

MIRACULOUS PRODUCTIONS
PRESENT



SCENE 1 - MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

At about the height
Of a high-flying bird
From the mundane concerns
Of now and here
There's a humble poet
Waiting to be heard
In a spherical belt
Of unthought idea.

A compendium of experience
In a cryptic wikipedia
Condensed and distilled
Into mystical multi-media
Lost archetypes, prototypes
And stereotypes abound
All indexed and subtext
And waiting to be found.

While in the depths of your pillow
Where the seeds of dreams are sewn
There sleeps the subconscious
With a logic of its own
(If only you trust it)
A mysterious world where
Nothing is what it seems
A tiny craft tossed in
A turbulent sea of dreams.

Two realms separated
By a window of transparent glass
Through which the traffic of thought
May easily pass

The only demand on the
Human being
Is the vigilance to keep
The darkened window clean.

And in the passage of passing
A remnant remains
A spark in the tinder
Of speculative brains
A knock, knock, knock
On Creations door
In the unfolding mansion
Of the mixed metaphor

And what better metaphor
Of Miraculous Production tonight to throttle
Than the loaded and encoded
Message in a Bottle.

So sit back and relax
In and idyllic bliss
Secure in the comfort
Of nothing amiss.
But wait! What is this

An imprisoned mistress
In a dungeon cell
Pouring her heart
Into an inkwell.
There must be something
We don't know
So let's just get on with the show.

MUSIC: CINEMATIC ADVENTURE MUSIC

SFX: QUILL PEN WRITING ON PAPER; WATER DRIPPING; DUNGEON REVERB

[In a sparse room with walls of what appear to be ancient, riveted rusty steel behind shelves of packed, neatly-ordered books and scrolls, a woman sitting at a desk illuminated by a single candle, hurriedly writes a note with a quill pen. She stops occasionally to dip her pen in a jar of ink on the desk. The desk has a pile of loose-leaf papers on one side and an ink blotter. At the back of the room is a large, steel-reinforced ancient wooden door with a window in its centre at face-height. The window has a set of wide-spaced bars through which the desperate face of Frangipani is visible].

Frangipani: Cassandra hurry! They'll be here any minute! We don't have any more time. If they catch me the message will never be delivered. You've written enough. What's taking so long?

Cassandra: Almost done. Just a few more words.

SFX: BOOTS MARCHING DOWN HALLWAY

Frangipani: OMG! They're coming! I can hear them walking down the corridor. They're almost here! Quick! Give it to me now!

Cassandra: [She blots the paper, rolls it up and hurries to the door]. Where's the bottle?

Frangipani: Here! I have it [she holds up a bottle and uncorks it audibly].

SFX: BOTTLE UNCORKING

Cassandra: Take the note and put it inside. [She takes the note and stuffs it inside and then seals the bottle, holding it up for her to see].

Frangipani: There! It's done.

Cassandra: Take this to the river before the guards see you. Now go!

Stampede: Hey you! [Frangipani looks suddenly towards the sound of the guard's voice and takes her hand and kisses it. She runs SL and the face of Captain Stampede appears at the window].

SFX: HANDS CLANG ON METAL BARS

Stampede: So Cassandra! Trying to send little messages outside the Castle are we? Well, your treasonous communiqué will never make it beyond the walls, let alone the City. Guards! After that girl. Bring me that bottle!

SFX: FOUR BOOTS RUNNING INTO DISTANCE

Cassandra: Do whatever you want to me, lock me up, silence me! You'll never win! Frangipani will get to the river and it will carry our message far away from you and the Magistrates to someone who hasn't been corrupted by power, that still has love in their heart and when they get it, they'll change the world!

Stampede: In your dreams! Ahahahahaha!

[Cassandra falls to the ground].

SCENE 2 - GUARDIANS CHASE FRANGIPANI

To quote the great Waterville bard HYPERBOLO
In his memorable ode to the River Flow

Oh grandiloquent River Flow
Your flamboyancy is rife
Your quintessential effervescence
Instills us all with life
Your tonic is cationic
Your eternity is chronic
But the colour you now have turned is decidedly moronic
I've seen you green
I've seen you blue
I've seen you clear as ice
But by what mishap
By what misdeed
By what untoward device
Could you churn have turned a corner to a murky sort of pink
With the perfume of the gurgle in the throat of a kitchen sink.

LIGHTS: SPOT FOLLOWS Frangipani THROUGH CROWD

MUSIC: CINEMATIC ADVENTURE CHASE MUSIC

SFX: RIVER SOUND

Stampede: Catch her! -PAUSE- Don't let her get to the river!

[Frangipani ducks and dives and runs through the audience chased by the Guardians and arrives at the river].

SFX: Fabric river and water

[Frangipani arrives. Struggles with guards. She throws the bottle into the river and escapes].

SFX: BOTTLE SPLASHES INTO RIVER LIGHTS: SPOT FOLLOWS BOTTLE IN RIVER

[The guards try to catch the bottle but get caught in river. The bottle goes over the falls, some Guards fall over the overflow and splash about in the river watching the bottle as it moves downstream].

LIGHTS: FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 3 - THE RIVER-DWELLERS

There are still a few remaining pockets
Where the simple life simply survives
Where people don't have to be simple
To lead simple lives.

Such a pocket is Waterville
On the good River Flow
The lifeblood of the village
And critically so
When it started to dwindle and smell and go pink
What could the Watervillagers possibly think.

They'd been taught since childhood never to go
Up into the reacher of the good river Flow
But if they did they should always carry their crossbow and Knife
For whatever lay up there would endanger their life.

The paradisiacal peace of simplicity
Would always seem to attract its contrary
For no matter how bright the day shining bright
It must soon requite its incipient night.

MUSIC: UPLIFTING, PARADISAL
SFX: BIRDS TWEETING; WIND IN TREES;
RIVER GENTLY BURBLING

[Walnut sits on the edge of the stage with a fishing rod, line dangling in the river. Fleur carries a bag plucking edible flowers and fruit and carries a fishing rod. She's eating something. She sits and rummages through his bag].

Fleur: [Pulls out an old shoe] Holy Neemberry! Is this it? Four hours on the river and this is all you got?!

Walnut: Easy! You know how hard it's been these days. Last week you caught almost nothing, remember. Have you noticed it's turning a weird pink colour and it smells funny? Like perfume. Three years ago it was up here and crystal clear. Now it looks like this [points to river]. What's making it go pink? Soon we're going to have start eating bugs.

Fleur: Don't worry. We'll figure something out before that happens.

Walnut: There must be some problem upstream. Maybe it's like an algal bloom or something. Or maybe it's the eclipse! I've heard that Lunar eclipses can make weird things happen.

Fleur: [Sigh] I wish Eyeball McGlinty was still around, at least he'd have had some crazy theory about what was happening and some idea what to do.

Walnut: Yeah, where did he just disappear to all those years ago?

Fleur: Maybe he fell into the river. [Silence].

Walnut: Or maybe he wandered into the Sludge of Despond and got eaten by the Scorpion-Flies.

Fleur: What? Scorpion-Flies don't even exist. That's just a fairytale they tell us so we don't wander upriver. Let's not talk about it. I'm hungry. Give me a go [takes his fishing rod]. [Line goes taught]. Hey, I've got something! Whoa it's big. Help me. But wait, what's this? [She pulls up Cassandra's bottle]. Uwanto, what's that?

Walnut: I don't know.

Fleur: Cool bottle though! And with a cork. I can use this for my home-made mangleberry wine.

Walnut: Wait a second! There's something inside.

MUSIC: TURNS OMINOUS

Fleur: Oh my god, there is too! It looks like a rolled-up piece of paper. Oooo. [She jumps up, excited]. Maybe it's a map to hidden treasure!

Walnut: Or maybe it's a message from someone shipwrecked on a desert island...

Fleur: In a river?

Walnut: Maybe it washed in here from the sea.

Fleur: Rivers flow into the sea, not the other way, you numb-nut!

Walnut: Alright, alright! Open it why don't you!

Fleur: Here we go.

SFX: BOTTLE UNCORK

[She uncorks the bottle and takes out the message. She unrolls it and reads]. Whoa!

Walnut: What is it?

Fleur: Look at this! The paper has the Mark of the Castle of Effluvium on it, it's just like the one on the plaque in the Town Square, all gold and shiny.

Walnut: Look there's something written! [They both read].

MUSIC: SHIFTS TO FARAWAY, EPIC MESSAGE MUSIC

The Message

To whomsoever finds this,

LIGHTS DIM, SPOT ON WALNUT AND FLEUR

I am Cassandra, the Favoured student of the Oracle of Effluvium and I am in desperate need of help.

MESSAGE MUSIC STOPS

LIGHTS BACK UP

Walnut: Who's the Oracle?

Fleur: Who's the...What? You don't know about the Oracle? The leader of all the land? She's amazing. According to the legend she was chosen by magic fireflies atop Mt Loftus over a century ago. She has hundreds of thousands of devotees across the country, none more famous than her best student, Cassandra.

Walnut: But if Cassandra's so famous and everything, why is she putting messages for help in bottles in the river?

Fleur: I don't know! It's obviously a joke. Look there's more:

The Oracle is gone.

Fleur: Hahahaha, the Oracle is gone! This is ridiculous!

**LIGHTS DIM, SPOT ON WALNUT AND FLEUR
MESSAGE MUSIC RESTARTS**

Three days before writing this, she came to me and announced that her time had come. She said the new Oracle would be chosen during this month's eclipse of the moon. And then she was gone, in a blinding flash of light.

As her favoured student, I am of course the obvious choice as her successor, but when I informed the city Magistrates of the Oracle's departure, they locked me in the castle vault so that the Head Magistrate Madam Pompous Crumpet, could take my place, and become the next Oracle.

**MESSAGE MUSIC STOPS
LIGHTS BACK UP**

Walnut: Where did this Oracle person live?

Fleur: Super far-away in Effluvium. It's a city at the base of Mt Loftus, beyond the Swamp of Despond. Look, you can just see the peak of it in the distance [she points]. [Holds note] This is obviously a joke. Pretty good job though, I'll give them that. Ha! And look, they've really gone too far with this last bit:

**MESSAGE MUSIC RESTARTS
LIGHTS DOWN, SPOT**

If chosen as Oracle, Crumpet, with the help of the Uwanto Soft Drink Company, plans to block the river, destroying the lives of all who live on it.

To ensure this never happens, I must be released before the eclipse of moon.
If not, a darkness will befall this land, from which there will be no escape.

The Vault door has only one key, which hangs around the neck of Madam Crumpet.
Follow the river to Effluvium. Find me, get that key and set me free.
Make no mistake: the future of everything you know, now rests in your hands.

If you're reading this, you're our only hope.
Cassandra.

PREVIOUS MUSIC RESTARTS LIGHTS BACK UP

Fleur: Hahaha! Too good! “Only hope”. [Crumples up the note and throws it over her shoulder].

Walnut: OK, there's nothing to eat here, let's head into town. I'm starving.

Fleur: “Only hope” huh? Hmmmm. OK, if we're going that way, maybe we should just show this to the Elders, just to make sure it's nonsense.

Walnut: The Council of Elders are meeting today in the Town Square about the river turning pink. Let's show it to them on our way.

[Exit].

SCENE 4 - COUNCIL OF ELDERS

In order to be an elder
It isn't enough just to be old
You also have to be important
Because the tea is getting cold.

And somebody has to make decisions
There are decisions to be made
And at the end of every meeting
There's a piper to be paid.

An air of confident
Authority is also prerrequired
An overworked appearance
Appropriately tired
But most of all a certainty
That what you say is right
And if anybody questions it
See them outside for a fight.

[A group of men and women stand on stage. They all wear long white robes with three-pointed hats. One in the middle wears a large gold medallion on a coloured ribbon around his/her neck].

SONG: ANTHEM OF THE ELDERS [OOMPAAH LOOMPAH SONG]

Waterlog: I hereby call this emergency town meeting to discuss the changing colour of the water to order! In a few days the rare sacred Eclipse of the Moon will be upon us, and you know what that means! The Festival of the Eclipse of the Moon! I am particularly looking forward to judging the cake competition.

Zeppelin: But how can we hold this festival when the water smells like shampoo? The river is getting worse with each passing day. We need to take emergency action. To

open the discussion, I welcome Elder Jambread to the podium. [Applause as Elderlady Jambread makes her ponderous way to the podium]. [Walnut and Fleur enter].

Fleur: Look! They're all here. Let's go and tell them about the bottle.

Walnut: But they're in the middle of some important announcement. Let's wait until they're finished.

Hurdle: Sssssh! Quiet! Can you two scruffy troublemakers shut up? Elder Jambread is about to make a very important announcement.

Fleur: But it'll only take a moment...

Waterlog: Didn't Elder Hurdle just tell you to be quiet? If you're going to keep interrupting, I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

Fleur: We found this bottle...

Zepplin: Alright that's enough! You're both going to have to leave now. Out you go!

Fleur: No, but there's a message...

Walnut: Fleur, it's OK. [To Zepplin] OK, OK it's alright. C'mon Fleur, let's go. Obviously they're busy right now. Let's get some food.

Fleur: But...

Walnut: C'mon. [They start to leave then stop when they hear Jambread speak].

Jambread: May I continue with my presentation? May I finish? May I finish my sentence? May I speak? Thank you.

The river is changing colour, and that colour appears to be pink: adjective, of a colour intermediate between red and white [guardians enter. They have flowing capes and helmets under their arms, a la Roman soldiers], as of coral or salmon: by way of example, his face was pink with embarrassment...

Hurdle: Oh! Guardians of Effluvium Castle! What an honour! Captain, as the Senior

Elder here at Waterville, on behalf of all Watervillians, it is my great pleasure to welcome you here to.... [Stampede cuts her off and walks to centre stage].

MUSIC: STAMPEDE MUSIC, MILITARY, POWERFUL, DARK

Stampede: Listen up idiots! Don't worry: I'll speak slowly so you peasants can understand me. As you are no doubt aware, I am Captain of the Guardians at the City of Effluvium. A few days ago we successfully foiled a terrorist plot to overthrow the city leadership, and the perpetrator is now safely behind bars. Normally this would be the end of the story, but however, in this case, before we caught her, this traitor, using tricks and lies, sealed a message in bottle and threw it in the river. My guards were not able to retrieve it before the currents carried it away. As your village sits on the river, we expect it will pass through here soon. If you find it, you must immediately deliver it to me. Do not under any circumstances open the bottle [she looks pointedly about the room, and looks carefully and closely at Fleur and Walnut], for the message contains hypnotic propaganda that will no doubt adversely influence weak-minded flatlanders like yourself. Failure to immediately deliver the bottle to me will result in serious and unpleasant consequences. I have spoken.

Waterlog: Well I can tell you an obvious place to start. What about the river-dwellers? They're always at the river fishing and pulling rubbish out of the river. If anyone's seen it, it'll be them. [Fleur and Walnut quickly sneak out].

Stampede: River-dwellers?

Zepplin: Yeah, those two. [Points to an empty space where Fleur and Walnut were]. Where did they go? They seemed really worked up about something. -PAUSE- They must have found the bottle!

Jambread: Elder Hurdle, this is your fault! Why did you let them leave? This is incompetence. You should immediately resign from your position.

Hurdle: Me? It was Lady Zepplin who wouldn't let them speak and she's closer to the door. If anyone should resign, it's her.

Zepplin: [Big gasp] How dare you address me in that tone? Have you no respect for my natural, god-given sense of authority and importance? It is my belief that you three should resign for your insolence. I move a motion of no confidence. All in favour [raises hand]. [All four raise hands].

Waterlog: Next order of business. It's come to my attention that vacancies on Council have appeared. Do we have any nominations? [The three fired councillors raise their hands sheepishly]. Any other nominations? Nominations accepted. All in favour, [All raise hands] Aye. I now pronounce us members of the Council, again. Now what were we talking about?

Stampede: Are you quite done? Shut Up! Guards Find them! [The guards exit towards **Fleur** and **Walnut**]. And as for the rest of you: [QUIETLY WITH MENACE] anyone who lays eyes on these 'river-dwellers' you speak of, is commanded to deliver them to us here in the town square, for interrogation.

Jambread: You heard her, everybody, start looking for those vagabonds! They must be hiding in the forest somewhere. Flush them out!

[Everyone exits. Once everyone is gone. **Walnut** and **Fleur** walk back on stage].

Walnut: Whoa! What are we going to do? Those guys mean business!

Fleur: [Holds up the bottle] Looks like this message is no joke after all, and now, we're in a tight spot. We have to get out of here before those Guardians find us and lock us up too.

Walnut: Get out of here? And go where? We've never left the village.

Fleur: We have to get to Effluvium, find this Cassandra girl and rescue her before the lunar eclipse.

Walnut: What? But the eclipse is only a week away. That's insane! And we have no idea where she is or how to get there.

Fleur: I guess, we'll just do what the message said: follow the river to its source, to the city of Effluvium and then free her.

Walnut: But that's going to be super dangerous! You know the stories of the forests upriver: Scorpion-Flies, hypnotic Jungle magic. And what will we eat? If we even survive for more than a day. We have no supplies. It's nuts. We'll never make it.

Fleur: But what? Cassandra said that they're planning to block the river. That'll destroy every village along it, not to mention the fish and other animals. We're going

to need help, like a guide or something, but who? Who's crazy enough to take us that far up river?

Eyeball: [Speaking from the shadows] And a time would come when misguided leaders in little rooms, would threaten the very life-blood of the land with planned doom [He emerges]. [Both jump].

Walnut: What the hell?

Eyeball: Out of the numbed morass a chosen few would arise to journey into the unknown, to face their fears and embark across the vast land through doubt, despair and temptation.

Walnut: What, who are you?

Eyeball: Who I was is no longer what I am. Where I was is no longer where I am. The time has come and I have come with it.

Fleur: Wait a minute! Eyeball McGlintry? You're alive? But we all thought you were dead! Ever since you disappeared all those years ago. Where have you been all this time? You just...

Eyeball: The forest has been my home for all these many orbits, and has taught me well how to survive and thrive on berries and bark and bugs and brilliance, I know now the woods and all its secrets from here to kalamazoo. Did I hear you say you were in need of a guide? What you need is a strategy. Do you have the message?

Fleur: Sure, here. [About to hand note to EB].

Walnut: Fleur no! [WHISPERING] How do you know we can trust this nutcase?

Fleur: This is Eyeball McGlintry! He's amazing! Totally crazy and totally fantastic. Here. [Hands Eyeball the note. He reads it].

Eyeball: We must destroy this note, lest it betray us. Fleur have you memorised its contents?

Fleur: You mean, follow the river and save the girl? I think I've got it. [Eyeball rips up note].

Eyeball: It won't take long before the Guardians come back here looking for you. We must leave tonight for Effluvium, but we need someone who knows the secret paths to get us out of the village and into the woods, undetected by the Guardians....

Fleur: I think I know just the people.

Eyeball: Good, lead us to them. [Eyeball throws torn message].

Walnut: What? Wait a second. There's no way I'm following this crazy nut-job anywhere, let alone upriver into freakin' suicide forest on some flaky quest to rescue some imaginary girl. Forget it! You can count me out!

Eyeball: [Sigh] Fleur, then it's up to you: remember these words: "at the end of the road, it really begins, when all hope fades look for answers within." [Sound of approaching guards' voices].

Eyeball: So what's it going to be? Stay here and face the guards, or join us as we head upriver. Our time has run out! We must leave now. This way. But we must be careful: there are Guardians everywhere! [They start to leave].

Walnut: Alright, alright, I'm coming! [They exit. Stampede and guards enter the empty room, talking].

Stampede: They're not out there. Which means they must have hidden themselves right under our noses in here somewhere. Wait! [Looks down at remains of note] The Royal Seal. They were here. Go! Bring them back to the Castle, dead or alive.

Focus & Flex: Yes Captain! [They rush out of the room].

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE 5 - BRACE & CHIKOO'S OUTDOOR WORKSHOP

There are practical people
And impractical people
And all sorts of
In-betweens
But you're always glad
Of a practical person
When you're dealing
With machines.

If you have an appointment
With destiny
And you're putting together
A crew
It's essential that there's a diversity
With people like
Brace and Chikoo.

And as the thickening
Plot unfolds
Everyone practically
Understands
That while you need a
Good head on your shoulders
It's good to be good
With your hands.

MUSIC: UPLIFTING, SOFT, FOREST - SFX: BIRDS; WIND

[Brace is sawing and tying a piece of wood to a frame. Chikoo is divided between working on an engine of some sort and grinding flowers and roots with a mortar and pestle. She has lots of little bags on the ground. Both wear obviously hand-stitched patchwork clothes].

Chikoo: [Talking to the engine] Aaaaw, you must be feeling bad, with the water smelling so funny it must be making you feel confused. That's why your fan belt keeps falling off. Don't worry with a few small adjustments, everything's going to be just fine...

Brace: [Hits his thumb with a hammer] Aaaah! Crap! Stupid, gn, gah, funkunkle, bunfluffing, pigglewacking, norbinherd! Hammer! Aaah! It hurts! [Chikoo comes over to him].

Chikoo: OK, OK, watch your language, no need to blow a gasket. Let me see. [She examines his thumb]. Nothing serious. Now open wide. Put this under your tongue [she puts some medicine in his mouth].

Brace: Ch! You and your hair-brained [chews] home- made [chews] herbal plant [chews and swallows] remedies. And what is this talking to machines? What are you calling yourself these days again?

Chikoo: I've told you before: I'm a Therapeutic Wholistic Mechanic. Machines have feelings too you know. In fact, we're all machines, just with varying degrees of complexity, and it's not just about mechanics, it's also about energy fields and how they interact with each other...

Brace: What nonsense! Energy fields, mumbo-jumbo, witch-doctor, hocus-pocus.

Chikoo: Oh really? How's your thumb?

Brace: What? Don't change the subject! How's my thumb? My thumb's, it's aaah, hmmmm. Hey! Wow! What d'you know. Pain's gone! Feels as good as new! Ha! Didn't even need your weird flower remedies and root-bark medicine or whatever dumb thing you call it. If you weren't my sister, I'd never even touch that stuff.

Chikoo: Uh-huh. Yeah. Right Brace. Your thumb got better all on its own.

Brace: Sure did! I'm like, made of stone! Invincible! [Stubs his toe on his hammer as he walks back to the frame]. Aaaah! Frinkin, buntwubble, snozzbuckle, aginmagin, raggin-fraggle, hatpin... [EB, Fleur and Walnut run in, looking nervously over their shoulders].

Brace: Oh, hey guys, what's up?

Chikoo: Yeah hey. Whoa! Eyeball? You're still alive?

Brace: Dude, where did you disappear to for like three years?

Eyeball: It is good to see your faces again too, but where I was and what I have been doing is not what we have time for right now.

Chikoo: What? What's going on? And do you have any idea why the forest is teeming with Castle Guardians? They came here and said they were looking for terrorists. What could possibly make them travel so far from the Castle?

Fleur: It's us. They're after us.

Chikoo & Brace: What? What d'you mean? Why are they after you?

Walnut: We fished a bottle out of the river with some secret message from none other than THE Cassandra.

Chikoo: Message? Cassandra? The Student of the Oracle? She exists? Like real real? Wow. What did it say?

Fleur: She said that she's been locked up so that the Magistrates can block the river.

Brace: Block the river? What are you talking about?

Walnut: I know, crazy right? We thought it was a joke, but when we went to see the Elders about it, suddenly these Castle Guardians march in looking for the note, so it must be true.

Fleur: The note said a new Oracle would be chosen during this month's lunar eclipse and that if she isn't free by then, it'll be too late.

Chikoo: But that's a week away!

Fleur: We know. We don't have much time. We have to free Cassandra and make sure that she gets to the top of Mt Loftus in time for the eclipse.

Walnut: We have to leave soon, like now. But we can't do it without you. No one knows the forest like you guys.

Chikoo: What? Are you insane? Just leave like that without any preparation? We have to prepare food, plan our pathway, it might rain, there could be Scorpion-Flies...

Walnut: What? Scorpion-Flies? Pfft! They're not even real. Right? They're not? Are they?

Chikoo: I don't know. Maybe, there are just so many things that could go wrong, I don't...

Brace: What? Relax. Of course we'll sneak you into the forest. We can eat leaves and berries and live off the land [gathering things as he talks]. We'll be fine. Scorpion-Flies. Ha ha ha ha!

Chikoo: I'm not going! No way! Absolutely not. Never in a million years...

Fleur: But Chikoo you can't stay here. It's not safe any more, and besides, we might need your mechanical medical skills or whatever you call them. Please come.,[Fire lights begin].

Chikoo: No. Never. It's too crazy. I'll just hide here until they go away. I'll see you guys when you get back. Have fun! [The sound of the Guardians approaching].

STAMPEDE MUSIC

Flex: They were last seen heading this way Captain.

Stampede: We've set the forest on fire. They have nowhere to hide!

VFX: FIRE ON SCREEN - SFX: FIRE

Chikoo: Aaaah! What are you waiting for! Let's get out of here! [They exit].

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE 6 - THE SLUDGE OF DESPOND

So with the intrepid Eyeball
As their dubious guide
(He knew hidden paths
And secret places to hide)
They crashed through the forest
With the river on their right
Sleeping by day
And moving by night
With the mangleberry oil
Lamps to lighten their sight.

He also found plants
And berries to eat,
Wrongoly rock moss
That tasted exactly like meat
He found them a palm
To put on their scratches.

He even knew how to light
A fire without matches.
After three days the forest
Got darker and denser
The undergrowth thickens
And the going intense.

When the ground became squelchy
And their footwear got stuck
As they struggled to
Resist the quick-sucking muck.

It smelt anaerobic
Like an old rotten pond

**What Eyeball called
Was the Sludge of Despond.**

**It got increasingly scary
Not a sound could be heard
Until Walnut broke the silence
And uttered a bad word.**

MUSIC: DARK, SCARY FOREST

SFX: SQUELCHY FOOTSTEPS; CRACKING TWIGS; DISTANT CROW

[Eyeball enters, looking about, unsure. Brace, Chikoo, Walnut and Fleur stumble in, looking exhausted and collapse on stage].

Walnut: Oh my god! This is hard. I'm finished, we've only been travelling for two days and I'm totally destroyed. How much more of this horrible dark forest do we have to go through?

Fleur: Yeah! Wow, I'm broken. I wish we could just camp here, but there's no way. This ground is like a swamp.

Chikoo: What is this place? Eyeball? Eyeball? Where are we? [Eyeball ignores her and continues to explore, picking up things, smelling them]. Aaaah! what is that? It's like a scorpion, but with wings.

SFX: VICIOUSLY BUZZING SCORPION-FLY

Brace: It's a Scorpion-Fly. They exist! Cool!

All: Aaaah! [They run around trying to kill it, but it won't die. Finally they knock it into space]. [Walnut runs and jumps into Fleur's arms, getting down quickly in embarrassment].

Brace: Whoa! What the hell?

Eyeball: Ah-hah!

Walnut: What 'Ah-hah'?

Eyeball: Scorpion-Fly.

Fleur: Scorpion-Fly? Sounds nasty. Not dangerous right? Right? Eyeball.

Eyeball: No.

All: Phew!

Eyeball: Not right. Very dangerous.

Brace: What?

Eyeball: Extremely poisonous. One sting makes you feel very sleepy for a short time, and then the others eat you.

Fleur: Excuse me? Eat you? The others?

Eyeball: Yes. Scorpion-Flies are never alone. They travel in giant vicious swarms. Hunting. Especially at night. They love the darkness. Oooh look, what a beautiful sunset!

Walnut: Hahaha. You're joking right? Tell me he's joking.

Fleur: Eyeball, stop mucking around. Let's get out of here. Which way?

Eyeball: [Looks left, right, up down, backwards]. Hmmmmmm...

Brace: What do mean Hmm? What does that mean? Which way do we go?

Eyeball: Wait a moment [He starts making hooping sounds]. Hoop!

Chikoo: What do mean 'Wait a moment'? Why are you hooping?

Eyeball: Hoop!

Walnut: Uh, what's he doing?

Fleur: Uh, not sure, but whatever it is, we've gotta find somewhere to sleep for the night, it's getting dark and we can't sleep in this muck!

Chikoo: Eyeball's lost it. He's coming apart at the seams. He can't help us any more. We've gotta move now. Let's go back the way we came.

Walnut: C'mon [Walnut starts walking].

Fleur: Where are you going? It's this way.

Walnut: No it's not, we came this way past that tree, or was it that one? Oh no. I don't know. OMG we're lost, we're lost, we're lost. It's hopeless.

Brace: This is your fault you crazy nut. Why did we ever trust you?

Fleur: Eyeball, listen. We need to find a way out of here. Tell us we're not lost.

Eyeball: Before you find yourself, first you must lose yourself.

Brace: What? What is that? We don't have time for your spiritual mumbo jumbo! Just tell us how to get the hell out of here.

Eyeball: Did I not say that it would be a trial? That you would lose all hope? This is indeed a wonderful opportunity for self-learning.

Walnut: Oh we're doomed, we're doomed. This is it. Wait... Listen, do you hear that?

Fleur: Hear what? I don't hear anything.

SFX: SILENCE

Walnut: Exactly. No animal sounds, no bird calls, no children mumbling in the audience, nothing. There's no sound at all. Something's not right.

SFX: SWARM OF SCORPION-FLIES

[They become aware of a distant buzz, increasing in volume].

Fleur: Now there's a sound.

Walnut: Yeah. What is that?

Fleur: Ow! [Slaps her neck]. Oh no. I've been stung! It's a Scorpion-Fly! [A swarm of Scorpion-Flies appear and they start swatting them/ Eyeball runs offstage].

Fleur: There's millions of them! Run!

MUSIC: DESPERATE RUNNING MUSIC

[They all run SL. EB exits SR. The video projection shows a moving forest and actors dressed as trees run past them. The projection show them running in profile and then towards the audience until finally they come to a cliff].

SFX: DISTANT SOUND OF HIGH ALTITUDE BIRD CRY; MEDIUM STRENGTH WIND

Chikoo: Whoa! What is this? [Reads signs] "The Cliffs of Surrender?" That's not good. OMG that's so far down, I can't even see the bottom. It just disappears into clouds.

Brace: Oh crap! They're still coming! What are we going to do?

Walnut: Where the hell is Eyeball? C'mon, get up Fleur! We've gotta fight these things!

Fleur: Oh my head is spinning. The venom is making me sleepy! I'm too dizzy to run. You go! I'll take care of the scorpion-flies [she weakly holds up a stick] and catch up with you. [She almost falls off the cliff and he pulls her back, and then she collapse on the ground, unconscious].

Walnut: But Fleur, there's nowhere to go. No no no, this is not the time for sleeping. Oh crap!

SF sound increases in intensity. [Suddenly the swarm appears on screen].

Walnut: C'mon you winged fleas! I'll take you on. Watch out! Think you're tough, huh? huh?

Brace: C'mon you barbaric bumble bees, you wanna-be wasps, think you're quick? Take that! [They attack and miss. Swings stick, hits a few and they fly away].

Chikoo: What are we going to do? We're trapped! Those things aren't going to give up. OMG, they're coming back! There's no way out.

[Buzzing sound increases. SFs surround them. All seems lost when suddenly Guru bursts onto stage followed by Eyeball. Guru's dressed like an African tribal chief with fur and bone. Eyeball and two crew one with drum and one with didgeridoo, shirtless dressed in tribal gear accompany him. He carries a bright lantern on the end of a stick]. [Distant drumming continues in the background].

MUSIC: GURU SONG

Guru: Boomshakala! Finally I found ya! Savik Yum Ma, Alles Clar, Wunderbar, Ali Baba, Ca Va? Now stand back ya!

All: Aaaah! [Looks at the Scorpion-Flies and twirls a bull-roarer].

Guru: Let everybody be known that the Guru is here. Shout it from the tree tops far and near, there be no complication, 'cause the fact is clear.

Eyeball: Aaah Guru! [Bro handshake]. Just in the nick of time as always! Wasn't sure whether you heard my call.

Guru: Che! Of course. Heard it straight away, the Drums of my people, the proud Homo Whatsappiens, informed me of your presence. They told me the whole story. You must be the one they call Walnoot.

Walnut: Walnut.

Guru: Yes, Walnoot. And this sleeping one must be the BelleFleur! Scorpion-Flies: nasty. Well well well, what have we here. How do you do? What the Guru do for you? Too wit to woo. Ha ha ha. [High fives his gang].

Chikoo: Guru, we come from Waterville, two days walk downstream.

Guru: Yes, I know all about you. You have travelled many days on some insane mission upriver with the guardians pursuing you every step of the way. How are you still alive? You are crazy! Hahaha! [Guardian trumpet in distance].

Guru: Oh-hoh. Sounds like the Guardians have found you.

Chikoo: Oh crap! I thought we had lost them.

Tiss: Guardians? Not Guru's friend. Last time the Guardians come, they steal Guru's prize chicken and fry him.

Guru: You go, when they come, we will take care of them.

Walnut: Go? But where? We're stuck on the edge of this cliff. Listen they're almost here. It's a disaster! There's no way out! Look it even says the Cliffs of Surrender. Maybe we're meant to just give up. It's a sign!

Guru: Aah but maybe it is not telling you to give up, maybe it is telling you to let go, to surrender your fear and jump into the unknown, who knows? I've never tried, you might also die.

Boom: There's only one way to find out.

Guru: So before you decide that the situation is tragic, start to believe in some jungle magic. But for now, hide behind us. [They all hide behind Guru and his band]. [The Guardians enter].

Guru: Greetings and welcome oh glorious impractically-decorated guard-dogs! What fantastical circumstance brings you to this recently dank and smelly forest?

Stampede: What? How dare you address the Guardians of Effluvium in that way. [Guru and band giggles].

Focus: Watch your tongue! [Stampede stops him].

Stampede: We're in pursuit of a band of dangerous criminals. Have you seen a scruffy-looking bunch of scraggly river-dwellers pass through here?

Guru: Scruffy-looking bunch of scraggly river-dwellers? Hmm. [To Boom and Tiss] You? You? [They all shrug]. Ah, I think we didn't see anyone.

Stampede: Oh really? Well then I don't suppose you'll mind if we have a look around. [The Guardians walk around and the group hide behind Guru and his band until finally they get caught]. Ah-hah!

Guru: Wait! Can I have your attention please, before you freeze, on the count of three,

very obedient you will be until the moment I set you free. Guru says Strike a pose! [Everyone strikes a pose, and then he frees everyone except the Guardians].

Stampede: What witchcraft is this? What have you done to us? Why can't we move?

Tiss: Did we not mention that aside from being awesome, he's also a practising witch-doctor?

Boom: This is just a little taste of Jungle magic number one. We call it: Guru says. [High fives].

Stampede: Why you, interfering, troublemaking, fur-covered, bandicoot, just you wait 'till I can move.

Guru: Guru says strike another pose! [They strike another pose]. Aaah, by then, here is where we will no longer be. Alright now, I can only do this jungle magic one more time and after that it won't last long so you better get going and jump before the end of our song. Ladies and gentlemen, this is magic number two:

SONG: MAGIC NO. 2

Guru: Jump! Jump! Jump! [They all jump].

All: Aaaaaaaaaah!

[Guru and tribals disappear off-stage, lights out and falling background projection. Walnut, Fleur, Chikoo, Brace and EB fall through space as scene is reset for Dreamweaver].

SCENE 7 - THE DREAMWEAVER

When today is like a razor blade
And you hover on its edge
You can teeter indecisively
Upon that window ledge
Until the unknown trope of tomorrow
Issues its clarion call,
And releases you from its quandary,
Whether to jump or fall.
Sleep is a soft landing
Whatever you decide,
And it comes with illustrations
Of the secrets it confides
The bedraggled rags of reality
Coming apart at the seam,
To be seamlessly interwoven
Into the fabric of a dream.
The loosened treads of mundanity
Fantastically intertwined
Into an illusive tapestry
In the theatre of the mind.

MUSIC: PARADISAL, SOFT, SWEET

SFX: WIND CHIMES; TIBETAN GONG; GENTLE BREEZE

[They finally collapse on stage and bounce up and down as if the ground is springy and absorbent]. [The three look around. They're in a brightly-lit forest filled with flowers and widely-spaced bushes. One, massive tree overhangs them all]. [They lie there for a moment, looking amazed and then slowly stand up].

Chikoo: [Looking up] Wow. What? How far did we fall? And how are we alive? What is this ground made of? It's like so soft and springy.

Brace: It's some kind of mossy lichen, but I've never seen anything like this before, it's like a trampoline and mattress fell in love.

Walnut: [Also putting down his bag]. What is this place? It's so beautiful.

Fleur: I don't know, but at least we're far away from the guardians. I think we're safe here for the moment. [Yawns] I'm so tired. At last, somewhere where we might be able to get some sleep.

Walnut: Yeah, the ground's so soft and dry. MMmmmm. [Lies down].

Eyeball: Snoring. [They all fall asleep].

Brace: [Shrugs and lies down]. Good night!

Everyone: Good night! [Everyone lies down and falls into a deep sleep].

**LIGHT FADE COMPLETES TO BLACKOUT UV LIGHTS ON
MUSIC: DREAMWEAVER - ETHEREAL, OTHERWORLDLY**

[In the darkness the trees glow in the black-light. The Dreamweaver appears, wearing a lycra suit decorated with a pattern that glows in the black-light. DW walks between the sleeping travellers, examining them curiously].

Dreamweaver: But what? Visitors? After all this eternity? None have crossed the threshold since... What manner of creatures are these? How came it that they found themselves here? Perhaps they are the ones foretold in the prophecy? "And strange beings from another land would come to set it right."

They are sound asleep for indeed some of them do sound asleep, [Walnut snores loudly] and they will not rouse while we walk, for as the eyes awake, do dreams evaporate and never the twain shall meet, lest of course the sleeper in the dream awakens to meet their dream awake asleep and with their subconscious speak. Come little bears! [Three bears enter].

Butter: Oh look! Newcomers.

Fluff: From where? Looks like they fell off the cliff. Are they dead?

Snuzzle: No, just sleeping. I guess the supermoss must have broken their fall. I knew it was springy, but I had no idea.

Dreamweaver: Let the dust now show thoughts concealed so that through divination of their purpose, we can their cause reveal.

Butter: Huh? What the hell did she say?

Fluff: No idea. Why does she always talk like that? All backwards and stuff.

Snuzzle: I think she wants to use the magic dust stuff to look into their dreams to figure out what they want.

Butter: Why does she want to find out what they want?

Snuzzle: So that she can help them, dummy!

Butter & Fluff: Oooooh.

Dreamweaver: Butter, Snuzzle and Fluff, bring now the dust, that the sleepers may myself their dreams entrust.

Snuzzle: She wants that pollen you collected from the Dizzy Bell flower. Hand it over.

Butter: What? I don't have it? Last time I saw it was with Fluff.

Snuzzle: Fluff, give me the powder.

Fluff: Me? Why would I have it? Butter was the one who gathered it. Ask her.

Butter: I don't have it.

Fluff: Yes you do! Stop lying!

Butter: What? Why you scruffy little ratbag! [They start whacking each other].

Dreamweaver: Oh look, here it is! [Takes the powder and sprinkles it over Fleur].

Dreamweaver: Let this, the stuff of flowers' day delight invite thy dreamer's self to join me tonight. [Fleur's dream self rises].

Fleur: What? Where am I? What the? Ooooh. Oh, hello. Who are you? And look, such cute little bears.

All bears: What? Cute? We're not cute, we're tough!

Dreamweaver: Quiet yourselves and behold this vision, whose dream self awakened now stands amongst us, the subconscious risen.

Fleur: Dream self? What? This is a dream? [She looks at her sleeping companions]. But what am I doing here?

Dreamweaver: I have brought you into my world so that I might meet you and perhaps see your purpose unfurled.

Fleur: See my what unfurled?

Fluff: She wants to know what you're doing and where you're going.

Fleur: Oh, OK. we're looking for the city of Effluvium, but we're lost and have no idea which way to go.

Dreamweaver: Effluvium? That's on Mt Loftus, only two days from here, but as the path takes you higher you have no choice but to pass through the tempting Village of Desire.

Fleur: Desire?

Dreamweaver: The very land of joy where there was naught but celebration and each object was a toy...

Butter: Yes, that was until...

Fleur: Until what? [Bears look at each other during an awkward silence].

Fleur: What? What? What is it?

All bears: JCB

Fleur: What's JCB?

Fluff: The miserable Tree-Eating Dragon, JCB ruined it all.

Fleur: What? Did you say a miserable tree-eating dragon?

Snuzzle: Yes, but JCB wasn't always like this, he wasn't always miserable. The day he moved into the village, you couldn't imagine a happier dragon.

Butter: In the beginning when he arrived, he got straight to work digging tree-holes for the new saplings and soak pits for the village's composting toilets.

Fluff: And then when his work was done, he'd play with the children, giving them rides in his shovel and filling the forest with laughter.

Fleur: And then what happened?

Fluff: Then he got his new orders.

Fleur: New orders?

Butter: Yeah, you know from Uwanto.

Fleur: The Soft Drink Company? The one that wants to block the river?

Dreamweaver: "And a force would threaten to darken the land, stealing joy in the name of progress."

Fluff: That's the one. So one day, some Uwanto reps turn up and say that playtime is over and that JCB had to stop playing and get to work digging a service road for the factory.

Snuzzle: And since that day he was never the same. No longer the happy-go-lucky dragon, he became a mean, nasty dragon.

Butter: Didn't play with the children any more.

Fluff: Told them to leave him alone.

Butter: He threatened to destroy everything.

Butter: And now he's blocked the road to the village.

Snuzzle: No one gets in.

Fluff: And no one gets out.

Butter: And that's going to be a problem for you.

Snuzzle: Because that's the only road to Effluvium.

Fleur: Well OK then, if that's the only road, I guess it's the road for us. Thank you for visiting me in my dream. As soon as I wake up, we'll be on our way.

Dreamweaver: I return now you to your sleeping rest so that you may resume your quest. But before I do, please accept a gift that comes from a tree to you. This hopenut that grows on this hopenut tree, grows between dreams and reality. [She takes a nut from the tree]. Only when hope has left all but you, may you crack this nut to make your dreams come true! [Puts something like a coconut in her hand].

SFX: OTHERWORLDLY CHIME, WITH LONG, TAILING REVERB

Fleur: Me? [Takes hopenut]. No no no I'm not a special visitor, I just fell here by accident. I'm just trying to save the river and my village...

Dreamweaver: Now my beauty let sleep your eyes endear, to awake restored and your direction clear. [Fleur lies back down].

END DREAMWEAVER MUSIC; LIGHTS UP, BLACK LIGHTS OFF

[Fleur wakes up].

Fleur: OMG what a crazy dream!

Brace: Huh? What? Whoa. How long did we sleep for?

Chikoo: Yeah. Aaaah [stretches], that's better! Nothing like a good night's sleep.

Walnut: Uh-huh, [looking at the top of the cliff] yeah, agreed, but now we're super lost. Where are we? How are we ever going to find the way to Mt Loftus now?

Fleur: I had this insane dream last night where some kind of glowing woman and three bears spoke to me and told me the way out of here to Mt Loftus.

Chikoo: What? Really? Which way?

Fleur: No, c'mon. You know how dreams work. It's obviously a subconscious expression of my wish that someone would just show us the way. Ha! And in my dream, she gave me a present. Wonder what that meant?

Walnut: What? What did she give you?

Fleur: Some kind of nut, the dream ended before I had a chance to look. She just put in my hand here [looks at her hand] and what? What is this? But, this is it! This is the present she gave me! But how can it be here, real, when it was given to me in a dream?

Brace: What is it? Looks like a nut or something.

Fleur: Oh yeah, she said it was a hopenut.

Walnut: Cool, can we eat it? I'm starving !

Fleur: No! She said to only crack it when when "hope has left all but you, may you crack this nut to make your dreams come true."

Chikoo: Maybe it was more than just a dream. Maybe she was some kind of magical creature that can visit your dreams in like an alternate reality.

Walnut: OK whatever! But if that's real, then maybe the directions she gave you are real too. Which way did she say to go?

Fleur: Uuuuh... that way. [Points]. She said there's only one road and it's blocked by a grumpy dragon.

Chikoo: What? A dragon?

Fleur: Yaaaaah, she said that there was a dragon. This is all so weird.

Walnut: Well where else are we going to go? We can't get back up the cliff and even if we did the Guardians would be up there waiting for us. We've got no choice but to follow dream-girl's directions.

Brace: Straight into the jaws of a grumpy dragon.

Fleur: Exactly! You got a better idea? C'mon let's go. [She puts the Dreamweaver's gift in her bag]. We'll deal with that dragon when we get to it.

Eyeball: But eternal delights and never-ending nights, Oh I can't wait to get Desire in my sights! Only a day's walk from here. There they have everything. Field after field of fruit-laden trees, unlimited delights unto infinity.

[Exit].

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE 8 - THE VILLAGE OF DESIRE

The village of DESIRE is a
Fairy tale founded on satisfaction
Anything else than pleasure
Was considered a distraction.

The fraction of action
To give satisfaction
By instant gratification
Was simply a measure
Of the personal pleasure
Inflated by multiplication.

Their food was organic
And amply dynamic like
The permacultivated produce of Solitude.

Fertilised every day by the
DESIRONIAN'S droppings
Since they were broad-minded
Enough not to think it rude.

But nor did they slink from
The pleasurable work
That manufactured their enjoyment,
In fact because everyone
Did what they liked
There was one hundred
Percent employment.

But like the shadow of night
That falls on your plight
When all you pursue is pleasure

Or the pitfalls and traps
Put there to collapse
Your daily hunt for treasure.

A terrible dragon had taken
To terrorise the lives
Of these tiny town folk.

They tried to disgrace
And laugh in its face
But in the end it
Just wasn't a joke.

If ever there was a monster
Technically designed to scare
The wits out of the innocent people
Who just happened to be where
The pursuit of happiness
Is a high priority
It's the scandalous invention
The deaded JCB.

It's fowl and growls
And fasts and howls
And move by hydraulic suction
It's tiny brain explains
It's claim to wreak ruin
And destruction.

He roars and snores and claws at God's creation
It's a devil, it's evil intent is devastation.
Unaware that he causes a holocaust
In the mass of carbon dioxide he exhausts

The worst thing was that it was temperamental
It's temper instrumental to see,
But the mayor of Desire was sure that he had the solution to deal with the JCB.

Gormand: The time has come for the tyranny to end. No longer will we the good people of Desire suffer under the reign of terror wrought by JCB the Dragon. To dispatch this loathsome beast from our lives, I have summoned here none other than the finest, fittest and most attractive warrior that Desire has to offer. None here can be unfamiliar with the radiant power and perfection that is Agapanthus!

MUSIC: HERO MUSIC

Agapanthus: I, Agapanthus, will now, with my superior fitness, muscles, symmetry, agility, and crushing good looks, quickly dismiss JCB to the scrapyard where he belongs. How? First I will hypnotise him with my beauty and dizzy him with my cultivated natural, aromatic body fragrance, acquired from years of sleeping in Sandalwood shavings and drinking pure jasmine tea, then I will dispatch this thing to the wrecking yard, never more to trouble innocent Desironians with his grumpiness. [Enter JCB].

SFX: LARGE ENGINE, MISFIRING AND BADLY- TUNED

All: Gasp!

Agapanthus: Fear not! Watch now as I make good on my promise with a single blow from Excalibrate.

SFX: SWORD REMOVED FROM SHEATH, RINGING

Agapanthus: Behold foul beast! Meet now thy match, for it is with absolute surety that I can confidently say that you have never gazed upon one so fit, charming, or fearsome as me, the great and humble Agapanthus. Prepare to be rendered into metal shavings with a mighty blo... [JCB grabs sword in teeth and eats it while he's boasting].

Agapanthus: No! Not my Crystal Scimitar, not Excalibrate, that's a one-off and it's my shiniest sword! Give it back. [JCB continues to eat Agapanthus' sword].

All: Oooh. Aaah. Ooooo.

Agapanthus: Aaaaah! [Runs away].

Gormand: Oh dear. Hmmmm. Sooo, what was Plan B?

Canapé: Ah there was no Plan B your Honour, remember? You were so sure that Agapanthus would turn JCB into scrap metal that you had me prepare a victory feast.

Gormand: Well then, I suppose the day isn't a complete waste. Let's eat! [Some people start to leave as Chikoo, Brace, Fleur, Walnut and Eyeball enter].

JCB: Not so fast Mayor Horsefly, if I understand correctly, you brought that warrior here to destroy me. It was your express purpose to have him, -PAUSE- how did he put it: "dispatch me -PAUSE- to the wrecking yard"?

Gormand: Well, you have to understand. You've been in such a bad mood lately and now you've blocked the road. Look here! These weary travellers have obviously walked far to get here and now they will remain hungry and thirsty because of you. Is that what you want? You used to be so friendly and kind and nice. What happened? We all loved you like...

JCB: Shut up! Enough -PAUSE- of your sentimental nonsense! [Pushes the mayor back into the crowd and terrorises everyone]. Times have changed! I've changed! Get used to it. Uwanto is here now and when they've built their factory, things will never go back to the way they were. Now -PAUSE- get out of here all of you, for the next few minutes may contain -PAUSE- scenes disturbing to some viewers. [JCB advances on Mayor as he retreats. Desironians run offstage].

Fleur: Chikoo! JCB's obviously in pain. There's something wrong with him. Why else would he act like this? You're a trained Therapeutic Wholistic Mechanic. Can't you do something?

Chikoo: Well I'm not actually, technically trained. I'm more kind of -PAUSE- self-taught.

Brace: Whatever! You're so good with machines. You can do this. Go work your magic.

Walnut: Yeah Chikoo. Go get him, but be careful, he looks super grumpy. [Desironians return hesitantly].

Chikoo: OK, here goes. [She walks slowly towards JCB. The crowd holds its breath]. Uh hello, Mr Dragon.

JCB: What? Who are you? -PAUSE- Travellers? Get out of here before I fry you like a poppadom.

Chikoo: OK, OK, sure, we're leaving, but before we go, I couldn't help noticing that sound: you seem to be misfiring a lot.

JCB: What? So what if I am? What business is it of yours? And what would you know about misfiring anyway?

Chikoo: Quite a bit actually and I think I might be able to help you. Misfiring doesn't feel very nice does it?

JCB: Of course it doesn't feel nice! But how would you know that? You're not a machine!

Chikoo: [Slowly approaching] With your permission, if I could just make one small adjustment... [she suddenly runs behind JCB and turns a knob and his engine sound suddenly improves].

JCB: What are you doing? Get away from me. Why, you interfering, troublesome tweaker, ooo -PAUSE- when I get my digger on you, you'll be...you'll be...you'll be...

Chikoo: Feels better huh?

JCB: I suppose it does feel a bit better.

Chikoo: How would you like to feel a lot better?

JCB: What do you mean?

Chikoo: Let me have a closer look at you and see what's going on under the bonnet.

JCB: Hmmmm. Alright, but no funny business. One wrong move and I'll woodchip you.

Chikoo: OK got it: No funny business I promise. [She approaches]. Alright let's have a look. OK, your battery's charged, there's plenty of spirit in the tank. Ahah! Here's your problem: the contacts on your psychic spark plug are clogged with confusion and black with obedience. [She takes a brush out of her bag]. Let's just scrub that off. Now a little spray of soul vent 59. That'll vent some some pent up soul. Ha ha ha. [JCB laughs].

I recognise these symptoms: you're suffering from Chronic Futility Syndrome. We're going to need to reset your system, so I'm going to give you [looks in her bag]...

JCB: Please no anti-robotics

Chikoo: No no, it's all psychopathic.

So, 150mg of Purpose; 300mg of Courage; and let's just give you the entire bottle of Rebootium. JCB, listen I'm sorry, but we're going to have to push-start you. I'm gonna need everyone's help here. C'mon now, push! [They try twice and the engine starts and runs perfectly].

MUSIC: JCB SONG & ROCK N ROLL DANCE

JCB: Sparking gasket! I feel amazing! I feel incredible! I had completely forgotten what it felt like to, just be me. This is incredible! Thank you, Thank you, Thank you! I never want to go back to how I was. I'm never cutting another tree in my life! I just want to go back to digging tree holes and playing games with the children.

Fleur: So you mean you don't want to destroy the village any more?

JCB: Of course not! This is my -SOBBING PAUSE- home!

Walnut: And you'll let us pass?

JCB: Absolutely! How can I ever repay you for giving me new life? And you [to Chikoo] You're some kind mechanico-energetic genius!

MUSIC: CHIKOO SONG

Gormand: Well, this is wonderful news! And cause for celebration. Please join us tonight as our guests of honour.

Eyeball: Yaaaaah! Let's par-tay! Woo-hoo! Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!

Fleur: Well, actually, we've really got to get going early in the morning...

Canapé: Nonsense! You're not going anywhere tomorrow until you've enjoyed a hearty breakfast of fresh googleberry pancakes and whipped butternut cream....

Eyeball: Yesssss!

Walnut: C'mon Fleur! We've been travelling so hard and we've been through so much. Couldn't we just stop for a little while? [EB with big eyes staring at Fleur].

Chikoo: Yeah! I could really go for some fresh googleberry pancakes and whipped butternut cream...

Brace: I'd love to tour your waste-processing and water-recycling systems, to learn how you do it.

Gormand: Then it's decided! You're all staying with us in Desire for as long as you, well, desire! Ha ha ha.

Fleur: Well, I suppose we could stay for a little while. It does seem very nice and you're all so friendly...

Canapé: That's the spirit! C'mon!

[They all exit].

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE 9 - THE MORNING AFTER

If eyeball had been a racehorse
He would have been a bad bet
You don't put your money on a screwball
And yet
He had what it takes to take what he got
The wherewithal to strike while the iron is hot.

He had what you might call a philosophy
That life is whatever you make it to be

And as far as it went he knew what mattered
He knew which side of the bread is buttered.
But also there comes a point when the spiritual guide
Needs to gather his gadgets and step aside
To allow our questers to follow their noses
Into whatever the fateful future proposes.

LIGHTS UP.

[Fleur and gang are all asleep on pillows and beanbags, when Canapé and the Mayor enter with a tray of coffee].

Gormand: Good morning sleepyheads! Who wants a hot cup of freshly-ground Jumpstart? [She delivers cups to everyone].

Fleur: Oooooh, thanks. What time is it? What day is it?

Canape: It's sometime in the middle of the morning and today is a big day! It's the Lunar Eclipse and you're all invited to the Festival, where there'll be delicious googleberry....

Fleur: Wait? What did you say? The Eclipse...Oh my god, the Eclipse! We have to go! We have to rescue Cassandra!

Chikoo: But how? How will we free her?

Fleur: What? [Hurriedly packing her bag] I don't know, but staying here any longer is definitely not going to save us or the river from Uwanto.

Gormand: But must you go so soon? Just stay one more night. We're preparing your favourite dish for dinner tonight: Scramble-bean Corumbu...

Brace, Chikoo & Walnut: Mmmmm, Scramble-bean Corumbu.

Fleur: Scramble-bean Corumbu you say? Well I suppose we could stay ooooone more... Wait a minute! What am I saying? No no no no no! We have to go, now! Otherwise we'll never leave!

Canapé: Well, then at least take these sandwiches for the road [hands over sandwiches].

Brace: Thanks [takes sandwiches]. [Eyeball hasn't moved and continues to eat grapes].

Chikoo: Eyeball! Eyeball! You coming?

Eyeball: No way! What fool would up and leave this deliciousness for definite suffering and guaranteed viciousness. From here on it gets hard and I'm just not in the mood, so I thought I might stay here for a little more food.

Chikoo: What?

Eyeball: I think I've done all I that I can, and from this point on, am no longer needed in the plan.

Fleur: But this whole quest was your idea!

Eyeball: Was it? Oh yes. Well I'm sure you'll be fine, bye bye, see you later. [To Mayor] Could I have a little more googleberry wine? [Mayor pours wine].

Brace: Alright Eyeball, well thanks for everything.

Eyeball: A pleasure my boy, and remember this: "when it really begins, look for answers within."

Chikoo: I think I've heard just about enough waffly philosophy for one day. Let's go!

Eyeball: Did someone say something about Scrumble-bean Corumbu?

[They exit].

SCENE 10 - THE GATES OF EFFLUVIA

There's a clearly discernible distinction
That scientists insist they have found
Between people who live in the forest
And the citizens who live in the town.

The town, they say is run on permission
And the insatiable need to take names
It's fueled by an insatiable suspicion
That there aren't enough rules to the games.

The forest life is also insatiable
with its scorpion ants, bats, dirt and dust.
But true to peasant tradition
Its demonstrably founded on trust.

The urban reality comes with a price
In fact it's a very close shave
On one hand
It's skating on very thin ice.
On the other
It's back to life in the cave.
The country life by comparison
Ideally lives in a tree
Untrammelled by the glamour of progress
The engine of bureaucracy.

In the end it's the name
That we give to the game
That defines human unity.

Because we are who we are
And we do what we like

It's called bio-diversity
And it ain't gonna change
Until it's way outa range
And we call it a catastrophe.

SONG: HOW CAN WE ASSIST YOU?

[Four people sit at a table all busily shuffling papers and signing, stamping, stapling and hole-punching. The ground is littered with crumpled balls of paper and other assorted rubbish as the bureaucrats absent-mindedly throw papers and other rubbish over their shoulder onto the ground].

Bracket: [Without looking up]. Next! [Brace, Chikoo, Fleur and Walnut enter, looking bemusedly around].

Binder: [Without looking up]. Come in, come in! We don't have all day! [The four approach the table].

Fleur: Ah hi, we're look....

Stamper: Welcome to the city of Effluvium. What is the Purpose of your visit?

Fleur: Ah what? Purpose of our visit? Ah, well we're ah here, to see Cassandra.

Clipboard: [All look up]. Cassandra?

Bracket: Well that's impossible! -PAUSE- The Magistrates have locked her up -PAUSE- and the only key in existence hangs around the neck of the Head Magistrate, -PAUSE- Madam Pompous Crumpet.

Binder: Cassandra has been locked up forever and that's that.

Stamper: Too many big ideas they say.

Chikoo: But how does she eat?

Clipboard: I heard that there's only one person allowed to visit her, -PAUSE- to bring her food, once a day.

Bracket: Ssssshhhhh! Silence! [Angrily]. You know that no one is to speak a word about Cassandra! All comments have been disabled [All look down]. So, alternative purpose of visit?

Brace: We just told you, we're here to rescue....

Walnut: Aaaah remedy! Yes, we're here to bring Rescue Remedy. We heard that there was a shortage of rescue remedy in Effluvium and we're here to make more.

Binder: Alright. Have you located suitable accommodation within Effluvium?

Walnut: We won't be staying long. Only 'til the full moon.

Stamper: Can you demonstrate that you have sufficient funds to sustain yourself in Effluvium until the full moon?

Chikoo: Ah, we have everything we need right here, in our bags. We brought sandwiches.

Clipboard: Alright, then you can enter as Friends of Effluvium.

Bracket: [Stamp documents, sign papers and hand over cards]. Here are your Effluvo-Cards. [Bell rings].

Binder: Tea-time! [They start to leave, then stops and turns]. Ah yes, I almost forgot, to guide and help you acclimatise, to keep you in line and assist with any interface issues. Two mentors please! [Rings a bell]. Enjoy your stay in Effluvium! [Bureaucrats exit].

[Talcum and Puff enter, dressed in florid, 16th-century English clothing, with pink curly wigs and white face paint, three-quarter pants and white stockings. Their shoes are pointy with little bows on top of them].

Talc: I am Talcum [Talcum introduces herself with a dramatic Louis the XIV-style flourish]. Enchantée!

Puff: And I am Puff [Puff does the same]. At your service!

Walnut: Wow. Why are you dressed so funny?

Fleur: Walnut! Manners!

Chikoo: Are you clowns?

Brace: Hahahaha!

Fleur: GUYS! I'm so sorry. It's just that we've never seen anyone dressed like, like, well like you.

Puff: Not at all. Of course you haven't. Here in Effluvium, we dress how we feel. We express ourselves and our unique individuality.

Talcum: Our freedom of expression is a reflection of our advanced civilisation. Sometimes we also just laugh when we feel like. Hahahaha!

Puff: Here in Effluvium we're encouraged to take pride in our work, regardless of what it is.

Talc: For example, we have the honour of being responsible for the dirty laundry of the city officials. We wash all their dirty laundry and we love every minute of it. Our life here is near perfection!

Puff: If not for that horrid sludge lake at the bottom of the mountain, in fact it would be perfect. There it is getting bigger every day and -SIGH- no one knows why.

Talc: But soon Uwanto will come to save the city with its amazing Uwanto Factory.

Puff: It'll be the biggest Uwanto bottling plant ever built.

Talc: It will process all the sludge and make it go away and also [takes a brochure out of her pocket] "construct Uwanto Towers- affordable luxury apartment medium-density accommodation solutions". Guess who's movinggggg?

Puff: Pity about the river though.

Talc: Yeaah.

Puff: But that's the price of progress. Hey are you thirsty? Would you like a drink?

Brace: Yes! Thank you. I'm super thirsty.

Talcum: Well then you're in luck, because ever since Uwanto partnered with the city, they've given us all the Uwanto we can drink. For free!

Puff: Isn't it great?

Brace: Uh OK. Do you maybe just have some water?

Puff: Nope! All the city's water now goes into Uwanto, it's a synthetic-flavoured vitamin drink. It's good for you!

Talc: Drink up!

SFX: FIZZY BOTTLE OPENING

[Brace opens the bottle and drinks. Judging by his expression, it obviously it isn't the most delicious drink in the world].

Puff: Isn't it great?

Brace: Mmmmm. Yeah. [Makes a disgusted face]. It's delicious.

Talc & Puff: It's an acquired taste. You'll get used to it eventually. It's good for you!

Brace: [Hands back unfinished bottle]. Mmmm thanks. I've had enough.

Puff: Finished already? But it's still almost full.

Brace: Thanks. Suddenly I don't feel thirsty any more.

Puff: OK! Well we don't need that any more [she throws the bottle into a big drain in the middle of the stage].

Chikoo: Whoa! What are you doing? You don't want to finish it? And that's a good bottle. You could have reused it for something else.

Talc: Reuse it! Hahahaha. You're funny. Why would we reuse it, when we have an infinite supply?

Puff: Hahaha. Look they're free! [Takes another bottle and drops in the drain].

Walnut: Do you just throw everything away?

Puff: Sure do!

Talc: Absolutely!

Fleur: But where does it go?

Puff: Where does it....? Huh. [To Talc and the others]. Hahaha. Talcum? [Talc walks over to the drain and presses a big red button that says "Flush"].

Talc: Listen to this.

SFX: FLUSH SOUND, FOLLOWED BY DISTANT GURGLING AS IF DISAPPEARING DOWN PIPES

Puff & Talc: It goes...away!

Chikoo: But where is away?

Talc: Who cares? It's gone. We never have to worry about it again.

Fleur: You just throw everything into this drain?

Puff: No silly! There are many drains all over the city. We also throw things into the toilet.

Talc: Yeah, it's super convenient, especially when you're at home.

Chikoo: Everything into the toilet?

Puff: Yep! It's great! Plastic bags, food scraps, old shoes... it all just disappears, forever. [Brace has wandered to the edge of the stage and taken a telescope out of his bag].

Brace: I don't think it just disappears. I have an idea where it goes.

Puff: Huh? What? What did you say?

Brace: I said I know where all your rubbish goes after you throw it away.

Talc: Hahahaha. So do we, it goes...

Talc & Puff:...Away!

Fleur: [Walks to Brace]. What do you mean Brace?

Brace: Look [hands her the telescope].

Fleur: Eeeuuuuuh. What's that? [Puff, Talc and the others come downstage].

Brace: It's your sludge lake and there are the two bottles [looks through telescope] you just threw in the drain. I can see them with my Farlooker.

Puff: What? But that's impossible! Those bottles were probably thrown there by some irresponsible citizen.

Chikoo: OK, let's do a test. Put something unique in the drain and see if it comes out in the lake.

Talc: What nonsense! To prove to you that there is absolutely no connection between the drains and the lake, I will flush my beautiful red scarf monogrammed with my initials, down the drain and you will see that it disappears forever and does not end up in the lake.

Puff: Not your custom Pashmina?

Talc: Pish posh, I was growing tired of it anyway and it's for a good cause. Sayonnara Pashmina! [Drops scarf in the drain, and presses flush].

SFX: FLUSH & GURGLE

Puff: Oh you're so noble! [Gives Talc a small round of applause]. [Brace looks through his telescope. The others rush to downstage to see if the scarf appears in the lake].

Talc: [Remains where she is]. You can look all you like, as long as you like, but you

will never see my beautiful scarf in the Sludge lake, because there is absolutely no connection between the drains and the...

Brace: There it is! [Talc turns her head towards Brace].

Chikoo: Yep, there it is, it just surfaced on the edge of the lake.

Puff: [Rushes over to look. Brace hands her the telescope. Puff takes it awkwardly and then looks]. But that's impossible!

Talc: What's impossible?

Puff: But how can it be? Your pashmina, it's there. I recognise it.

Talc: Let me see that thing! [Looks through telescope]. But what? My pashmina in the sludge! Inconceivable! What is this tube of lies?

Brace: It's my invention, I call it a Farlooker because it allows you to see far. It does not lie. What you see is true.

Talc: But if that is true, then everything I have believed all my years in this city is false! Everything we throw in the drains doesn't just go away, it goes into the lake?

Puff: Is it possible, we are the cause of the sludge lake? Oh my god. Through our ignorance, we've created our own disaster! We're the problem!

Chikoo: And the disaster you've created isn't just your problem. It's affecting the entire river. The sludge is spilling into the river, turning it pink, for some reason.

Talc: Pink you say? That could only be our famous hair-pinkening shampoo. But that would mean that...

Fleur: Everything that goes into your drains, shower water, sewage, rubbish, it all just pours into the lake.

Puff: But don't panic, it's all going to be OK. When the new Uwanto factory is ready, it'll suck up all the sludge and turn it into healthy Uwanto drinks.

Chikoo: But it's going to destroy the river in the process!

Talc: I suppose that's the price of progress. But once the housing complex is built, you'll all be able to buy apartments in the Uwanto towers. That's what they told us.

Walnut: But I don't want to live in an apartment! I want to live on the river, like I always have.

Brace: Is the Uwanto factory the only solution? Now that you know you're creating the sludge lake, couldn't you just put less rubbish into the drains and toilets?

Puff: That would have been a brilliant idea a month ago, but now it's too late. The fireflies choose the new Oracle tonight.

Chikoo: Yes, we know.

Talc: The Magistrates have ensured that there will be only one candidate on the Mountain tonight - Madam Pompous Crumpet.

Walnut: Wait, but that means Madam Pompous Crumpet will become the new Oracle tonight!

Puff: Exactly. After that, she'll have ultimate power over Effluvium. We'll have to do whatever she says. The guardians will make sure of that.

Talc: Her first act as Oracle will be to authorise Prosperopolis to blast the hillside and block the river so that they can start building the Uwanto Factory.

Brace: Prosperopolis?

Talc: Doxianous Prosperopolis, head of Uwanto Corporation.

Chikoo: We can't let that happen!

Walnut: We have to free Cassandra!

Puff: That's impossible. The only key to her prison hangs on a chain around Madam Crumpet's neck.

Talc: You'll never get anywhere near it.

Brace: But if the residents realise that their behaviour is creating the sludge, then we don't need Uwanto. They just need to change their behaviour.

Talc: I just don't think that that's going to happen. You'd have to convince the Magistrates, who don't listen to anyone.

Puff: Except Prosbertopolis.

Fleur: We have to at least try!

Chikoo: OK, then let's go. Where are these Magistrates?

Puff: I'll show you, but I keep telling you: it's too late. It's already getting dark!

EXIT.

SCENE 11 - THE MAGISTRATES

To be a magistrate

It is crucial

To assume an air of
Expertise,

You are then officially
Entitled to wave your
Finger as you please.

You can assume an air of
Self-importance
And be taken seriously.

Than you can make sort of
Majestic pronouncement
Imperiously.

It doesn't really matter
Whether you know
What you're talking about,
Just to have a strong opinion
And when in doubt to shout.

AFTER ALL

An opinion is only a distraction
From the global main attraction
It's the vain claim of
An ego to a brain
It's a vortex of confusion
In a toilet of delusion
It's a conviction that

We're all just going down the drain.
You have at your fingertips
An amazing amount of power,
That you can wield
From a coffee-powered
Armchair, ensconced
In an ivory tower.

And if you countenance any uncertainty,
Don't let it show
For you have the authority
To pronounce yes or no.

On environmental issues
You can also be a judge,
About who should be
Responsible for the
Collective sludge.

There's nowhere in the city
It can possibly go
So let's pour it into the
Forest, Nobody will
Ever know.

And from there it will find
Its way into the lake
Where it will be turned
Into UWANTO
For everybody's sake.

[On an imposing raised series of chairs, sit five men and women in black robes. Floorwax, Calculus, Sequin, Crackling and Crumpet. The one in the middle wears a red hat. Around her neck hangs a large empty ring. On either side stand city officials in orange robes. All wear fez-like hats and have large orange circles painted on tunics].

Floorwax: Are the Funding Applicants ready Calculus?

Calculus: Madam Pompous Crumpet, please welcome: Queen Offyougho.

Queen Offyougho: Greetings O radiant eminences, all I request is 17 billion Snapples for the construction of my Maniacal Mansions in the community of Extravagance.

Crumpet: All in favour?

All: Aye!

Calculus: Introducing Doxianous Prosptopolis from Uwanto Corporation.

Crumpet: Hey Doxo. What is up my dude? Was that a great night last night or what? High five!

Doxianous: Yeah. [High five].

Crumpet: So what can we help you with today? [Winks obviously].

Doxianous: Oh, I don't suppose you could loan/give me 150 dodeca trillion snapples for the Uwanto Factory and Residential Towers?

Crumpet: All in favour?

All: Aye!

Calculus: Well that's everyone your radiant eminences, we have a delicious buffet of deep-fried namby-puffs awaiting us at the banquet before we get ready for the Naming of the Oracle ceremony tonight. Madame Pompous Crumpet, this is a big night for you, so I say we wrap this... [A scruffy-looking artist-type, Rosella Smoothie, speaks from the back of the room].

Rosella Smoothie: Uh, wait a second, what about us?

Calculus: Hah? What? And who are you?

Rosella: I'm Rosella, Rosella Smoothie. Remember, I spoke with you a month ago about our application. I gave you the form.

Calculus: [Flipping quickly through the clipboard]. Sorry, but you're not on the list.

Rosella: Yes, we are. [Goes over to him]. Right here [puts finger on list].

Calculus: Oh hahahaha, yes, I see you there. Can't even read my own writing [Mags all laugh]. Um, oh yes, Rosella Smoothie from Scruffulous Forest. Alright, alright! But make it quick. As you know Madam Crumpet must prepare for the ceremony tonight, and We have a banquet to get to.

Rosella: All we request is twenty Snapples for the Alternative Autonomous Pilgrims Gathering Community Dinner Performance.

Floorwax: What? twenty Snapples? Outrageous! For what? A community dinner performance? You think you can just go around here doing what you want?

Sequin: Who do they think they are? [Mags all chuckle dismissively]. Such irreverence. How can you expect us to support you if there is no reverence?

Crackling: It is clearly our mandate to discourage exactly this sort of thing. All opposed?

Rosella: What sort of thing? You didn't even come to see the last thing we did.

Crackling: We don't need to. We know your kind. All: Nay.

Crumpet: We unanimously agree that you set a bad example to the community. Zero snapples for you and zero snapples for your irreverent project!

Rosella: But, it's a community event, its...

Floorwax: Enough! The Magistrates have spoken! That is final. There is no discussion. Good-bye. [Fleur, Brace, Walnut, Eyeball, Chikoo, Talcum and Puff enter looking over their shoulder at the people being carried out. The Mags are standing now getting ready to leave].

Puff: Your eminences, ah, before you leave, these visitors have come up with a plan to reduce the sludge and save the river.

Sequin: [Absent-mindedly stacking papers and talking to other Mags]. Mmmm-hm.

And what would be the nature of this plan? [To Mag] Yeah, ha ha ha, he said the fuzzlepuffs were sent all the way from Munkville...

Talc: These visitors have observed that the things that we throw in our drains do not just go ‘away’.

Crumpet: Oh really? How interesting. And if these things do not go just away, where do they go then?

Puff: Into the Sludge lake. [Mags stop talking, look at each other as if their secret has been revealed, and then look at the travellers].

Brace: Yes, the sludge lake is no longer a mystery. It’s the result of the residents throwing all their waste into the city drains and toilets. We saw it with our own eyes. [Mags all look at each other, then burst into smug, guffawing laughter].

Crackling: Well of course it is!

Talc: What? [Looks at the travellers]. You know that the sludge lake is caused by the residents?

Crumpet: Hahaha. [Dripping with condescension] My dear girl, this is common knowledge amongst us city leaders, we just saw no reason to trouble the common people with information that is beyond their capacity to understand.

Puff: Beyond our capacity to understand? You mean that you’ve allowed us all to unknowingly contribute to the sludge, without sharing this information?

Crumpet: What would be the point? The residents would never change their habits. I mean wouldn’t you rather throw your waste in your toilet then what? Separate it into organic, inorganic, glass, metal, reduce, reuse, recycle, repair, create a compost pile? Ew!

Sequin: Ha! Next you’ll be suggesting that we grow vegetables with the compost, and water our gardens from our showers and sinks! [Mags laugh].

Crackling: And anyway. There’s no need for all that. From now on Uwanto will take care of all our problems! They will be in charge of the sludge and the water.

Fleur: But to do this, you're going to block the river?

Sequin: Of course! You don't get something for nothing.

Chikoo: But what about all the villages? What will happen to them?

Calculus: They'll move into apartments in Uwanto Residential Towers, which will feature swimming pools, fuzzieball courts, horse-parking and much, much more. Welcome to the future!

Sequin: Anyway, these river villages represent inefficient land use.

Walnut: But where will they get the money to buy these apartments?

Crumpet: Loans my boy, that they'll be able to pay off by working in the Uwanto Factory. Isn't it great?

Floorwax: So, as you see, we've thought of everything! You don't need to worry,

Crackling: In fact, you don't even need to think, all you need to do is what you're told because it's all been fully planned and we know best.

Crumpet: Once I am Oracle, [rubs hands together, looks enthusiastically at other magistrates and chuckles dangerously] every resident of Effluvium will hang on our every word!

Brace: But what about Cassandra? I heard she was a student of the previous Oracle. Shouldn't she also be part of the Firefly selection process?

Calculus: Hahahaha. I don't expect you, a river-dweller to understand. She has no office experience, no planning qualifications and no accounting training.

Sequin: We removed her from the process to avoid embarrassing her.

Crumpet: She's being safely held under lock and only key. [Crumpet holds up key hanging around her neck]. Hahaha.

Floorwax: Thanks to our actions, order will be restored!

Crackling: No more tedious listening to ‘what the residents want’. From tomorrow, progress will be quick and efficient.

Calculus: Let nothing stand in the way of progress!

Crumpet: And now, we have a banquet to enjoy, a river to dam and a factory to build!

Crackling: Farewell! Dismissed! [Magistrates leave, chuckling and slapping each other in the back].

Fleur: Oh my god, we have to free Cassandra!

Chikoo: We've got to make sure she's at the Ceremony tonight.

Walnut: But how? You saw the key hanging around Crumpet's neck. We're never going to get anywhere near it. It's hopeless!

Fleur: We have to try! Talcum, Puff, can you lead us to the Vault?

Talc: Of course! And the good news is that they're so confident no one will ever break the door or the lock that it's almost never guarded.

Puff: The bad news is they're right: the Vault was built centuries ago from unbreakable materials to protect scrolls and valuables. In 500 years, nothing has even come close to getting through it.

Fleur: Well, I'm not giving up! Let's go. Talcum show us the way.

Talcum: OK, follow us.

[They exit].

SCENE 12 - OUTSIDE THE VAULT

It's also a fact of a city
That its secured
By lock and key
And that can be
A problem
If you're not Harry Houdini.

When our obsession
With possession
Is defining who we are
Refining how we are driving
In our shiny new car.

It's no wonder we've
Encastellated secrecy
From the occasional
Invasion of our privacy.

But when the purpose
Of the prison is
Political detention
There will always be
A popular support for intervention.

And currently Cassandra
Is such a calamity
That she's gonna need
Some dynamite
If she's ever gonna be free.

But our little band of pilgrims
Is a credibly competent crew.

The brain of their operation
Is their holistic mechanic Chickoo.
And there is an immediate imperative
To do whatever they can
And so it falls to Chickoo
To come up with a plan.

MUSIC: SNEAKY MUSIC

[A vast door with a barred window sits in the middle of the stage. Frangipani enters carrying a tray with a bowl, a jug, a glass and a flower in a small vase].

Frangipani: Dinnertime Cassandra. I've made your favourite: Scrumble-bean pancakes and googleberry syrup! -PAUSE- Cassandra?

Cassandra: Yes. I hear you. How can I be hungry at a time like this?

Frangipani: I know, it's terrible. But what can we do? The guardians have us all scared to death.

Cassandra: But don't they see that this outcome is bad for everyone?

Frangipani: Most of the guardians don't like it either, but they're too scared to disobey the Magistrates.

Cassandra: It's so wrong: How can five people control an entire city?

Frangipani: I wish there was something we could do, but we've got no choice but to just accept it. Oh, they told me not to talk to you. I better leave before they get suspicious.
[She looks around nervously and then leaves. Once she's gone, Talcum, Puff, Walnut, Fleur, Brace and Chikoo sneak in].

Talc: This is it!

Brace: Whoa this door is solid!

Chikoo: No getting past that.

Walnut: I told you this was a stupid idea. Also, I'm getting hungry, when do we eat?

Fleur: Guys focus! Cassandra?!

Cassandra: Hello? Who goes there?

Fleur: Cassandra, my name is Fleur. I received your message in a bottle! And with my friends we have travelled very far to come here to free you.

Cassandra: But what did you say?

Chikoo: We got your message! We're here to help you!

Cassandra: But that is beyond belief! O, I was sure the message had never made it to the river! O Give me your hand! [Fleur and Cassandra hold hands]. Words fail to describe my relief at hearing this news! I cannot imagine how you managed to procure the key, but that is of no consequence! Quick! Open the door so that I may get to ceremony! [Awkward pause while Talcum, Puff, Walnut, Fleur, Brace and Chikoo all look at each other]. Well, what are you waiting for? Open the door! I must be at the ceremony as soon as possible!

Fleur: Well you see, Cassandra, it's ah, like this, we don't uh, actually have the key to the door.

Cassandra: WHAT? You don't have the k...? But what were you thinking? That you were going to just jimmy the hinges? Bend the bars? Pick the lock with a hair clip? You imbeciles! Uh!

Brace: Hey cool down! We'll think of something, right guys?

Cassandra: Well unless it's something that none of the countless kings, queens, warriors and imperial magicians that have attempted to open this door in the past 500 years have thought of, it looks like I'm plain out of luck. Ah! [Through clenched teeth]. Idiots!

Brace: [Examining door] She's right. About the door. It's impenetrable. Chikoo? Any thoughts? Can you do anything?

Chikoo: Uh-uh. I'm in the business of healing broken machines and this machine, perfect health, let me tell you. There's no getting past this door without a key.

Cassandra: THE key! Hanging around the neck of that snake Pompous Crumpet.

Walnut: It's hopeless! I told you! Now what do we do?

Fleur: We have to get that key! Talcum, Puff! Think! There must be a way!

Talc: She wears the key around her neck night and day. The only time she'll ever take it off is for the Possessions Ritual, but that's...

Fleur: The what ritual?

Puff: Just before they climb Mt Loftus, all candidates, the only candidate, are required to remove all possessions to indicate that they have renounced their sense of possession.

Talc: Of course after the ceremony they can just take it all back, which is exactly what Crumpet will do with the key.

Fleur: But that means she'll take off the key for the entire selection ceremony?

Puff: Yes, [sigh] but there's no way we'll get anywhere near it. The possessions are carefully guarded by the highly secretive Possession Committee, whose faces are masked so that no one knows their identity.

Talc: Plus, they will be on extra high alert this time as the main possession in question will be the key to the vault.

Walnut: Masks? Extra high alert? We're doomed! The only person who'll ever see that key other than Pompous Crumpet will be whichever of those masked, mystery goons that Crumpet gives it to!

Chikoo: OMG! Wait. Walnut that's it! You're a genius!

Walnut: I am? I mean of course I am, but...could you explain exactly how I'm a genius?

Chikoo: You just said it: the only person who will have that key other than Crumpet, will be one of those masked goons.

Fleur: Of course! And if they're masked, no one will know who they are!

Brace: I still don't understand how this makes Walnut a genius, or helps us in anyway.

Puff: Surely you're not suggesting...

Chikoo: We sure are! All we have to do is disguise ourselves as the Possession Committee and Crumpet will just hand us the key. Easy!

Fleur: Fabulous. There's just the small issue of where we're going to find these disguises in the next 30 minutes.

Talc: [Clears throat]! As you may recall, you are presently in the company of the proud custodians of the City Official Laundry, where we have a room filled with uniforms of all the city officials, including...the Possession Committee!

Fleur: What? Well what are we waiting for? Let's get to the Laundry! We're running out of time!

Puff: Wait! The Possession Committee has only four members! So who will go?

Walnut: I'll happily sit this one out.

Fleur: No Walnut, this is our quest. [To Talc and Puff] You both have helped us enough. This is our risk to take.

Walnut: Oh god! Well maybe we'll finally get something to eat at this banquet.

[They exit].

SCENE 13 - THE BANQUET

At any self-respecting ceremony
There should be a surplus of food
Where any form of self-indulgence
Would be sure to be seen as rude.
But to keep their feelings secret would be too much to ask
So it's fortunate their faces will be hidden by a mask.

It might not surprise us that beneath their disguises
Our heroes are hungry and tired
But Walnut is famished
His self-control vanished
One small mouthful is all he desired.

But how to engage in a mouthful
When your face isn't there to exist.
And a table laden with scrumptious
Is a temptation too strong to resist.

MUSIC: POSH MEDIEVAL

[A long table filled with fruit and cakes sit in the centre of the room. The five magistrates amongst other men and women in long white robes mill about carrying goblets talking and helping themselves to food from the table. Guardians stand on either side of the room, including Captain Flint Stampede].

Doxianous: [To Stampede] Captain, whatever happened to that bottle that Cassandra threw in the river? Do you think there's any chance that someone might have found it and read her message?

Stampede: Highly unlikely. I saw it destroyed. And even if someone had found the bottle, what could that stupid girl have written that could possibly make anyone go out on a limb to help her? [Mockingly] "Help, help. Come and save me?" Hahaha. No chance!

Doxianous: Good, good. Thank you Captain.

Calculus: [Knocking a fork against his goblet] Ladies and gentlemen, attention, attention! I welcome you all to this auspicious pre-ceremony banquet. Allow me now to draw your attention to the woman of the moment, your soon-to-be new Oracle, Madam Pompous Crumpet! [Applause].

Crumpet: Thank you, thank you. When I am announced as the new Oracle, I will usher in a new age - an age of rule by the chosen one! Gone will be the tedious days of consulting the residents, I...

Doxianous: Yes, once Crumpet is Oracle, we will fire the explosives to dam the River so that work can begin on our glorious new Factory.

Crumpet: Yes, tomorrow the sun will rise on a new... [Fleur, Chikoo, Brace, and Walnut enter wearing blue robes, pointy blue hats and scarves over their faces, looking decidedly out of place, and Fleur trips on a pot plant as they enter]....oh, ladies and gentleman, the Possession Committee has arrived, please all bow [all bow and rise]. But isn't it a bit early for you to begin the ritual? I thought you were meant to come at the end...

Chikoo: [In a fake voice]. Yes, hm hmm, well there was a last-minute change of plans and we, ah...were...ah...

Fleur: ...Advanced to ensure that we had enough time for this important moment of surrendering your, ah, possessions.

Brace: Yes, ha ha ha, yes, we must even surrender our possession of the unexpected, for it is not ours to own.

Doxianous: Oh well said, bravo, bravo [claps and everyone follows]. [Fake Possession Committee look around surprised].

Fleur: So, ah, with any further ado, I'd like to now begin the ceremony...

Crackling: But aren't we meant to wait until after the googleberry toast?

Chikoo: No no, that's all been changed, ah ever since the great Googleberry incident of '75...

Plumpkin: I'm not familiar with that incident, what exactly...

Brace: Of course not, hahaha you're way too young to remember it. Terrible it was, wasn't it? [Looks to Walnut, who has become distracted by the buffet]. Wasn't it?

Walnut: What? Yes yes, it was terrible. [Then slowly sneaks towards the table of food].

Chikoo: And that's why we took an executive decision to change the timing, without warning, just like that.

Doxianous: Are you sure about this?

Fleur: Yes, absolutely, one hundred per cent, so if you could just hand over the key, we'll conclude the ritual and be on our mysterious way [holds out hand].

Crumpet: Well...I suppose...you are the Possession Committee after all, so here you go [removes key from around neck]...promise me you'll keep it closely guarded, I'll be wanting that back tonight.

Chocho (banquet guest): [Walnut has lifted his mask to consume a piece of cake]. Hey! What are you doing? I thought you weren't meant to reveal your identity!

Walnut: Wha? What? Oh yeah. Ah well...Ah, do you recognise me?

Chocho: No, I've never seen you before in my life. You're not from around here!

Walnut: So then you don't know my identity. See?

Plumpkin (another banquet guest): Wait a second, who are you? Do you even live in Effluvium?

Walnut: Um, a I'm mysterious member of the what's it called committee? [Others cringe].

Stampede: [Whips off mask] Wait a second! I recognise you! You're one of those dirty river-dwellers from that crappy little village! [Pulls off Fleur's mask] and you're another one!

Plumpkin: But how could you...You're not the Possession Committee! You're imposters, here to steal the key and free that traitorous girl!

Crumpet: [Pulls key back out of Fleur's hand] And to think I almost handed you the key to the vault! Oooo you meddling, conniving, sneaky, tricky little things. You want to the get into the Vault so badly, you'll have your wish! Guards, seize these criminals and lock them up! [Guards seize the group and hustle them off the stage].

Chocho: Oh dear! Well, in light of things, I propose we better adjourn this banquet and head straight up the mountain. The sooner we get you announced as the Oracle, the better.

Plumpkin: Yes well said! Alright party's over everybody! It's time to climb Mt Loftus!

[They all exit].

SCENE 14 - INSIDE THE VAULT

When you're forced to take your chances
On random circumstances,
There's no telling how the spelling might conspire.

Because as the tale is unfolding
It gets colder as its older.
And increasingly the straits
Are looking dire.

They're forced to muster their resources
Because the force of all the causes
Can only send you crazy
Or go tearing at your hair.

It's in that state of desperation
That the thought of liberation
Reaches deeply into an area where

Your secret thoughts are hidden
And thinking is forbidden
Lest it release the private anguish
That's imprisoned in a prayer:

To be tellingly trapped
In a solitary cell
After what they'd been
Although would be tragic.

Their only resort
Is the thought
That they're caught in a
Maze that's configured by magic.

[Cassandra paces her cell impatiently, glancing anxiously over at the door, when she hears approaching footsteps, and a key turning in the lock].

Cassandra: Oh my god, they did it: they got the key! [The door opens to reveal Crumpet, still holding the key. The guards roughly push the group into the room, then closes the door and speaks through the window].

Stampede: I hope you like your new home, because you're going to be there for a loooong time, depending on how long you live that is! Ahahahaha! Ahahahaha! [Laughing as they walk into the distance]. [Awkward silence falls over the room as Cassandra looks from one to the other of the group].

Cassandra: Are you freaking kidding me? You got caught? And now, not only am I not free, I'm stuck in here with you idiots. I do not believe this. Ah!

Fleur: Your ah, holiness, we failed you. We're so sorry. There's nothing else to say or do.

Chikoo: [To Walnut] This is all your fault you idiot! Why did you have to take off your mask?

Walnut: I was so hungry, and I saw the cake and it looked so yummy and I was so hungry and I didn't think, I didn't think that....

Chikoo: Yeah that's right, you didn't think! And now we're all stuck in here because of you! You chocolate-coated wingnut!

Brace: Hey Chikoo, cool down. You're not making things any better freaking out like that. We all knew this was going to be dangerous, that something like this might happen.

Walnut: Thanks Brace, but she's right. If it wasn't for me, we wouldn't be in this situation! And now we're all trapped in here forever! Oh I just want to die. It's hopeless!

Fleur: Brace, wait! Remember back in the Desire, Eyeball said something about hope. What was it again?

Brace: What? Eyeball? Why are you...I don't know! It was one of his crazy rhymes, something like: "at the end of the road, it really begins..." aaaah...

Fleur: "...when all hope fades look for answers within."!

Chikoo: Great, that's super-helpful. So here we are! You don't get more within than locked forever in this Vault.

Brace: What? You think that Eyeball was sending us some kind of message?

Fleur: I don't know, maybe, but it reminds me of something, I just can't quite put my finger on it: "At the end of the road", well that pretty much feels like that's where we are now...

Cassandra: Oh you think? Brilliant. Very helpful.

Fleur: "When all hope fades..." -Pause-

Brace: "...Look for answers within"! Fleur! Within your bag!

Fleur: Huh? What about my bag? What do you mean?

Brace: Don't you remember your dream after we fell off the Cliffs of Surrender? That woman gave you something! What was it?

Fleur: What? Oh my god, yes! The hopenut! What did she say again? "When hope has left all but you, may you crack this nut to make your dreams come true!" Where is it now? [She rummages in her bag and pulls out the hopenut]. Here! [Brace, Walnut, Chikoo gather around to investigate].

Cassandra: Oh what are you idiots up to now? Can you please keep it down? We're going to be stuck in here together for a long time and you're already starting to get on my nerves!

Fleur: Chikoo, give me your hammer.

Chikoo: Sure, but I don't know what you're expecting to happen. I wouldn't get my hopes up if I were you [hands over hammer]. [She tries with the hammer but finds it difficult. They somehow hold the nut. Fleur bangs four times with the hammer].

Walnut: It's useless, we're never going to crack this with this crappy hammer...

Chikoo: Hey!

Cassandra: [Getting up and walking over to them]. How many times do I have to tell you to keep it down? [At that moment the nut opens followed by a soft clinking sound. They all fall silent].

SFX: MAGICAL CLINKING SOUND

Walnut: What was that noise?

Chikoo: Sounded like something metal... [Fleur rummages through the broken pieces of nut and holds up a key].

Brace: What?

Chikoo: Is that what I think it is?

Cassandra: [Cassandra looks on amazed]. That looks like a key! But it can't be...

Fleur: Dare we try it?

Brace: What are you waiting for? C'mon!

Fleur: [Fleur runs to the door and puts the key in the lock]. It fits! [Silence as she attempts to turn the key. A loud unlocking sound is heard. And the door swings open. They all look at each other, amazed. Hug each other].

Fleur: C'mon everybody let's get Cassandra to that ceremony! [They run out the door].

SCENE 15 - NAMING OF THE ORACLE

In order to exacerbate
The endless daily grind
It can be provident
To celebrate whatever
You can find.

The endless creation of
Auspicious occasions
Irrespective of religions
Or political persuasions.

Earthdays and birthdays
And solstices and such
Can never be considered to be
To many or too much.

And we particularly
Prominently feel the pull
When the moon is eclipsing
But also simply when it's full.

For it is then that the
Culmination of astronomical occlusions
Can create a surge in the
Convergence of occultic transfusions.

Vampires and werewolves
Run rampantly around
Even enchanted fireflies
Can be found.

So finally our heroes
Like strands of a rope
Spring from their prison
By the golden key of hope.

And finally Cassandra
Now that she's free
Can keep her appointment
With destiny.

With Fleur and the
Riverlets there for the ride
Unaware that fickle fate
Is on their side.

[On a tiny plateau atop Mt Loftus, many people have gathered for the ceremony where the next Oracle will be announced. Behind them the rocky backdrop of a mountaintop is visible and high above them is the full moon. Two burning lamps stand either side of the stage. In the middle of the stage is a white round, raised rock, set there by the organisers for Crumpet to stand on during the eclipse, to ensure the fireflies don't miss her. The other magistrates and Prosperopolis stand around Crumpet upstage. Stampede and the other guards stand on either side of the stage. Shamanji, a pujaisri/shaman-like character, with a large beaded necklace and decorated, craggy stick staff stands stage left, scattering petals, ringing bells, spraying water with a brush].

Doxianous: [Walks over to Shamanji] How much longer is this going to take? Let's get this over with.

Shamanji: [Addressing everyone] Atop this Mountain many moons ago as a teacher delivered wisdom to her gathered students one night, an eclipse stole the Moon's light and...

All three:...threw the mountain into darkness.

Peekaboo: Suddenly, as if from nowhere, fireflies appeared to illuminate the teacher's face so that...

All three:...her teachings could continue.

Picatrix: From that day on, she became known as the Oracle. Now she has left us, but only days before another rare...

All three:...eclipse of the moon.

Shamanji: We have gathered here tonight the candidates for selection - well the candidate as there is only one. When the fireflies emerge, they will choose from the candidates, the candidate,...

All three:...the next Oracle of Effluvium! [Cassandra, Talc, Puff, Brace, Chikoo, Walnut and Fleur suddenly pour onto the stage].

Cassandra: Wait! There is more than one candidate in tonight's ceremony! I am Cassandra, the favoured student of the Oracle, and I present myself for selection tonight to become the next Oracle!

Crumpet: What? But how did you get...

Calculus: This is most irregular...

Sequin: I'm sorry, but you cannot be part...

Crackling: This is outrageous! You are completely inappropriate....

Floorwax: She's a convicted terrorist and criminal...

Doxianous: Quiet please, quiet please. Good evening Cassandra and uh, associates. I see that you've somehow managed to free yourself from the Vault and while nothing would give us greater pleasure than to include you in this ceremony, I'm afraid to say, that you are ineligible. So sorry. Perhaps next time? Now if you'd be so kind, our friendly guardians here will escort you safely back to the vault. Guards! Lock them up and this time make sure they don't escape! [Guards move towards Cassandra].

Cassandra: No! I will not go and you will not make me! I'm rightfully entitled to be part of this ceremony. You're just scared that the fireflies will choose me instead of your Crumpet here!

Doxianous: What? Hahaha. Of course not! Myself and the magistrates believe in a

fair and transparent selection process that selects the best Oracle for the city, it just so happens that there is only one suitable candidate, and a very good one I might add!

Crumpet: Oh well thank you Mr Prosptopolis.

Doxianous: The fault is yours I'm afraid. You did not cooperate, you avoided arrest and then you delivered a destabilising message. You left us no choice. Guards! Seize them! [Guards move and then stop when Fleur talks].

Fleur: Wait! If you're so concerned about selecting the best Oracle for the city then why not have faith in the process?

Doxianous: Sorry? What did you say?

Fleur: Let Cassandra be part of the ceremony and let the fireflies choose. If they choose Crumpet then so be it and if they choose Cassandra, then obviously that's the way it's meant to be.

Walnut: Sounds fair to me.

Doxianous: Silence! I've heard just about enough of this nonsense! The answer is no! The Guards will escort you all to the Vault this instant so that we can get this ceremony over with and get on with building the city. For the last time, take them away and lock them up forever this time! [Guards move and gently hold the group].

Focus: Forever is like a really long time...

Stampede: What did you say?

Flex: Also what she said about letting the fireflies choose, it's kind of reasonable.

Focus: Yeah, I mean isn't that how it was meant to work in the first place? That the fireflies choose?

Doxianous: You dare question my authority? Captain, ensure that these men are stripped of their rank and expelled from the city, after they escort these criminals back to the Vault, of course.

Stampede: Uh, I, Yes, of course. You heard him you fools! Take these criminals and lock them in the Vault and this time, destroy the key [gives them the key]! Now go! [The Guardians reluctantly begin to escort the group away].

Cassandra: [Runs back to centre stage] No! You cannot do this!

Doxianous: Can you not just get them out of here? Ah! Why do I have to do everything myself? [Walks towards Cassandra].

Shamanji: Stop! [The stage begins to darken].

Picatrix: It has begun!

Peekaboo: The eclipse of the moon is upon us! [Above the moon begins to eclipse].

Doxianous: Alright, well guards, quickly get these people out of here so we can do this.

Shamanji: No! There must be no movement! All must be still and silent during the passing of the shadow, lest we disturb the fireflies and they do not appear.

Doxianous: But...

Shamanji: Silence! Let the candidate approach the podium. [He gestures towards **Crumpet**, who solemnly moves to the podium. Cassandra also moves towards the podium, but DP grabs her and holds her fast. Complete darkness falls as the moon reaches complete eclipse].

All three: And now in the darkness, where there is no light, let the flies of fire light up the night! [Nothing happens].

Let the flies of fire light up the night! [Nothing happens].

Doxianous: Alright, I think we've heard? enough. I don't think anyone here actually expected magic fireflies to suddenly come flying out of the mountain. Sure there might have been few fireflies back when those peasants...

Shamanji: Silence!

Doxianous: What?

Picatrix: Listen!

Doxianous: I don't hear anythi...wait a second, what is that sound?

SFX: FIREFLIES - ETHERAL, TINKLING, HUMMING

Can you all... (hear it too)? [Suddenly a collection of small lights float onto stage].
[People gasp].

Doxianous: What the hell? [The lights move amongst everyone in the room, as if investigating them, they swirl briefly around crumpet].

Doxianous: The fireflies have chosen! Crumpet is the new Oracle! [As he says this, the FF leave Crumpet and move to swirl around Cassandra].

Cassandra: I knew it! I knew it all along! I am the chosen one! [But the fireflies then fly back to Crumpet and then back to her, before they stop in between them, as if confused. Then suddenly, they come together and fly towards Fleur, surrounding her and moving in a pattern that appears to be pointing at her, before they settle on her, making her giggle as if being tickled].

Fleur: Shoo! Go away! Stop being silly! Heehehehe! Stop! You've got work to do. Go on [as if talking to a puppy] go on, go find the Oracle! Where's the Oracle? [The FF all stick onto her]. No! Not me, the Oracle! Over there. Go find the Oracle! [Again they stick to her. She smiles in embarrassment]. So sorry about this. They seem to like me. I can't make them go away. [By now everyone is looking at her in amazement].

Shamanji: There is a reason why they will not leave you my grace.

Fleur: What? Who are you talking to? Who's your grace?

All three: [To everyone] The Fireflies have chosen!

Shamanji: All bow before...[awkwardly goes over to Fleur]. what is your name your grace?

Fleur: What? My name? Fleur. Nice to meet you.

All three: All bow before Fleur the Oracle! [Everyone bows except DP. The magistrates take a bit longer].

Stampede: What are you doing? Bow immediately before the Oracle! [The Magistrates reluctantly bow].

Stampede: My apologies your Grace. It will not happen again under my watch. All will bow in your presence.

Fleur: What? No no no no no. I'm not the Oracle! She's the Oracle! Cassandra! They're meant to choose her. Everyone, get up. She's the Oracle!

Stampede: The Oracle has spoken! Get up! [Everyone stands].

Doxianous: But this is just ridiculous! She can't be the...

Focus: Oh quiet you! How dare you question the Oracle? Did the Oracle say you could question her? I didn't hear anything.

Chikoo: Oh my god, but what? You're what now? The Oracle?

Walnut: Where have you been the last five minutes? Yes she's the Oracle, the fireflies clearly chose her. Did you not see?

Puff & Talc: It comes as no surprise to us your Grace, you're definitely Oracle material.

Brace: Nice one Fleur.

Fleur: But guys c'mon this is crazy! I'm no Oracle! All I want to do is save the river and go home, back to little old Waterville.

Stampede: Consider it done! The Oracle has spoken! No one will block the river, it will continue to flow, the Guardians will make sure of that. Uwanto will have to find its water supply elsewhere.

Doxianous: But...

Stampede: Silence!

Chikoo: Wow, look at you! So powerful, everyone just does whatever you say.

Stampede: Of course! She is the Oracle! Her every word is law!

Fleur: But I don't want to be Oracle.

Shamanji: You what? Don't want to be Oracle?

Picatrix: But your Grace, there is no higher honour in the land...

Pujaboo: How could you not want to be Oracle?

Fleur: I just...don't. I just want to go back to my quiet little life on the river, before all this began. Hey! I have an idea! What if I choose someone else to be Oracle?

All three: What? Someone else?

Doxianous: [Rushing forward] Yes, uh your grace! That's a brilliant idea! Obviously Madam Crumpet is the only choice. To help you decide, might I also interest you in a complimentary executive suite in Uwanto Towers, as a little holiday home when river life gets a bit too boring, hahahaha!

Cassandra: Your Grace! You absolutely cannot! You know that they will block the river the moment they have power and that I was the chosen one of the Oracle all along. You must choose me!

Doxianous: You cannot choose this arrogant child as Oracle, imagine being ruled by her!

Cassandra: Why you dirty ratbag, you'll just...(destroy everything).

Fleur: Quiet! I need a moment to think! Hmmnnn [walks around the room muttering to herself. All lean in towards/ watch Fleur]. Ahah! I have it!

Doxianous & Cassandra: Yes?

Fleur: I've decided! As the next Oracle for Effluvium and all the land, I choose...
-pause- ...everyone!

Everyone: What?

Fleur: Yes, that's right! You're all now the Oracle! You don't have to do what anyone tells you, or follow any leader, you only have to do what you believe is right.

Doxianous: Well then if everyone is the Oracle, that also makes me the Oracle, and as my first command, [to the guardians] I order you to seize these criminals and lock them in the Vault forever!

Focus: What? Hahahaha. In case you didn't hear, everyone is now the Oracle, which means that we're also the Oracle and we don't have to do what you or anyone tells us.

Doxianous: What? How dare you! Captain, discipline these guards and throw them out of the city!

Stampede: No.

Doxianous: What? Why not?

Stampede: Don't feel like. And even if I did, they don't have to listen to me any more. And from now on I don't feel like taking orders from anybody either, especially not you.

Focus: And I don't think any of your river-blasting crew are going to do what you say either, because last I heard, they quite like the river and would rather not destroy it.

Doxianous: But...

Flex: Hey, who wants to go for a walk in the moonlight, see the town by night?

Focus: Yeah! Sounds good! You coming Captain?

Stampede: Thanks, but I think I'd like to escort these oracles back to their village, so I think I'll go and prepare provisions for the journey. You guys have fun though!

Fleur: That's sweet, but you don't have to do that any more remember? We're all the Oracle, you included.

Stampede: Well you know what? I kind of think I'd like to go on a bit of an adventure. [To the guards] You guys go ahead and have fun and I'll see you when I get back.

Flex: Whaaa? And miss out on an adventure? No way, I'm coming too.

Focus: And me.

Stampede: Alright! Well let's go together and prepare for the trip! We'll see you all at the gate as soon as you're ready to leave. [They exit]. OK let's see: we'll need water, bread, cheese...

Flex: And don't forget Googleberries!

Focus: We can pick those on the way.

Flex: Oh yeah. [The Magistrates all look lost and wander off in a group. DP notices them leaving.]

Doxianous: Hey! Where are you going? Wait for me! [They exit]. We have to meet and strategise and discuss our next move....

Chikoo: Well done Fleur!

Fleur: It kinda seemed like the only solution.

Walnut: Cool, I'm the Oracle. I can do whatever I want!

Brace: As long as it's what you believe is right.

Walnut: Aaaaw!

Talc & Puff: Well [sniff] I guess this is goodbye. It won't be the same here without you.

Fleur: Thanks guys. Come and visit us in Waterville sometime. There'll always be a spot beside the river for you both.

Brace: We better get going.

Fleur: See you later, soon I hope! Bye!

Pikaboo: So Cassandra, you got your wish: you're the Oracle!

Cassandra: we're all the Oracle!

All: Woo-hoo!

[All exit].

The Moral

So if our tale has a moral
And a moral is a mother
It's that life is a series of bubbles
Each inside the other.

The trouble with a bubble
Is that it will inevitably burst
And each successive bubble
Will be more trouble
Than the first.
As life is an explosion, from a singularity,
And a stream becomes a river
And flows into the sea

So a solitary soul
Expands and embraces
A string of generalities
But mostly special cases.

In this case a small voice
Devoid of smart devices,
By simple perseverance
Averts an environmental crisis.

ALL ONSTAGE FOR FINAL SONG.