't just hang around on street corners, waiting to follow some turnip home.'

'I heard that!' Dad called from the garden. 'I'm not a turnip. Do I look like a turnip, Nicholas?'

I eyed Dad carefully. ‘If that sheep can be an Elvis then I reckon you could just about be a turnip, Dad.’

‘Well, thank you very much,’ Dad grunted.

‘After all the things I’ve done for you. I changed your nappy when you were a baby –’

‘No you didn’t,’ Mum broke in. ‘You said you couldn’t hold your nose and change a

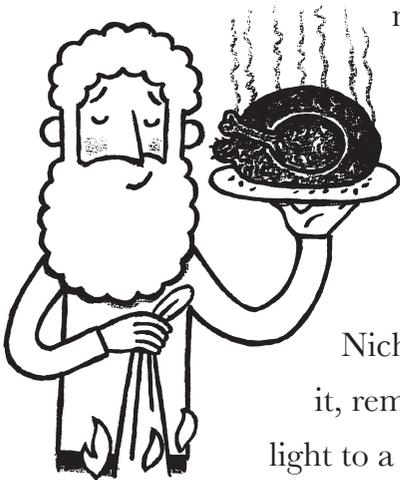


nappy at the same time.’

‘OK, but what about all those other things I did? I cooked his supper –’

Mum shook her head.

‘No, Ron, you *tried* to cook Nicholas’s supper, but you burnt it, remember? In fact, you set light to a tea towel.’



‘I didn’t do it on purpose. Anyhow, what else have I done for you, Nicholas? I taught you how to blow raspberries. There!

I was very good at that.’

‘I know, Dad, and when I went to school the next day we had Show and Tell and I showed and told everyone in class how to blow raspberries and I was sent to the headteacher for being rude.’



Dad held up his hands in despair. ‘OK, I surrender. I haven’t done anything at all for you.’

I smiled. ‘It’s all right, Dad. I don’t mind. You’re the best dad in the world. I bet there aren’t many dads who bring home sheep.’

‘Or alligators,’ added Mum. ‘Don’t forget Crunchbag the alligator.’

‘Exactly,’ said Dad, suddenly perking up. ‘You’re right, Nicholas. There can’t be many

dads like me!’ And he grinned broadly at all of us. ‘I should be in the *Big Book of World Records* for being the, er, somethingest dad in the world.’

‘Strangest?’ suggested Mum, and Dad made a face at her.

‘Silly Daddy!’ shouted Tomato.

‘That’s it exactly,’ agreed Mum. ‘The SILLIEST dad in the world. That fits perfectly.’

‘Thank you very much,’ said Dad, giving us a bow.



So that was that. We now have a sheep in the garden. We also have five chickens (that’s Captain Birdseye, Mavis Moppet, Beaky and Leaky and Poop), two rabbits, Rubbish the goat and Schumacher the tortoise. Mum says that Elvis must belong to someone so she’s going to ring all the local farmers and find out if anyone is missing a sheep.

‘Meanwhile, I suppose he will have to stay with us,’ she said. ‘I hope Mr Tugg won’t mind.’



Mr Tugg is our neighbour. If you haven't met him yet I had better warn you. Imagine a hurricane mixed with a volcano and then throw in some bits of earthquake, an avalanche and a couple of tsunamis – that's what Mr Tugg is like. He is a bumper collection of natural disasters all squeezed into one small, bald-headed, exploding human. (Although my dad says that Mr Tugg is really a Martian alien from outer space.)

Elvis the sheep soon made friends with Rubbish. They followed each other round the garden and at night they slept together, with Elvis resting his head on the goat's fat belly. It



was very sweet. Dad said that maybe they should get married and then we could call them Mr and Mrs Sheegoat. Or Mr and Mrs Gosheep. Mr and Mrs Rubbish perhaps?

It was a whole day before Mr Tugg realized we had a sheep living with us and when he did he wasn't very impressed. He stood at the fence, staring with bulging eyes.

'Is that what I think it is?' he snapped.

Dad leaped back as if he'd just had a terrible fright. 'Argh! The Martians have arrived! Run for your lives!'

'Very funny,' scowled Mr Tugg. 'I said, is that what I think it is?'

'I don't know,' Dad replied. 'What do you think it is?'

'A sheep, of course!'

'Then of course it's a sheep,' Dad answered calmly. 'Well spotted. I hereby award you a first-class sheep-spotter's badge. You can sew it on your scout jumper.'

Mr Tugg's face began to change colour. 'Are you allowed to keep sheep in your back garden in a residential area? Do you have a permit? I shall check with the local council.'

'Really, Mr Tugg? Must you check everything? Do you have a permit?'

'What are you talking about? What do I need a permit for?'

'Breathing,' Dad shot back. 'Do you have permission from the council to breathe? Because if you don't you'll just have to pack it in, you know.'

'Will you ever stop talking nonsense?' growled Mr Tugg. He was getting redder by the second, which was a big Danger Signal. Any moment now he would blow his top and we'd have a Major Explosion on our hands and the prime minister would have to declare our road a Disaster Area.

Fortunately, just at that moment, Mrs Tugg appeared. I like Mrs Tugg. She is round and

wobbly and jolly. She looked over the fence and spotted Elvis at once.

'What a lovely sheep!' she declared.

Mr Tugg looked at his wife in surprise.

'Isn't it pretty?' she went on.

'Pretty? It's a sheep,' Mr Tugg pointed out.

'Yes, dear, and a rather funky one. It looks like an Elvis to me.'

'Mrs Tugg, you are a wonder!' cried Dad. 'Will you marry me?'

Mr Tugg snorted. 'Don't be ridiculous.'

But Mrs Tugg was shaking with laughter.

'That's amazing!' Dad continued. 'See, Nicholas? I told you his name was Elvis.'

I just grinned at everyone.

'You can't call a sheep Elvis,' Mr Tugg grunted.

'Oh? Do I need a permit for that too?' asked Dad.

'Stop being such a killjoy, dear,' Mrs Tugg said, and she gave Mr Tugg a playful tweak of his ear.

'Ow!' He leaped back from the fence. 'I'm

going indoors to ring the council,' he said.

'What's more, I would like to know where you got that sheep from. It didn't come from any pet shop that I know of. They don't sell sheep.'

'It followed me home,' said Dad. 'Finders keepers.'

'Pish!' snapped Mr Tugg and, turning on his heel, he marched into his house.

Mrs Tugg looked at my dad and shook her head.

'Oh dear,' she sympathized. 'You know what my husband's like. I'm afraid we haven't heard the last of this.'

'No,' agreed Dad. 'We probably haven't.' He turned to the sheep. 'You hear that, Elvis? You'd better go into hiding. Mr Tugg is after your fleece.'