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Playscripts, Inc.
325 W. 38th Street, Suite 305
New York, NY 10018

Phone: 1-866-NEW-PLAY (639-7529)
Email: info@playscripts.com
Web: www.playscripts.com

Cast of Characters

NARRATOR, an Observer

PRINCESS “TABBY” TABASCO, our Heroine

SAFFRON, her Sidekick

SEBASTIAN, a Scholar

AUDREY, a Priestess

PRINCE DASHING, a Prince

LILY, a Sprite

GUNTHER, a Cyclops

CASSANDRA, a Mermaid

ARIEL, a Pixie

MAX, a Troll

DOCTOR DIABLO, a Villain

ATTENDANT, Doctor Diablo’s Henchman

ANOTHER ATTENDANT, another Henchman

KING CAYENNE, Tabby’s Father

QUEEN TAMALE, Tabby’s Mother

MESSENGER, a Messenger

Time

Long Ago.

Place

Far Away.

PRINCESS TABASCO SAVES THE UNIVERSE

by Douglas Clinton

ACT I

Scene 1

(Enter NARRATOR, in front of curtain.)

NARRATOR. Ladies and gentlemen, good evening. Tonight we invite you to join us for a happy and historic occasion—the wedding of Princess Tabasco to the charming Prince Dashing—not to be confused with his cousin, the dashing Prince Charming. The wedding announcement went out a year ago today, and ever since then, hundreds of people have been hard at work planning and organizing the celebration. And today, thousands have gathered from all over the land to share in that celebration. Even now, the guests are beginning to arrive. Here comes one now...

(Enter SAFFRON, stage right.)

NARRATOR. *(To SAFFRON:)* Excuse me, Miss, you are...?

SAFFRON. Busy.

(SAFFRON attempts to make her way stage left, is halted by NARRATOR.)

NARRATOR. Yes, I understand that, but could you maybe tell us your name, something about yourself, whether you'll be sitting on the bride's side or the groom's side?

SAFFRON. Us? What are you talking about?

(NARRATOR indicates audience.)

SAFFRON. Oh, right. My name is Saffron, and I am Princess Tabasco's lady-in-waiting.

NARRATOR. Ah, bride's side, then.

SAFFRON. Obviously. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to go help Tabby get ready.

NARRATOR. Must you go so soon? Can't you stay and chat awhile? Maybe give us a little hint about what the bride will be wearing?

SAFFRON. Clothes. Can I go now?

(Enter AUDREY, stage right.)

NARRATOR. Ah, here comes another guest! Excuse me, Miss, would you mind telling us your name, maybe a little bit about yourself—bride's side, groom's side?

AUDREY. My name is Audrey—I am a Priestess at the Most Sacred Temple of Converse. I'm a friend of the bride's. *(Spots SAFFRON, rushes over.)* Oh, hi, Saffron! How is Tabby? Is she happy? Is she excited? Oh, I bet she is!

SAFFRON. She's wearing a pretty dress and marrying a handsome Prince—she's thrilled, of course.

AUDREY. Oh, I'm soooo happy for her! I hope I don't cry!

NARRATOR. Do you usually cry at weddings, Miss?

AUDREY. Well, I don't know—I've never actually been to a wedding. But all my friends keep saying how *they* always cry at weddings, so maybe it'll be that way for me, too.

NARRATOR. *(To audience:)* Ah, this is what I love about weddings—the emotional feast of it all! Nobody's sure whether to laugh or cry, throw rice or tie tin cans to the back of the horse-drawn carriage.

SAFFRON. Come on, Audrey—Tabby's still getting ready. You probably know more about make-up and veils and all that than I do.

AUDREY. But isn't it bad luck to see the bride in her gown before the wedding?

SAFFRON. *(Annoyed:)* Only if you're the groom! *You're* not marrying Tabby.

AUDREY. Well, I should hope not—I'm certainly not *that* dressed up.

(Enter SEBASTIAN, stage right, carrying a very thick leather-bound book.)

NARRATOR. Aha—and here comes another guest. What is your name, Sir?

SEBASTIAN. My name is Sebastian, the Scholar. Bride's side, of course, but I'm really here to see this young lady. (*Indicates SAFFRON.*)

SAFFRON. Oh, *great.*

NARRATOR. What's this? Old friends reunited at last? A budding romance, perhaps? (*To audience:*) Now, this is what I'm talking about—this is the sort of thing that makes weddings great. Why, I'm about to turn into a pumpkin just thinking about it!

SAFFRON. Trust me, there's nothing budding between the two of us. Certainly not romance.

SEBASTIAN. Well, maybe not yet, but...

SAFFRON. No, not ever.

AUDREY. Oh, don't be like that, Saffron—this is a wedding, after all. There's romance in the air...

SAFFRON. Oh, don't *you* start.

NARRATOR. (*To SEBASTIAN:*) Now, tell me, how did you and this charming young lady meet?

SEBASTIAN. It was a starry, moonlit evening by the side of the ocean—I was out for a walk, deep in thought—contemplating the meaning of life. Suddenly, there was a crash of thunder, a bolt of lightning, an avalanche, an earthquake, and a fierce gust of wind blowing through the mountain valley. I looked up, full of alarm, and there she was—standing in a pool of golden sunlight. I have been devoted to her ever since—swearing never to leave her side.

AUDREY. How romantic.

NARRATOR. Yes, and very...

SEBASTIAN. Poetic?

NARRATOR. Exactly.

SEBASTIAN. Well, in addition to being a scholar, I am also something of a poet.

NARRATOR. *(To SAFFRON:)* Well, after a meeting like that, I'd say the prospect for romance is very good.

SAFFRON. It didn't happen like that at all! We met each other once, a loooong time ago, and he would *not* leave me alone. We haven't seen each other in years. I guess you could say we are friends. *Maybe.* But that's all.

NARRATOR. Ah, playing hard-to-get?

SAFFRON. No! I am saying *exactly* what I mean. There should be no confusion whatsoever!

NARRATOR. *(Aside to SEBASTIAN:)* I think she's just playing hard-to-get.

AUDREY. He really is very sweet, Saffron.

SAFFRON. Not another word. Now *come on*, the ceremony is going to start any minute now.

(Exit SAFFRON, AUDREY, and SEBASTIAN, stage left.)

NARRATOR. *(To audience:)* Well then, it looks as though we're about to begin. The Prince and the Princess should be out any moment now to exchange vows and go on to live happily ever after, which will conclude our festivities for the evening. *(Exit stage right.)*

Scene 2

(Enter TABBY, stage left, in wedding gown, running, in front of curtain; enter SAFFRON, stage left, also running.)

SAFFRON. Tabby!

(TABBY comes to a halt, center; SAFFRON joins her.)

SAFFRON. Tabby—what are you doing? Where are you going?

(Enter AUDREY and SEBASTIAN, stage left.)

AUDREY. Tabby, what's the matter? Everyone is waiting.

SEBASTIAN. The Prince didn't look happy.

SAFFRON. What's going on, Tabby?

TABBY. Oh, nothing. Everything! Forget it, I'm leaving! I'm getting out of here! I—I just have to go. (*Moves to exit stage right.*)

SAFFRON. Tabby, wait—what's going on? You can't just run off without an explanation!

TABBY. I—it's just that... No. I have to go.

AUDREY. Tabby, wait, please. We're your friends. Talk to us.

TABBY. It's just that...do you guys ever think about true love?

SEBASTIAN. All the time.

SAFFRON. Oh, like I wasn't nauseous enough already.

TABBY. Well that's just it—I don't love Prince Dashing! I don't want to marry him!

SAFFRON. And you waited until now to do something about it?

TABBY. Well, before...I don't know, I guess I just wasn't thinking...

SAFFRON. Obviously.

TABBY. This isn't helping!

AUDREY. Try to explain.

TABBY. Well, I guess that when he asked me, I was very flattered, and my parents thought it was a good idea...

SAFFRON. Well, you could have said something about it sometime in the *year* since then.

TABBY. I know. And I mean, Prince Dashing—he's very noble and handsome and brave and everything—I just thought that I needed to get used to the idea of loving him, you know? But today I realized...that he's not my true love—and he never will be. I can't marry him—I just can't. If it isn't true love, what's the point?

SEBASTIAN. Yes, you have to follow the course of true love, even if it seems impossible sometimes. True love always finds a way.
(Looks at SAFFRON.)

SAFFRON. Keep dreaming, pal.

AUDREY. So what are you going to do now?

TABBY. I don't know...I can't stay here, that's for sure. I have to go somewhere, and fast—but where?

SAFFRON. *(Peeks behind curtain.)* Well, you better think of something quick, the natives are getting restless.

TABBY. Oh if only someone would come along with—I don't know—some sort of *message* telling me what I should do next.

(Awkward silence; everyone looks around as if waiting for someone to arrive.)

TABBY. *(Louder:)* I said; if only someone would come along with some sort of a message telling me what I should do next!

(Another awkward silence.)

TABBY. I said—

(Enter MESSENGER, stage right.)

MESSENGER. *(Surly:)* All right, all right—I heard you. I'm coming.

TABBY. *(Cheerful and surprised:)* Why hello, who are you?

MESSENGER. A messenger.

(Pause.)

TABBY. And...?

MESSENGER. That's it. Just a messenger. Nothing more and nothing less as far as any of *you* are concerned.

(Pause.)

SAFFRON. Well, do you have some sort of a message to deliver?

MESSENGER. Yeah, I've got a message all right.

AUDREY. So why don't you tell us what it is?

MESSENGER. Nah, I don't think so.

SEBASTIAN. Now, look here, these ladies have asked you very politely—

MESSENGER. (*Holding up hand for silence.*) Hey, I don't want to hear it. I mean, do you know what it's like being a messenger in a play like this?

SEBASTIAN. Well, no.

TABBY. No, I don't think any of us do. Why don't you give us your message and then you can tell us all about it.

MESSENGER. I don't think so, lady—or your highness or your majesty or whatever high-blown way I'm supposed to address you.

TABBY. Tabby is fine, really.

SAFFRON. Listen, are you going to give us the message or not?

MESSENGER. Maybe. But first I'm going to tell you all about what it's like to be me—a messenger, that is.

(Enter NARRATOR, stage right.)

NARRATOR. Uh, excuse me, but we have a show to do, so if you could just speed it up and deliver your message...

MESSENGER. Hey! I don't want to hear it Mr. Big Shot Narrator-man. Oh, you think you're soooo big, bossing everyone around, telling 'em which scene is next. Get out of here—this is *my* scene.

(Exit NARRATOR, sheepish, stage right.)

SAFFRON. Oh, can't you just get on with it?!

MESSENGER. I'll get on with it when I feel like getting on with it.

TABBY. Well, you know, I'm actually kind of interested in finding out what it's like to be a messenger now.

AUDREY. Yeah, me too.

SAFFRON. Oh, don't encourage him.

SEBASTIAN. I sympathize with you, Miss Saffron, really I do, but as a scholar, well, I just can't pass up any sort of learning opportunity.

SAFFRON. And you wonder why I'm not interested in you.

MESSENGER. Are you people finished? I have a good mind to just leave right now and then you'll *never* get your message.

TABBY. We're finished. Please, go on.

MESSENGER. (*Sarcastic:*) Thank you. It's so rare for people like you to pay any attention to a person like myself. The same thing happens in every play—everyone just expects a messenger to come onstage, deliver some vital piece of information and then get off-stage again as quickly as possible. No one ever asks the messenger how he's feeling or whether he'd like something cold to drink, or *takes any interest in the messenger as a human being at all!*

SAFFRON. I'm beginning to understand why people sometimes shoot the messenger.

TABBY. *Saffron!*

MESSENGER. And the worst part is that usually the messenger comes in at the beginning of the play, so at the end of the play, when it's time for everyone to take their bows and all that, the audience is sitting there clapping and wondering, "Was that person even *in* the play?" I ask you, what kind of life is that?

SAFFRON. Sounds like a lousy one. So what's the stupid message?

TABBY. *Saffron!* (*To MESSENGER:*) We're sorry—it does sound awful for you. But, I mean, we didn't make up the rules.

MESSENGER. Yes, but you didn't *say* anything about it until now, did you?

AUDREY. (*To SEBASTIAN:*) Did you know about this?

SEBASTIAN. I guess I just never paid any attention to it before. It does seem awfully unfair.

SAFFRON. Oh you guys aren't actually taking this joker seriously, are you?

MESSENGER. And did you know that as a messenger I don't even get a name?! I'm serious. *(Takes TABBY by the arm, leads her towards audience.)* Here, let me show you something. *(Requests and receives program from audience member.)* See? Look, all it says there is "Messenger." They can't even be troubled to give me a real name.

(TABBY and MESSENGER return to the stage.)

SAFFRON. So what do you want *us* to do about it?

MESSENGER. Well, you can start by addressing me by name.

AUDREY. But you just told us you didn't have a name.

MESSENGER. I know. But I've made one up for myself. If you address me by name, then I will deliver your message.

TABBY. All right, what would you like us to call you?

MESSENGER. The brave, noble, courageous, and lovable Hermie.

SEBASTIAN. That's quite a name.

MESSENGER. Well, I've had quite awhile to work on it. Now, address me by name and you'll get your message.

TABBY. Oh, brave, noble, and courageous Hermie—

MESSENGER. You forgot lovable!

TABBY. Sorry. Oh, brave, noble, courageous, and *lovable* Hermie, what news do you bring us?

MESSENGER. Princess Tabasco, it is my duty to inform you that your friend, the mermaid, Princess Cassandra, has been cruelly and wrongly imprisoned in Doctor Diablo's Insane Asylum. I have been sent to ask that you come to her aid as quickly as possible.

TABBY. Oh, no!

SAFFRON. The talking fish stick locked up? I kinda love it.

TABBY. Saffron! *(To others:)* We have to go and rescue her!

SAFFRON. *(Sighs.)* Of course we do. *(To audience:)* "Be a lady-in-waiting," my mother tells me, "you'll spend all day sitting around a castle telling some Princess she doesn't look fat." Instead I end up

in this crazy play making sure *she* (*Cocks thumb at TABBY*) doesn't get herself killed. (*Shrugs.*)

AUDREY. Doctor Diablo's Insane Asylum is a very dangerous place. Are you sure you really want to do this?

TABBY. Well, she is my friend—sort of, and I can't stay here any longer—I mean, how would I explain? And my grandmother was so looking forward to doing the electric slide at the reception.

SEBASTIAN. (*Peeking behind curtain:*) You're right, I think the wedding guests are beginning to realize something's wrong. And the Prince *really* doesn't look happy now.

TABBY. Well, let's get out of here, then—the sooner the better.

(TABBY, SAFFRON, AUDREY, and SEBASTIAN turn to exit stage left, they all stop with a start when they notice MESSENGER who is still onstage.)

TABBY. Oh! You're still here.

MESSENGER. You see? This is *exactly* what I was talking about. As soon as I told you what you wanted to hear, you completely forgot about me.

TABBY. Oh. We're sorry. Is there anything we can do to make it up to you?

MESSENGER. Yes. Come here.

(Motions for the others to come closer; they huddle around him as he whispers something.)

TABBY. Oh—we can do that.

(TABBY, SAFFRON, AUDREY, and SEBASTIAN step back from MESSENGER and begin to clap.)

MESSENGER. No! Not you! Them! (*Indicates audience.*)

TABBY. Oh. Right, sorry. (*To audience:*) Could we get a round of applause for the brave, noble, courageous, and lovable Hermie?

(At this point, hopefully the audience will oblige with applause. MESSENGER takes a few bows, then exits stage left.)

SAFFRON. *Now can we go?*

TABBY. Yes. Come on, guys.

(Exeunt ALL, stage left.)

Scene 3

(Enter MESSENGER, wearing an eye patch, stage right.)

MESSENGER. *(To audience:)* Good evening. The Narrator is a very busy man—hosting awards shows, accepting honorary degrees, and promoting his autobiography, “To Speak is Human, To Narrate Divine”—so I will be filling in for him from time to time throughout the play. I assure you that there is absolutely nothing suspicious, irregular, or underhanded about this whatsoever—it is all just part of life in the theater. Well, the wedding’s off, is it? Good—I *hate* weddings. You know what I really like? Insane asylums. And that Doctor Diablo, he has a *great* insane asylum. Let’s all have a look, shall we? *(Exit stage right.)*

(Curtain opens on an office setting—a desk, chairs, even a couch would be a plus. The set can be as dressed up or dressed down as it is deemed necessary. DIABLO should be seated at the desk, up left, writing, while ATTENDANT stands nearby, gazing off into the distance.)

DIABLO. *(Stops writing, looks up, to ATTENDANT.)* You know, sometimes I almost feel sorry for them.

ATTENDANT. Who do you mean, Sir?

DIABLO. Why the patients, of course. I mean, every day there’s someone coming in here claiming to be a dwarf or an elf or a gnome or something like that—and no matter how long I have them in my care, they still insist that they are some sort of magical, *fairy tale* creature. Ah, the mysteries of the human mind...

ATTENDANT. Well sir...I mean, sir... Have you ever wondered...I mean, have you ever considered...

DIABLO. Spit it out man!

ATTENDANT. Well, what if they're not crazy at all? What if they really are fairy tale creatures?

DIABLO. Preposterous! What if they really are fairy tale creatures indeed. I think someone's been spending too much time around the patients.

ATTENDANT. No sir—it's not that, sir—I was just thinking—

DIABLO. Tell me, do you have any advanced degrees?

ATTENDANT. Excuse me sir?

DIABLO. Advanced degrees. Have you ever been to college? Have you ever studied medicine, psychology, any of it? Do you have enough diplomas to wallpaper a three-bedroom house six times over?

ATTENDANT. Well, no sir, but—

DIABLO. Well I *do*. So until you have some more impressive credentials, you'd best leave the thinking to those who are trained for it.

(Enter ANOTHER ATTENDANT, stage right.)

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Excuse me, sir, I hate to interrupt—

DIABLO. And yet you do it constantly. What is it?

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Well sir, you wanted to examine the new patients, and, well, they're right outside, sir.

DIABLO. Well, quit dilly-dallying and bring them in! What do I pay you for?

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Actually, you don't pay me anything, sir.

DIABLO. And you're worth every penny! Send in the first patient.

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Yes sir. *(Begins to exit stage right.)*

DIABLO. Attendant!

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. *(Stops, turns to DIABLO:)* Yes, sir?

DIABLO. Isn't there something you want to tell me?

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Ummmm...you're a very brilliant man... and I'm very grateful for this position—

DIABLO. (*Cutting him off:*) I know that, I know all that. The patient, man—aren't you going to tell me anything about the patient you're bringing in?

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Oh, right, of course. Her name is Lily and she—let me make sure I'm explaining this correctly—

DIABLO. Don't strain yourself. Send her in.

(Exit ANOTHER ATTENDANT.)

DIABLO. (*To ATTENDANT:*) Now you will have an opportunity to watch a highly trained mind at work.

ATTENDANT. It's always a pleasure to watch you work, sir.

DIABLO. Of course it is! I should charge you for the honor of watching me work instead of the other way around.

ATTENDANT. You do charge us for that honor, sir.

DIABLO. Well, of course I do—these patients certainly don't bring in any money.

(Enter ANOTHER ATTENDANT with LILY, stage right.)

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Here she is, sir.

DIABLO. Excellent. Go out and wait with the others.

(Exit ANOTHER ATTENDANT.)

DIABLO. So, young lady, who do you suppose yourself to be?

LILY. My name is Lily.

DIABLO. All right, Lily, and what is it that you suppose yourself to be—some sort of pixie fairy?

LILY. No—of course not. How could you possibly mistake me for a pixie or a fairy?

DIABLO. A mortifying mistake, I'm sure. Out with it, then.

LILY. I'm a sprite. I thought that was obvious.

DIABLO. I see, and how did you come by this belief?

LILY. Well to start with, have you noticed the rather sizable wings growing out of my back?

DIABLO. Oh, yes, the wings—I had forgotten that all you pixie fairies—

LILY. (*Gritting teeth:*) Sprites.

DIABLO. Yes, Sprites, whatever—I had forgotten that you so-called *sprites* enhance your delusions with prosthetics and believe that you can fly around on your little wings. There's some kind of dust involved, too, isn't there?

LILY. No, that's pixies. You're thinking of pixies and their magical pixie dust.

DIABLO. Fascinating. And fairies?

LILY. Fairies are basically useless.

DIABLO. So no dust for you.

LILY. No. No dust. Only sprite nectar.

DIABLO. Sprite nectar, really? Tell me more.

LILY. It is a magical substance that I secrete through my pores.

DIABLO. Ah, so you believe that your sweat is magical.

LILY. I do not sweat! I shimmer.

DIABLO. Of course you do. (*To ATTENDANT:*) Do you see how deeply this patient's delusion runs? Not only does she believe herself to be a wholly imaginary creature, but her psychosis runs so deep that she has created an elaborate world of creatures with their own unique rules, roles, attributes, and identities.

LILY. But I really am a sprite!

DIABLO. Of course you are my dear—nothing that a month in a padded cell won't cure. I think this has been enough excitement for today—Attendant, take her away.

(*ATTENDANT takes LILY by the arm and leads her off stage right. Enter ANOTHER ATTENDANT, stage right.*)

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Are you ready for your next patient, sir?

DIABLO. Do you *see* any patients in this office? Obviously I'm ready for the next one.

(Exit ANOTHER ATTENDANT, stage right, moments later, ANOTHER ATTENDANT enters, stage right, pushing CASSANDRA, whose lower half is clad in a mermaid tail, in a wheelbarrow.)

DIABLO. *(To ANOTHER ATTENDANT:)* Thank you, you may leave.

(Exit ANOTHER ATTENDANT, stage right.)

CASSANDRA. I will not put up with this treatment any longer! It isn't proper! It isn't dignified! I demand to speak to the person or persons in charge at once!

DIABLO. I am the individual in charge of this establishment.

CASSANDRA. Excellent. I'll have you know that I have been manhandled, mistreated, and maligned ever since my arrival. I demand that those responsible be fired at once.

DIABLO. Well, I am the one responsible for your course of treatment.

CASSANDRA. Well then, I demand that you be fired at once.

DIABLO. *(Chuckles.)* Well, we'll see about that. Now, what is your name, young lady?

CASSANDRA. My *name* is Princess Cassandra—and I will *not* be referred to as “young lady.” In fact, what you should have said was, “Whom do I have the privilege of addressing?” To which I would have replied, “Princess Cassandra, of the Tangerine Sea.”

DIABLO. Oh, you're a Princess, are you? Well, that's a common enough affliction among my patients—an individual is leading a plain, ordinary life, the mind breaks down—and the individual begins to operate as though they are something much higher, much grander than they could ever be in real life. Though I must admit,

you have an original take on things—claiming to rule over a body of water rather than over a land-based dominion.

CASSANDRA. That's because I'm a mermaid, you moron! Notice the fin? And might I add that I am being unjustly deprived of moisture at the moment. Oh, I'll be all dry and flaky before you know it!

DIABLO. Yes, yes, the fin is an interesting touch. You will require a great deal of treatment. Next patient!

(Enter ATTENDANT, who begins to wheel CASSANDRA away.)

CASSANDRA. Hey! I wasn't finished! Oh, *someone* is going to pay for this.

(Exit ATTENDANT and CASSANDRA, stage right; enter GUNTHER.)

DIABLO. Ah, another lost lamb. Now tell the good doctor, what would you be? A genie? A satyr? A gnome, perhaps?

GUNTHER. Of course not—don't be ridiculous.

DIABLO. No? What about a hobbit? Or a dwarf? Perhaps an elf?

GUNTHER. No, no, no!

DIABLO. Hmm...well, perhaps you're here by mistake. You mean to say that you're just an ordinary man?

GUNTHER. A man? Or course not. I am a Cyclops.

DIABLO. Ooooh, you're a *Cyclops*. Of course. And what makes you say that?

GUNTHER. Well, it all started when I was born with a single giant eyeball in the middle of my forehead. Sure, the other kids teased me, but I learned to adjust.

DIABLO. Yes, yes—very interesting...a single giant eyeball in the middle of your forehead...

GUNTHER. Have you even looked at me? You've got two eyes—surely you can see that I have only one.

DIABLO. All I can see, Mister...

GUNTHER. Gunther.

DIABLO. All I can see, Mr. Gunther is that you are a very disturbed young man who has put a great deal of effort into his delusion. You will require a great deal of treatment. *(Stands, takes GUNTHER by the arm, begins to lead him offstage.)* Come on, I have a nice padded cell I can show you to. *(Exits with GUNTHER, stage right.)*

(Curtain closes.)

Scene 4

(Enter NARRATOR, stage right.)

NARRATOR. Oh, I was so looking forward to that wedding, and now Tabby and her friends are on their way to an insane asylum—not very romantic. *(Shakes head.)*

(Enter TABBY, SAFFRON, AUDREY, and SEBASTIAN, stage right.)

NARRATOR. What are you four doing here? I wasn't finished.

TABBY. Finished doing what?

NARRATOR. Setting the scene! I haven't finished setting the scene yet!

SAFFRON. Setting the scene? What are you talking about?

NARRATOR. I'm the Narrator, I'm supposed to establish your geographical location so that the audience knows where you are.

SAFFRON. You're not going to start telling us how difficult it is to be a narrator, are you?

SEBASTIAN. *(Intrigued:)* Oh, I bet *that* would be fascinating.

AUDREY. Yes, and if he's as unhappy as the messenger...

SAFFRON. Why do you insist on encouraging these people?!

TABBY. Well, we don't even know where we are right now, so we'll just stand here while you explain it to the audience, and then we'll know where we are.

NARRATOR. *(Sighs.)* All right, but that's not the way it's typically done, you know. *(To audience:)* The Wilderness! The Wilderness can be a dark and dangerous place, but this is where Tabby and her friends are forced to travel if they wish to reach Doctor Diablo's Insane Asylum—

SAFFRON. Dark and dangerous, great.

NARRATOR. *(To SAFFRON:)* Please don't interrupt. *(To audience:)* Yes, after a long, hard day traveling through The Wilderness, Tabby and her friends are about ready to make camp, with Doctor Diablo's Insane Asylum only half a day's journey ahead. *(Exit stage right.)*

(Curtain opens on an appropriately Wildernessesque set, with flats representing trees, bushes, and the like. Rocks might be a nice touch as well, but they are unnecessary if it's too much of a hassle. TABBY, SAFFRON, SEBASTIAN, and AUDREY move upstage to stand amongst the Wilderness setting.)

SEBASTIAN. Ah, the Wilderness—quite the opportunity for study.

TABBY. And we're only half a day away from the Insane Asylum—our journey is almost over.

SAFFRON. Oh sure, nothing like being just down the road from an Insane Asylum.

AUDREY. Yes, but this doesn't look like a very good place to make camp.

TABBY. No, it doesn't. *(Looks off left.)* I think I see a cave up ahead, maybe we can camp there. Come on, Audrey; let's go check it out. *(To SEBASTIAN and SAFFRON:)* You two can wait here.

SAFFRON. *(Sarcastic:)* Great.

(Exit TABBY and AUDREY, stage left.)

SEBASTIAN. You know, I've been waiting for a time like this— A time when the two of us can be...alone.

SAFFRON. I just bet you have.

SEBASTIAN. No, no, no—I'm not going to try anything... unsavory—you are a Lady and deserve to be treated as such.

SAFFRON. Thanks.

SEBASTIAN. It's just that... (*Brandishes heavy book, which he has been carrying since his first entrance.*) Well, you see... What I mean is, that...well, as you know, in addition to being a scholar, I am also something of a poet.

SAFFRON. I know.

SEBASTIAN. (*Still holding up book.*) So, you see, I wrote you a few poems.

SAFFRON. A few? How many is a few?

SEBASTIAN. Six hundred and eighty-four. Actually, six hundred and eighty-five if you count the long one.

SAFFRON. The long one?

SEBASTIAN. (*Holding open book for SAFFRON, flipping through pages.*) Yes, you see, the first half of the book contains six hundred eighty-four different love poems—I used all different styles and methods—there's couplets, sonnets, haikus—everything!

SAFFRON. (*Reading:*) Let us gaze upon the lovely Saffron/
And the dazzling smile that she...hath on.

SEBASTIAN. Do you like it?

SAFFRON. It's awful.

SEBASTIAN. (*Ignores this, flips more pages to approximately the middle of the book.*) And the second half of the book—that's one long poem—an epic poem, actually.

SAFFRON. (*Reads:*) "The Taming of Saffron."

SEBASTIAN. Yes—it is the tale of our meeting, our romance, and our eventual marriage.

SAFFRON. You can't be serious.

SEBASTIAN. Well, I admit there is a little poetic license involved...

SAFFRON. Try *a lot* of poetic license.

SEBASTIAN. (*Closes book, offers it to SAFFRON.*) Here, take it—read it when you have the time.

SAFFRON. Um, actually, it does look awfully heavy—why don't you carry it for now.

SEBASTIAN. Oh, of course! How thoughtless of me! Expecting you to carry this big, heavy book through the Wilderness like that. Can you ever forgive me?

SAFFRON. We'll see.

SEBASTIAN. Don't worry, I'll keep it safe until the end of the play.

SAFFRON. Well if we have to use it to start a campfire or something, I'll understand.

SEBASTIAN. Oh, I don't think it will come to that.

SAFFRON. If we're lucky it will.

(Enter TABBY and AUDREY, stage left.)

SAFFRON. Well, how did it go? Can we spend the night in the cave?

TABBY. Well, yes and no...

SAFFRON. Which is it, yes or no?

AUDREY. Well, the cave wasn't exactly empty. There was a family of bears living inside.

SAFFRON. Bears?

AUDREY. Yes—they were very friendly, and they said they could make room, but...

TABBY. We just didn't have a good feeling about it.

AUDREY. Yeah, especially with all the piles of bones lying around on the floor of the cave...

TABBY. And that sign we passed that said "Beware of Man-Eating Bears."

AUDREY. So we thanked them and said we'd look for another place to camp.

SAFFRON. Good idea.

SEBASTIAN. The sun's going down...

SAFFRON. So it's nearly dark, there are a bunch of man-eating bears running around, and we still don't have a safe place to camp. Great.

AUDREY. Oh, to hear you talk you'd think we were doomed.

SAFFRON. We *are* doomed!

SEBASTIAN. Don't worry, as long as I'm alive I won't let anything happen to you.

SAFFRON. *That's* comforting.

TABBY. Oh, if only someone would come and show us the way!

(Awkward, expectant pause.)

TABBY. *(Louder:)* I said, if only someone would come and show us the way!

(Another awkward, expectant pause.)

TABBY. *(Still louder:)* I said—

(Enter ARIEL, stage right, stumbling as though pushed onstage, with wings on her back and liberally covered in glitter.)

TABBY. Oh, look—a tadpole!

SAFFRON. A *what?*

TABBY. A tadpole, that's what that is, isn't it?

SEBASTIAN. No, no—I've done some wildlife studies, and that definitely isn't a tadpole.

AUDREY. Maybe it's a badger!

SAFFRON. A *what?*

AUDREY. A badger—a hideous, horrible badger, with teeth that bite and claws that scratch.

SEBASTIAN. No, that isn't it, either.

ARIEL. Has it occurred to any of you yet to ask me what—or better, *who*—I am.

SEBASTIAN. (*Thoughtful:*) Hmmmm...yes...that would be *one* way of going about it, wouldn't it?

TABBY. So who are you? And what are you, if it's all right to ask.

ARIEL. I am Ariel, the pixie.

AUDREY. Is that anything like a sprite?

ARIEL. Certainly not.

SEBASTIAN. Is it like being a fairy?

ARIEL. No! That's even worse! Fairies are basically useless.

SAFFRON. (*Sarcastic:*) Well, this is certainly productive.

TABBY. Saffron, hush. I'm sorry—we're all new here. Is the Wilderness your home?

ARIEL. It is. And that explains what *I'm* doing here. It doesn't explain what *you're* doing here.

TABBY. Well, we're travelers—strangers in the Wilderness—we're on our way to Doctor Diablo's Insane Asylum.

ARIEL. You are, are you? You're not *friends* of the Doctor's are you?

TABBY. No—he has imprisoned a friend of mine and we're on our way to rescue her.

ARIEL. I was imprisoned there once. I was lucky enough to escape.

SAFFRON. So, what's with all the dandruff?

TABBY. *Saffron!*

ARIEL. What did she just say?

AUDREY. She didn't say anything. She just...uh...has the hiccups.

SEBASTIAN. No, wait, I'm curious, too—I mean, that's a lot of dandruff! And it's so...shiny.

ARIEL. I will not be insulted! (*Moves to exit stage right.*)

TABBY. (*Catching ARIEL by the arm before she can leave:*) Wait—they didn't mean it. We're all just tired from traveling all day. Please—

we need a place to camp for tonight, and someone who knows their way around Doctor Diablo's Insane Asylum. Will you help us?

ARIEL. All right. But it's not dandruff. It's pixie dust. My whole life people have been making fun of me for it and I'm a little sensitive about it.

TABBY. Of course—no dandruff jokes. We promise. Right, guys?

SAFFRON. Whatever.

AUDREY. Of course we promise.

SEBASTIAN. Still, it would make for a fascinating study...

TABBY. Sebastian—not now, ok?

ARIEL. You can follow me.

(Exeunt ALL, stage right. Curtain closes.)

Scene 5

(Enter MESSENGER, wearing an eye patch as before, stage right.)

MESSENGER. Well, well, well...it looks as though Princess Tabasco and her silly little friends have it all figured out, *doesn't* it? They think that they can just go off on their little adventure without anyone doing anything to disrupt their plans, *don't* they? They don't think that anyone else has anything to say about what they are trying to do, *do* they? Well, here's a news flash, kids—the charming Prince Dashing isn't too happy about being left at the altar. And Princess Tabasco's parents—King Cayenne and Queen Tamale—aren't too happy with their little girl right now either. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if they're devising some sort of plan to put an end to this nonsense. Observe... *(Exit stage right.)*

(Curtain opens on Wilderness set and KING, QUEEN, and DASHING.)

KING. Once again, I apologize, Prince Dashing—this really isn't like our Tabby.

QUEEN. I'm sure it was just a case of cold feet.

KING. Cold feet? What's wrong with her feet?

QUEEN. Nothing, dear—it's just an expression.

KING. Well, there better not be anything wrong with her feet, I pay good money to buy shoes for that girl.

QUEEN. I know you do, dear.

KING. This doesn't have anything to do with that shoe prophecy she got herself mixed up in, does it?

QUEEN. I'm sure that it doesn't, dear.

DASHING. Listen, I'm not worried about her feet—her feet aren't what we're trying to find—we're trying to find the rest of her!

KING. Well they are attached—her feet and the rest of her. If you find one—

QUEEN. I think he understands that, dear.

KING. Oh, yes, of course. Well, we know where she started—which is to say the castle, and we know where she's been—which is to say here, in the wilderness—but what we're not clear on is where she's going.

(Enter MESSENGER, stage right, wearing eye patch, as before.)

MESSENGER. Perhaps I can be of some assistance.

DASHING. Who are you?

MESSENGER. A friend.

DASHING. I don't know about that—none of my friends wear eye patches.

MESSENGER. Never mind that right now—you three were wondering where the Princess is going, were you not?

DASHING. What were you doing, listening backstage or something?

MESSENGER. As a matter of fact, I was.

KING. Well that explains it.

QUEEN. Please, can you tell us where our daughter has gone?

MESSENGER. She is, at this very moment, making her way to Doctor Diablo's Insane Asylum.

QUEEN. No! Not the diabolical Doctor Diablo!

MESSENGER. The same.

DASHING. So, she's gone mad, has she? That would explain why she left me at the altar.

MESSENGER. No, she has gone to rescue a friend of hers who has been imprisoned there.

KING. Friends, eh? *(To QUEEN:)* I told you we shouldn't have let her go running off on all those adventures—look what it's done to her!

QUEEN. I thought she should see the world, build some character before she got married.

KING. Some character. Running out of her own wedding.

MESSENGER. And now I will depart, as mysteriously as I first appeared.

(Exit MESSENGER, stage right.)

DASHING. *(Slamming fist against open palm for emphasis:)* That's it, then! We have to go to this Insane Asylum and bring the Princess to her senses.

KING. Yes, well, of course, but you'll need someone to show you the way, a guide of some kind.

DASHING. A guide?

KING. Yes. I mean, you may be the dashing Prince Charming—

DASHING. No, I'm the *charming* Prince *Dashing*—

KING. Yes, yes—well, whatever your name is, even you can't hope to navigate the Wilderness on your own.

(Enter TABBY, SAFFRON, AUDREY, SEBASTIAN, and ARIEL, stage left; KING looks up at them, annoyed.)

TABBY. Oh, we're sorry—we were just on our way to our campsite.

KING. Yes, well—hurry up and get on your way.

(Exit TABBY, SAFFRON, AUDREY, SEBASTIAN, and ARIEL, stage right.)

KING. Now, where was I?

DASHING. You said that I needed a guide to help me find Princess Tabasco.

KING. Yes, yes—she’s a lovely girl, but she can be rude sometimes—interrupting other people in particular.

(Enter TABBY, stage right.)

TABBY. I’m sorry, Daddy—I didn’t mean to interrupt you.

KING *(Irate:)* Well you keep doing it! Get out of here!

(Exit TABBY, stage right.)

KING. Anyway, to help you find your way across the Wilderness, we found you the best guide in the land.

QUEEN. We spared no expense.

KING. *(Shouting off right:)* Guide! Guide—get in here!

(Enter TABBY, stage right.)

TABBY. I’m sorry, Daddy—were you calling for me?

KING. No, no, no! Does “guide” sound even remotely like “Tabasco”? *(Makes shooing gesture with hands.)* Now please, be on your way. And send that guide out here.

(Exit TABBY, stage right, moments later, enter MAX, with horns on his head, stumbling onstage as though pushed.)

KING. Ah, here he is—your guide.

DASHING. Who is *this*?

KING. This is Max, your guide.

DASHING. Well what’s with the horns? I mean what is he, some sort of Goat Boy?

KING. No, no, no—he’s a Troll.

DASHING. You expect me to trust a *Troll* to be my guide?

QUEEN. We spared no expense.

MAX. I'm a friendly Troll.

DASHING. A friendly Troll?

MAX. Yes, I mean—I know there are all sorts of Trolls that will crack open your skull and eat your brains, but we're not *all* like that.

DASHING. So you don't crack open peoples' skulls and eat their brains?

MAX. Not unless it's called for.

DASHING. And when is it called for?

MAX. Oh, you know, special occasions, mostly—Midsummer Night's Eve, Festivus—or if I'm just in a bad mood.

DASHING. Great.

KING. Well, I can tell that you two are going to be the best of friends. Happy hunting!

(KING and QUEEN begin to exit, stage right.)

DASHING. Wait, you're just leaving? You're not coming with us?

QUEEN. No, dear, we don't have any more lines in the play. We'll be back at the end, though.

(Exit KING and QUEEN, stage right.)

DASHING. Great. You know what you're doing?

MAX. I do.

DASHING. Well, guide away, then.

MAX. Follow me.

(Exit DASHING and MAX, stage left.)

(Curtain closes.)

Scene 6

(Enter NARRATOR, stage right.)

NARRATOR. *(To audience:)* Sorry to keep you waiting, ladies and gentlemen—someone backstage keeps locking me in my dressing room. It's professional jealousy, I suppose. Is it my fault that as the show's Narrator I get the biggest dressing room with the biggest star on the door? No. Is it my fault that they'd just be a bunch of silly people with silly names wandering around without any sense of direction if I wasn't here? No. You know, one night they tried to do the show without me—without a narrator of any kind, in fact—and how do you think that went? Not very well, I can tell you that. In fact, I saved a couple of reviews from that night. I'll read them to you now. *(Pulls papers from pocket, begins reading:)* "Last night's production of *Princess Tabasco Saves the Universe* was the best of the show's run. By removing the intrusive narrator character, the play flowed much more smoothly and the laughs came a lot faster. The only incident that marred the night was the presence of one deranged audience member sitting in the back of the house, screaming about the Narrator's absence until she was asked to leave by the management. Hopefully, we have seen the last of this wholly unnecessary character." *(Pause.)* Well, okay, that doesn't really illustrate my point, but you have to consider that it was written by the critic Rutherford Quill, who we all know is a frustrated actor in general and a frustrated narrator in particular. People who can't do, criticize. Let's read another one. *(Reading:)* "Last night's performance of *Princess Tabasco Saves the Universe* was nothing short of a disaster. With the beloved Narrator missing, both the actors on stage and the audience were hopelessly lost. Midway through the show I began to chant, "We want the Narrator!" and feel that I would have succeeded in getting the rest of the audience to join me had I not been rudely dismissed from the theater. Come back to us, sweet Prince." *(Stops reading.)* This review was written by the esteemed and influential dramatic critic Lola Narrator. Now, I know what you're thinking—Lola Narrator is probably my wife or something like that—but let me assure you, ladies and gentlemen, that this is not the case. The only reason that I happen to have any acquaintance with this critic is that she coincidentally happens to be my mother.

(Enter TABBY, stage right.)

TABBY. Hi. Look—we've talked to you about this before...

NARRATOR. Huh? Oh, right, sorry. I was just...

TABBY. *(Holding up her hand for silence:)* It's okay. It's just that we have a whole other act to do after this one.

NARRATOR. Yeah, sorry, really—

TABBY. *(Silencing him again:)* It's fine. Just—go narrate.

(Exit TABBY, stage right.)

NARRATOR. See? Professional jealousy. Anyway, after spending the night in the Wilderness, Tabby and her friends set out once again, determined to reach Doctor Diablo's Insane Asylum by mid-afternoon. And here, at the very outskirts of the Wilderness, not far from the gates of Doctor Diablo's Insane Asylum, they are about to receive a most unexpected surprise. *(Exit stage right.)*

(Curtain opens on Wilderness set and DIABLO, ATTENDANT, ANOTHER ATTENDANT, GUNTHER, LILY, and CASSANDRA, in a wheelbarrow. GUNTHER and LILY both have ropes around their middles, restraining their arms, and ATTENDANT and ANOTHER ATTENDANT are holding the other end of each rope, as though each was on a leash.)

DIABLO. Yes, there's nothing like a pleasant walk in the open air, amidst the wonder of nature to knock some sanity into the head of a lunatic. I'm almost too generous doing them this kindness, but what can I say? As a man of medicine, I am the very soul of generosity. How do you like the Wilderness, you sad, pathetic lot of half-wits?

GUNTHER. I'd like it a whole lot better if you untied me.

CASSANDRA. It's dry, it's hot, and it's absolutely barbaric. This is perhaps the least dignified situation I've found myself in yet.

LILY. I can't feel my hands.

DIABLO. Excellent! I'm glad to hear that all of you are enjoying yourselves so much!

ATTENDANT. Um, excuse me, sir...

DIABLO. Yes?

ATTENDANT. Well, I mean, don't we have more patients than just these three?

DIABLO. Well of course we do. But we're performing with a very small cast, and these are the only patients that are important. If we wanted to have *all* the patients out here, we'd have a bunch of actors who didn't have any lines and who would just be standing around onstage doing nothing. Then when it came time for the cast party, we'd have twice as many people, and instead of everybody getting two pieces of pizza apiece, we'd each only get one. Do you understand now?

ATTENDANT. Yes, sir—I understand.

DIABLO. I know you like pizza.

ATTENDANT. I *really* like pizza.

DIABLO. Excellent! Then let's hear nothing more on the subject.

(Enter TABBY, SAFFRON, AUDREY, SEBASTIAN, and ARIEL, stage right.)

TABBY. Cassandra! We've found you!

CASSANDRA. Well, it's about time—do you *know* how dried-out and flaky I've become under these conditions? So, who else is here?

TABBY. What do you mean?

CASSANDRA. Who's here to do the actual rescuing?

TABBY. Just us.

CASSANDRA. You? What have you ever done?

TABBY. Well, there was that time that I stopped an evil Frost Giant from taking over the world.

CASSANDRA. Oh, right—the Prophecy of the Shoe. Yeah, that sounds dire. Who names these things, anyway?

TABBY. Which one of you is Doctor Diablo?

DIABLO. I am Doctor Diablo. And may I say that I have seen many natural wonders in my time, many examples of beauty out here in

the Wilderness, but never have I seen anything as lovely as yourself. Would you care to dine with me tonight?

AUDREY. Did he just ask her out?

ARIEL. I think so.

SEBASTIAN. Wow, he's smooth—maybe he can give me some pointers.

SAFFRON. I know what you're thinking, and it still won't do you any good.

TABBY. Please, Cassandra is my friend, can't you release her?

DIABLO. Do you mean to say that you are...acquainted with this patient of mine?

TABBY. Yes.

DIABLO. Well that is rather...unexpected. But first, tell me, do you believe in love at first sight?

SEBASTIAN. I know I do.

SAFFRON. Oh will you please give it up!

TABBY. Well, I believe in true love...

DIABLO. Well then, perhaps you have some idea of the way I am feeling now, gazing into the depths of your eyes...

TABBY. Umm...sure. But what about my friend? Will you let her go?

GUNTHER. And us, too?

LILY. I can't feel my hands.

TABBY. Well, I...

GUNTHER. The only reason I'm here is because I think I'm a Cyclops.

TABBY. Is this true?

DIABLO. It is.

AUDREY. Shouldn't he have three big horns on his head?

SAFFRON. That's a triceratops.

SEBASTIAN. I must say, he does *look* an awful lot like a Cyclops.

GUNTHER. I *am* a Cyclops! Count the eye!

ARIEL. The other one's a sprite.

TABBY. How can you tell?

LILY. Haven't any of you been listening to me? *I can't feel my hands!*

TABBY. I really think you should let them go.

DIABLO. We can discuss that—and other things—over dinner. The sun is almost down, I insist that all of you come to the asylum and dine with us.

TABBY. Well, if you insist.

SAFFRON. Tabby, are you sure this is a good idea?

TABBY. Well, maybe if I talk to him, you know...

SAFFRON. Flirt a little?

TABBY. Something like that. But maybe I can talk him into letting them go.

SAFFRON. All right, Tabby— if you really think it's going to work.

DIABLO. Come along, everyone— dinner will be ready shortly.

(Exeunt ALL, stage left. Curtain closes.)

(Enter NARRATOR, stage right.)

NARRATOR. *(To audience:)* Well, it looks like that Doctor Diablo has a little crush on Tabby. Will she be able to use her feminine wiles to free her friends? Only time will tell. But first, intermission.

End of Act I

ACT II

Scene 1

(NARRATOR, *stage right, in front of curtain.*)

NARRATOR. (*To audience:*) Welcome back, ladies and gentlemen, to the second half of our show. A lot has happened to Tabby since the show began, but yet she still seems no closer to rescuing Princess Cassandra or her new acquaintances from the clutches of the diabolical Doctor Diablo.

(*Enter DASHING and MAX, stage right.*)

DASHING. (*To NARRATOR:*) You! Where is Princess Tabasco?! I demand to see her at once! This outrage will not stand!

NARRATOR. (*To DASHING:*) Are you talking to me?

DASHING. Of course I'm talking to you! Now, bring me the Princess at once or my Troll will crack open your skull and eat your brains!

NARRATOR. (*Indicating MAX:*) What, *he's* going to crack open my skull and eat my brains?

DASHING. Yes—he's a fierce and dangerous Troll—now bring me the Princess at once!

MAX. Actually, I'm a friendly Troll.

DASHING. (*To MAX:*) Will you be quiet? (*To NARRATOR:*) Now, bring me the Princess or face the consequences!

NARRATOR. Listen, I'm not the one you need to talk to about this— Doctor Diablo's in charge around here.

DASHING. Fine! Then bring me this Doctor Diablo!

NARRATOR. He'll be around shortly. Just go backstage for a while and wait.

DASHING. All right, but if I don't get the Princess back, I'm holding *you* responsible!

MAX. That doesn't seem fair—he's just doing his job.

DASHING. Silence! Now, come on you useless lump of...Troll.

(Exit DASHING and MAX, stage right.)

NARRATOR. *(To audience:)* Well that certainly wasn't very pleasant, was it? Now, let us return to the cozy confines of Doctor Diablo's Insane Asylum. *(Exit stage right.)*

Scene 2

(Curtain opens on office set, as before; enter TABBY and DIABLO, stage left.)

DIABLO. So, did you enjoy your dinner, my dear?

TABBY. It was all right—though it was hard to concentrate on my food with all that screaming.

DIABLO. Screaming? No, that's singing to my ears—the sweet music of mental health I call it.

TABBY. Well, it didn't sound like music to me. What do you do with your patients here, torture them or something?

DIABLO. Only if you consider hanging people upside down by their ankles for hours on end torture. Now, tell me, Princess Tabasco, what would it take for someone like you to love someone like me?

TABBY. Are you asking what it would take for me to fall in love with you?

DIABLO. No, no, no—I'm asking what it would take for someone *like* you to love someone *like* me.

TABBY. Well, I—I don't know exactly. I mean, we really only just met, so I couldn't really say right away what—

DIABLO. *(Collapsing to his knees, distraught:)* Oh, Princess—I was lying before! I really was asking what it would take for you—Princess Tabasco—to fall in love with me—Doctor Diablo!

TABBY. Oh, gosh, uh—please, stand up. *(DIABLO stands.)* I mean, it's not that I don't like you—I mean, you seem like a really... interesting guy.

DIABLO. Really?

TABBY. Well, sure. And I mean, you must be awfully smart to be able to run this Insane Asylum all by yourself.

DIABLO. I get no help at all from those attendants of mine.

TABBY. No, I bet you don't.

DIABLO. *(Taking TABBY's hand:)* Princess Tabasco, you are so...so very kind.

TABBY. Oh, it's nothing.

DIABLO. No, no—it's something. Your kindness has touched me *(Places free hand over heart)* deep inside. *(Releases TABBY's hand, begins to pace stage.)* You have opened doors inside me—doors that I thought were closed forever. And now—now I'm frightened—frightened that I haven't always been doing what's best for my patients. And I wonder if maybe you can help me— *(Returns to TABBY's side, takes her hand again)* help me undo all the wrong I've done. As a partner. And perhaps...as my wife.

TABBY. I... Well, I... I'll think about it. Now, about my friend—and the others...

DIABLO. Yes, yes—of course. But first, come with me; let me show you around the place—it could use your kindness.

TABBY. All right.

DIABLO. Wonderful. Please, come this way.

(Exit TABBY and DIABLO, hand-in-hand, stage right.)

(Enter SAFFRON, AUDREY, and SEBASTIAN, stage left.)

AUDREY. Do you think Tabby will be able to convince the Doctor to let them go?

SAFFRON. I hope so, this place gives me the creeps.

SEBASTIAN. I have read a number of books on psychology, and I must say, I'm not too sure about the Doctor's methods. I mean, there doesn't really seem to be anything *wrong* with the patients here, but Doctor Diablo keeps trying to convince them that there is.

SAFFRON. For once I agree with you. I mean, it is hard for some people to believe in sprites and pixies and Cyclopes and mermaids and things like that—but these people aren't crazy, they're just...

AUDREY. Misunderstood?

SAFFRON. Exactly.

SEBASTIAN. What we need is a plan—in case Tabby can't get Doctor Diablo to just let them go.

SAFFRON. Right. But for now let's keep an eye on Tabby and the Doctor—I don't trust that guy.

AUDREY. Me either.

(Exit SAFFRON, AUDREY, and SEBASTIAN, stage right.)

*(Enter ATTENDANT, stage right, carrying a tray of Dixie cups.
Enter ANOTHER ATTENDANT, stage right.)*

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Oh, hey, uh...

ATTENDANT. Oh, hey, uh, what?

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. I'm sorry. I feel really bad about this. I mean, we've worked together for so long and...I don't actually know your name.

ATTENDANT. Don't worry about it. I mean, can you even remember your own name?

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Well of course I can, it's, uh...well, this really is embarrassing—I can't remember that either.

ATTENDANT. It's because you don't have a name—I don't either. We have two of the smallest parts in the play! If you look in the program—we're just "Attendant" and "Another Attendant."

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Well, I guess that clears that up. I mean, I'm disappointed that we don't get to have actual names, but at least there's nothing wrong with my memory. What are you doing?

ATTENDANT. Just taking the patients their medication.

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Remind me—how does force-feeding the patients raw chili peppers improve their condition?

ATTENDANT. I've never been sure— I asked Dr. Diablo about it once, and he told me not to waste his time with stupid questions.

(Enter DASHING and MAX, stage right.)

DASHING. Where is Princess Tabasco?! I demand to see her at once! Don't make me sic my Troll on you!

MAX. Why do you keep saying that? I keep telling you, I'm a *friendly* Troll.

DASHING. *(Teeth clenched:)* Can you just play along and help me out a little bit here?

MAX. Well, I don't appreciate the way you keep using me to threaten people!

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Excuse me, but did you just say he was a Troll?

DASHING. Yes, I did. And all I have to do is snap my fingers and he'll crack open your skull and eat your brains.

MAX. Stop saying that!

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. *(To MAX:)* And you, do you believe that you are a Troll?

MAX. Well of course I do!

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. *(Aside to ATTENDANT:)* Did you hear that? They're *both* convinced that the little one is a Troll.

ATTENDANT. This is a very serious case. We should notify Doctor Diablo at once.

DASHING. Yes, that's the man! Doctor Diablo, I demand to speak to him at once!

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Sure, sure—you'll get to see him. We'll take goooood care of you here. Right this way.

(Exit DASHING, MAX, ATTENDANT, and ANOTHER ATTENDANT, stage right.)

(Enter TABBY and SAFFRON, stage right.)

TABBY. What's so important that you had to talk to me right away? Doctor Diablo was just about to show us the dungeons.

SAFFRON. Have you forgotten why we're here, Tabby? We need to figure out a way to get Cassandra and the others out of here, and I don't think Doctor Diablo's just going to let them walk out.

TABBY. Are you sure? I mean, I think maybe he's changed.

SAFFRON. I think he's just telling you whatever he thinks you want to hear. It's up to us, Tabby.

TABBY. Well what should we do, then?

SAFFRON. We could ask him to let us take them out into the Wilderness again and make a run for it.

TABBY. Do you think he'd let us do that?

SAFFRON. Of course he will. He's smitten. Imagine if I asked Sebastian to let me do something like that?

TABBY. So there is something going on between you two! Oh, how romantic—you hide your intentions very well, what with the way you're always insulting him and everything.

SAFFRON. No! That's not it all! My feelings for Sebastian are precisely what they appear to be—annoyance mixed with mild contempt. I'm just saying that love makes you stupid—which is why I want no part in it.

TABBY. All right, I'll ask him.

(Exeunt TABBY and SAFFRON, stage left.)

Scene 3

(Enter DIABLO, ATTENDANT, stage right.)

DIABLO. She's a fine woman, that Princess Tabasco—taking an interest in these lunatics the way she is, showing them the wonders of nature.

ATTENDANT. You aren't really going to set those patients free, are you?

DIABLO. Of course not! They're all obviously very ill. As for the Princess herself...well, I've always thought that this place could use a woman's touch.

ATTENDANT. Does that mean we'd have to start leaving the toilet seat down?

DIABLO. Yes of course it means you'll have to start leaving the toilet seat down!

(Enter ANOTHER ATTENDANT, stage right.)

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Excuse me, Dr. Diablo, but I'm afraid I have some bad news.

DIABLO. I'm sure that you do. What unspeakably incompetent thing have you done this time?

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. It's Princess Tabasco, sir.

DIABLO. Princess Tabasco? Has she come to harm? Oh, I thought it would be a bad idea to leave her alone with those lunatics. Of course, any idea I don't come up with myself is usually a bad one. Has my judgment been clouded by love?

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Harm, sir? I don't think so, sir. It's just that...she's gone, sir.

DIABLO. Well I already knew that she had gone—she's taking those maniacs out for fresh air.

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. That's what I'm getting at, sir—she's freed the patients and run off herself.

DIABLO. What? Impossible!

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. I'm afraid it's true, sir.

DIABLO. How can this be? Is this what love does to a man? Oh, I'm so distraught. There I was, in love, completely distraught, and now I am utterly, utterly distraught. How can I win her back?

(Enter MESSENGER, wearing eye patch, as before.)

MESSENGER. Perhaps I can help you with that.

DIABLO. Who are you, sir? Not a patient I hope—I've never been able to cure the Cyclops delusion.

MESSENGER. Let's just say I'm a friend. Come with me.

(Exeunt ALL, stage right.)

(Curtain closes.)

Scene 4

(Enter MESSENGER, wearing eye patch, as before, in front of curtain, stage right.)

MESSENGER. *(To audience:)* It may seem as though the story has come to a close, but Princess Tabasco's trials and tribulations are not quite at an end. Soon—

(Enter NARRATOR, stage right.)

NARRATOR. Who are you?

MESSENGER. No one.

NARRATOR. You're not narrating, are you? There are strict laws against narrating without a license.

MESSENGER. Well, I'll let you proceed, then.

(Exit MESSENGER, stage right.)

NARRATOR. And so Princess Tabasco's adventures come to an end. Everyone is now free to live happily ever after.

(Exit NARRATOR, stage right.)

(Curtain opens on TABBY, SAFFRON, SEBASTIAN, AUDREY, ARIEL, LILY, CASSANDRA, and GUNTHER.)

TABBY. Well, you guys are free now—it's over.

CASSANDRA. It's not over yet! Someone has to take me back out to sea!

SAFFRON. Oh, do you ever shut up?

SEBASTIAN. Now that the play is over, are you ready to read the poems I wrote you?

SAFFRON. I was hoping you had forgotten about that.

CASSANDRA. Hey! Just because I don't waddle around on those ridiculous stumps you call feet—

SAFFRON. We could just leave her here, you know.

AUDREY. My temple is near the Tangerine Sea—I can take you.

CASSANDRA. That's very thoughtful. We'll have to do it discreetly, though—if anyone saw me with some ghastly, finless freak, my reputation would be utterly ruined.

SAFFRON. (*Sarcastic:*) What gratitude.

GUNTHER. Well I'm grateful to be free—thank you all.

LILY. Me too—even if a pixie had a hand in setting me free.

ARIEL. I'm not thrilled to share the company of a sprite, either.

LILY. Well, at least neither of us are fairies.

ARIEL. That I can agree with.

SAFFRON. What is it with you guys and fairies, anyway?

SEBASTIAN. Excellent question—I was just thinking the same thing!

SAFFRON. Give. Up. Now.

LILY. It's just that fairies are...

ARIEL. They're useless.

LILY. Yeah, that really sums it up.

SEBASTIAN. You know, I can't help but feel like we're leaving some things unresolved here. I mean, it doesn't seem right that a dynamic action hero like Prince Dashing would get stood up at the altar and not do anything about it.

SAFFRON. Oh, don't say anything to make this play go on any longer than it already has.

TABBY. Prince Dashing...I had forgotten all about him.

(Enter NARRATOR, stage right.)

NARRATOR. Princess Tabasco! I've found you!

TABBY. What is it?

NARRATOR. It's Doctor Diablo. He is at this very moment making his way to Calamity Cave, in the heart of the Wilderness. He is looking for something called the Orb of Secrets—this Orb holds the entire universe together. It is Doctor Diablo's intention to destroy the orb, and in so doing, destroy the entire universe.

SAFFRON. *(Joining TABBY:)* Great—the end of the universe. It's not like I had plans or anything.

TABBY. What can we do?

NARRATOR. Find him! Stop him!

TABBY. Well, I guess *somebody* has to save the universe.

SAFFRON. Well, the title of the play *is Princess Tabasco Saves the Universe.*

TABBY. Good point—I hadn't thought of that. Come on, guys—let's go!

(Curtain closes.)

Scene 5

(Enter MESSENGER, wearing eye patch, as before, stage right, in front of curtain.)

MESSENGER. So, just when you thought everything was wrapped up in a nice, neat little package, *something* comes along to ruin the fun. Happily ever after, indeed. And things only get *more* difficult from here on out. It was after nightfall when Princess Tabasco and her charming little friends made their way back out into the Wilderness. It was difficult to find their way in the dark, and before long, a fierce thunderstorm swept in. In a matter of minutes, Princess Tabasco and her companions were separated—scattered throughout the Wilderness with no way of finding each other or

Calamity Cave. And now we take you back to the Wilderness, to see how that pathetic group of misfits is getting on. (*Exit stage right.*)

(*Curtain opens on Wilderness set, as before. ARIEL is sitting center, rubbing her head. Enter GUNTHER, stage right.*)

ARIEL. Hi there. It's nice to see a friendly face.

GUNTHER. That's the first time anyone has ever said *that* to me.

ARIEL. Have you seen any sign of the others?

GUNTHER. (*Shakes head.*) No.

ARIEL. That was a terrible storm.

GUNTHER. I know. Usually I just stay in my cave when a storm like that blows through.

ARIEL. Your cave?

GUNTHER. Yeah, I've got a cave up in the hills. It's nice. For a cave, I mean. Cozy.

ARIEL. I'd like to see it some time.

GUNTHER. And that's the first time anyone has said *that* to me.

(*Enter MAX, stage right.*)

MAX. Have any of you seen a Prince around here?

ARIEL. A Prince?

MAX. Yes, Prince Dashing. I was his guide. My name is Max, the Troll.

ARIEL. (*Standing, alarmed:*) A Troll? You're not going to crack open our skulls and eat our brains are you?

MAX. No, no, no! How many times do I have to explain this? I'm a *friendly* Troll! Now, who are you?

ARIEL. My name is Ariel, the Sprite. And this is my friend Gunther, the Cyclops.

MAX. Nice to meet you both.

ARIEL. You said you were some sort of guide, didn't you? Could you help us find Calamity Cave?

MAX. I could—but I should probably try to find Prince Dashing.

ARIEL. Do you like working for Prince Dashing?

MAX. Not particularly. He only sees me for *what* I am, which is to say a troll, and not *who* I am, which is a friendly troll.

GUNTHER. Yeah, I get that a lot, too. In a Cyclops way, I mean.

ARIEL. Help us find the cave, then. I'm sure our friends are much nicer than Prince Dashing, and, oh yeah—the fate of the universe is at stake.

MAX. All right, follow me.

(Exit MAX, ARIEL, and GUNTHER, stage right.)

(Enter AUDREY, SEBASTIAN, and LILY, stage left.)

AUDREY. *(Calling:)* Tabby? Saffron? Where are you guys?

SEBASTIAN. Oh, it's hopeless.

AUDREY. Lily, Sebastian, do either of you know where we are?

LILY. It's hard to say. What with the storm, everything looks so different.

SEBASTIAN. Well, by my calculations, I'd say that we are...we are...

AUDREY. What?

SEBASTIAN. Lost.

LILY. That's helpful.

AUDREY. Well, let's try and find Calamity Cave. Maybe Tabby and Saffron will be waiting for us there.

LILY. Do you really think they'll find it?

SEBASTIAN. Well, if Miss Saffron is still with Tabby, she'll be able to find it. She can do anything!

LILY. Does he always go on about her like this?

AUDREY. I'm afraid so.

LILY. I spent a lot of time in the Wilderness before Doctor Diablo took me—it might take a while, but I think I can find it. C'mon, guys.

(Exit LILY, AUDREY, and SEBASTIAN, stage right.)

(Enter CASSANDRA, stage right, pulling herself along on her hands, her fin dragging behind her.)

CASSANDRA. Oh, this is even *less* dignified than that wretched Insane Asylum. And that storm! Freshwater simply ruins my pores! Oh, isn't there a nice saltwater bath around here anywhere?

(Enter DASHING, stage left.)

DASHING. You there—

CASSANDRA. You there? Did you just address me as “you there”?

DASHING. Well, it's not like I know your name, is it?

CASSANDRA. Well, you could have asked first, couldn't you have? But I suppose *that* would be asking too much, so I'll just *tell* you. My name is Princess Cassandra, of the Tangerine Sea.

DASHING. You're a Princess?

CASSANDRA. Yes, I'm a Princess! I know I don't look much like one, dragging along on the ground like this—it's *even* worse than being in that stupid wheelbarrow—but I *am* a Princess. Who are you?

DASHING. I am the charming Prince Dashing.

CASSANDRA. A Prince? Really? Any relation to the dashing Prince Charming?

DASHING. He's my cousin.

CASSANDRA. Well, he's a moron, and by the looks of you, you aren't any better.

DASHING. Excuse me?

CASSANDRA. I tell you that I'm a Princess and you just leave me lying in the dirt like this! Some Prince you are!

DASHING. (*Crossing to CASSANDRA.*) Oh, I'm sorry—really I am. It's just that, I've had a lot on my mind lately. Here. (*Picks CASSANDRA up off the ground.*)

CASSANDRA. My, you're very strong. And handsome, too. Do you work out?

DASHING. Yeah, I lift. You know, bench presses, curls, stuff like that.

CASSANDRA. Well, this is certainly a much more agreeable way to travel than in a wheelbarrow.

DASHING. Where to, my lady?

CASSANDRA. Well, there was such a big rush in pulling off our daring escape that I left all my purses and hair clips and sea shells back at the Insane Asylum. We'll have to go back for them.

DASHING. As you wish, my lady.

CASSANDRA. I could get used to this.

(Exit DASHING, carrying CASSANDRA, stage right.)

(Enter TABBY and SAFFRON, stage left.)

SAFFRON. Oh, nothing is *ever* easy in this play, is it? Not only do we have to go off and stop Doctor Diablo from destroying the universe, but now we've lost the others and we're hopelessly lost!

TABBY. Oh, cheer up, Saffron—it isn't *that* bad.

SAFFRON. Yes it is! It is *that bad!* How can you be so cheerful at a time like this?

TABBY. Because, the title of the play is *Princess Tabasco Saves the Universe*, not *Princess Tabasco Almost, But Not Quite Saves the Universe Due to Unforeseen Circumstances and Inconveniences*.

SAFFRON. All right, you have a point. But we have no idea *where* that Calamity Cave place is.

TABBY. Well I'm sure someone will come along and point us in the right direction.

(Enter MESSENGER, wearing eye patch as before, stage right.)

MESSENGER. You rang?

TABBY. *(To SAFFRON:)* See? *(To MESSENGER:)* Tell me, good sir, can you tell us the way to Calamity Cave?

MESSENGER. I can. You'll find that most of your friends went that way, *(Points off right)* which will lead them to the cave, but *I* know a shortcut.

TABBY. You do?

MESSENGER. Yes. Just go straight in that direction, *(Points off left)* and you'll find Calamity Cave before you know it. *(Exit stage right.)*

TABBY. Did you hear that, Saffron? A shortcut!

SAFFRON. Yeah, but I got a bad feeling about that guy—maybe it was the eye patch.

TABBY. Yeah, well—we have to get to that cave, and we have to get there fast—let's go!

(Exit TABBY and SAFFRON, stage left.)

(Curtain closes.)

Scene 6

(Enter NARRATOR, stage right, in front of curtain.)

NARRATOR. *(To audience:)* I really need to find out who keeps locking me in my dressing room. Well, like I said before—professional jealousy. As it stands now, even separated from her friends, Princess Tabasco still hasn't given up, and now she finds herself here, in the depths of Calamity Cave.

(Exit NARRATOR, stage right.)

(Curtain opens on a set that in some way suggests a cave—a creepy one. Enter TABBY and SAFFRON, stage right.)

TABBY. Oh, man—this place is creepy.

SAFFRON. I'll say. Any sign of the others?

TABBY. No, I don't see anyone. Should we wait for them?

SAFFRON. No—we have to find that Orb of Secrets thing before Doctor Diablo gets to it.

TABBY. *(Looking off right:)* I think I hear someone coming.

SAFFRON. Quick, this way!

(Exit TABBY and SAFFRON, stage left.)

(Enter ATTENDANT, and ANOTHER ATTENDANT, stage right.)

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. *(Reading from a steno pad:)* Let me make sure I haven't forgotten anything. We need to get a ladder, rope, grappling hooks...did I forget anything?

ATTENDANT. Trampoline.

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. *(Makes note.)* Trampoline, right. The Orb of Secrets is pretty far off the ground, huh?

ATTENDANT. What's he going to do with the Orb of Secrets again?

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. I can't remember, exactly—something to do with destroying the universe, I think.

ATTENDANT. Destroying the universe, huh? *(Shrugs.)* Well, he's the boss.

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Exactly. Now come on—we need to hurry.

(Exit ATTENDANT and ANOTHER ATTENDANT, stage right.)

(Enter AUDREY, SEBASTIAN, and LILY, stage right.)

AUDREY. *(Calling:)* Tabby? Saffron? *(To SEBASTIAN and LILY:)* Maybe they're not here yet.

LILY. I have a bad feeling about this place.

SEBASTIAN. Me too. Oh, with all my research and all my studies I've never learned *anything* about Calamity Cave—and—and if I had...well...I might be able to help Miss Saffron—but since I don't... Oh, I just feel so *useless*.

AUDREY. Oh, don't worry about it.

LILY. Yeah, there's nothing you can do about it now.

(Enter GUNTHER, ARIEL, and MAX, stage right.)

ARIEL. Have you guys seen Tabby and Saffron anywhere?

AUDREY. No. And I guess you haven't either.

ARIEL. I'm afraid not.

LILY. *(Indicating MAX:)* Who's he?

MAX. I am Max, the Troll.

SEBASTIAN. Oh, no—I don't want to have my skull cracked open and my brains eaten!

MAX. I'm not even going to *try* to explain anymore.

GUNTHER. We need some sort of a plan. Do we try and find Tabby and Saffron, or do we try to find the Orb of Secrets?

AUDREY. Maybe they've already found it.

LILY. But we don't know that.

MAX. She's right.

ARIEL. And this place is so huge, looking for them could take forever.

AUDREY. So maybe we should try splitting up and looking for them?

MAX. That might take even longer than forever.

GUNTHER. *(To SEBASTIAN:)* You're a scholar, right? Do you have a plan?

SEBASTIAN. I—I know I should—but they don't write about this sort of thing in books. Not in the ones I read, anyway.

GUNTHER. OK, then—we'll stick together and keep looking. Whatever we find, we find.

(Exeunt ALL, stage left.)

(Curtain closes.)

Scene 7

(Enter DASHING, carrying CASSANDRA, in front of curtain, stage left.)

CASSANDRA. So what's so special about Princess Tabasco anyway?

DASHING. What do you mean?

CASSANDRA. Well, why do you want to marry her when you could marry anyone you wanted to?

DASHING. Oh, well, you know how it is—our parents set the whole thing up.

CASSANDRA. So you're not in love with her?

DASHING. Well, no, not yet, but I imagine I will be someday—I mean, that's what happened with my parents. You're a Princess; you should know all this.

CASSANDRA. Well, I may be a Princess, but I certainly don't just do whatever someone else tells me to do. I mean, of *course* I'm going to marry a Prince some day, but when that happens it will be because I *want* to marry him—not because someone else tells me to.

DASHING. You'd really do that? Disobey your parents if they wanted you to marry someone you didn't want to marry, I mean.

CASSANDRA. Well, of course. Sure, my parents may be the King and Queen of the Tangerine Sea, but that doesn't mean they get to make up my mind for me. I marry who I want, when I want. And I don't see why you don't do the same thing.

DASHING. Well, I...I guess I've never really thought about it before.

CASSANDRA. Obviously.

DASHING. I mean... *(Shakes head.)* Look, I'm getting all turned around. Do you know how to get to Doctor Diablo's Insane Asylum from here?

CASSANDRA. Men. You expect us women to do everything for you.

DASHING. Well, I had a guide before.

CASSANDRA. I know what you're thinking. You just want to find your precious Princess Tabasco, right?

DASHING. Well, of course I do—I mean, she and I are supposed to be getting married, right?

CASSANDRA. You still don't get it, do you?

DASHING. Listen, I don't have time to talk about this anymore. We need to figure out where we're going.

(Enter MESSENGER, in eye patch, as before, stage right.)

MESSENGER. I'm sorry. Have you lost your way?

DASHING. Well, actually, yes. We're looking for Doctor Diablo's Insane Asylum.

MESSENGER. Oh, that's right this way. *(Points off left.)* But I think you rather go to Calamity Cave—and I'd hurry if I were you; things are just about to get interesting down there.

DASHING. What's so special about Calamity Cave? What would we find there?

CASSANDRA. Unless it's full of clam shells and pearl necklaces, I'm not interested.

MESSENGER. Oh, but the cave holds so many interesting things. The Orb of Secrets...Princess Tabasco...

DASHING. Princess Tabasco is there?

CASSANDRA. Well of course she is—I'd be stuck going down there myself if it hadn't been for that storm.

DASHING. You knew about this?

CASSANDRA. Well of course I knew about it—and I would have been fine going down there *eventually*, but, hello? Hair brushes, sea-shells—a girl has priorities.

DASHING. Where is this cave?

MESSENGER. (*Points off right.*) You'll find it that way.

CASSANDRA. Yes, yes, go ahead, run after your stupid Princess. At least this should be amusing to watch.

DASHING. No, I said I'd take you back to Doctor Diablo's Insane Asylum and that what I'll do. It isn't gentlemanly to promise a girl a trip to an Insane Asylum and then break that promise.

(Exit DASHING, carrying CASSANDRA, stage left.)

MESSENGER. (*To audience:*) Well, that was distracting. As I said—things are about to get interesting down in Calamity Cave.

(Exit MESSENGER, stage left.)

Scene 8

(Curtain opens on cave set once again with the Orb of Secrets—something large, and papier-mâché, perhaps decorated with stars—hanging from the ceiling, up center; TABBY and SAFFRON, stand beneath it, looking up.)

TABBY. Well, this must be it. I guess I just thought it would be, I don't know, more impressive-looking or something.

SAFFRON. Yeah, well, they always build things like this up so much that it's always a letdown when you actually see it. That and the set design people probably just got lazy.

TABBY. Look how high up that is! Oh, this play is full of so many ridiculous problems.

SAFFRON. I've been saying that all night.

TABBY. Well, if we can't reach it, then Doctor Diablo won't be able to reach it, either, which means it's safe. Problem solved!

SAFFRON. Unless he brings rope or a ladder or grappling hooks to reach it.

TABBY. Right—or a trampoline.

SAFFRON. A trampoline? Be serious, Tabby.

TABBY. I just wish we knew where he was.

(Enter AUDREY, SEBASTIAN, ARIEL, LILY, GUNTHER, and MAX, stage right.)

LILY. Look—that must be the Orb of Secrets!

MAX. Amazing!

GUNTHER. Huh. I just kind of thought it would be—

ARIEL. Bigger?

GUNTHER. Yeah. Shinier, too.

SEBASTIAN. Oh, Miss Saffron—you're safe! I was so worried.

SAFFRON. I'm sure.

AUDREY. Have you seen Doctor Diablo?

TABBY. No, we haven't seen any sign of him yet. Maybe if we find a way to bring it down from the ceiling, we could take it somewhere—keep it safe.

SEBASTIAN. If I had the time, and the materials, maybe I could build something...

SAFFRON. But you don't, so you can't, and you won't.

AUDREY. What do we do now?

SEBASTIAN. Maybe if we all stood on each other's shoulders...

SAFFRON. No.

TABBY. *(To LILY:)* Can you fly up there?

LILY. No, these wings are just props.

ARIEL. Ha! Just the kind of excuse you would expect from a pixie.

TABBY. So your wings actually work?

ARIEL. No, they're just props, too. I was just being, y'know, snippy. *(Pause.)* Sorry.

TABBY. I don't think there's any way we can get it down. We have to find Doctor Diablo.

(Enter MESSENGER, wearing eye patch as before, stage left.)

MESSENGER. Looking for Doctor Diablo?

TABBY. Why, yes—yes we are!

SAFFRON. And we're trusting him because why?

MESSENGER. I will show you the way to him—he is hiding in Cave-in Cavern.

SEBASTIAN. Cave-in Cavern—what an intriguing name! What does it mean?

MESSENGER. It doesn't mean anything—it's just a name.

SEBASTIAN. Fascinating.

SAFFRON. Is there anything that you aren't fascinated by?

SEBASTIAN. Well, now that you mention it, I suppose that there isn't—we live in a truly fascinating world! Of course, there is nothing in the world that fascinates me as much as you.

SAFFRON. You are severely testing my gag reflex.

MESSENGER. Come along.

(Exeunt ALL— Curtain.)

Scene 9

(Curtain up on SAFFRON, SEBASTIAN, AUDREY, ARIEL, LILY, and GUNTHER, with rubble sitting in a pile, stage right.)

AUDREY. What was that?

GUNTHER. A cave-in.

SEBASTIAN. So that's why they call it Cave-in Cavern!

SAFFRON. Genius. Pure genius.

SEBASTIAN. Why, Miss Saffron, that's very kind of you to—

SAFFRON. I was being sarcastic.

AUDREY. Are we trapped?

GUNTHER. Looks like it.

LILY. This is bad. This is very, very bad.

SAFFRON. And the understatement of the year award goes to—

ARIEL. She's right. The Orb of Secrets...

SAFFRON. What about it?

LILY. If Doctor Diablo has it—

SAFFRON. I know, I know—the universe will be destroyed.

GUNTHER. Can he really destroy it?

AUDREY. Yeah, I mean, something that powerful can't be easy to destroy.

SEBASTIAN. I've studied the Orb of Secrets a bit—I mean, there's so much about it that remains a mystery—but I remember that there is something about this particular cave...

ARIEL. Exactly. There's magic in this cave that protects it.

LILY. If Doctor Diablo takes it out of here, he won't need to do anything to destroy it—the Orb will simply disintegrate on its own.

AUDREY. So we just need to get it back here, right?

ARIEL. That won't be enough—the seal on the Orb will have already begun to erode—we'll need to repair it.

AUDREY. Can we do that?

LILY. Yes. It will take a compound of pixie dust and sprite nectar to do it—we'll need someone to mix the compound, though.

SEBASTIAN. I think I can do that—I dabble in alchemy.

AUDREY. I'm sorry, but what exactly is sprite nectar?

LILY. It's a substance that I secrete through my pores.

SAFFRON. Great, so we're counting on magic dandruff and mystical sweat to save the universe.

LILY. I do not sweat! I shimmer.

GUNTHER. And I don't see how anyone could ever mistake pixie dust for dandruff.

ARIEL. You're sweet.

SAFFRON. This is great and all but has anyone noticed anything seriously wrong with this plan?

AUDREY. What's that?

SAFFRON. We can't get out of here—the tunnel has caved in! And does anyone know what happened to Tabby?

GUNTHER. Yeah—and what about the little guy—Max?

SAFFRON. Tabby!

TABBY. *(Off right:)* Saffron?

SAFFRON. Tabby, are you okay?

TABBY. I'm fine—are you guys okay?

SAFFRON. Define “okay.”

GUNTHER. Is Max with you?

MAX. *(Off:)* I'm here!

TABBY. We're going to try and dig you guys out!

SAFFRON. There's no time for that, Tabby! You have to find Doctor Diablo! He's probably back at the Insane Asylum by now. You need to get the Orb of Secrets away from him and bring it back as soon as you can. We'll start digging from in here!

TABBY. *(Off:)* All right! I won't be long!

(Curtain.)

Scene 10

(Enter TABBY and MAX, in front of the curtain.)

TABBY. Thanks for helping me find my way back here, Max.

MAX. Absolutely no problem whatsoever. I'm just glad you didn't act weird around me—you know, like I might crack open your skull and eat your brains or something.

TABBY. It never really occurred to me—and besides, that’s your business, anyway.

MAX. Well, I appreciate that.

TABBY. Listen, I think I can take care of getting the Orb of Secrets back from Doctor Diablo myself—can you go back and help the others dig their way out?

MAX. Of course. Good luck.

(Exit TABBY, stage right, exit MAX, stage left.)

Scene 11

(Curtain up on the Insane Asylum, with DIABLO, ATTENDANT, and ANOTHER ATTENDANT, with the Orb of Secrets sitting on a table.)

ATTENDANT. Will this thing really destroy the universe?

DIABLO. Not that I could possibly expect someone of your feeble intellect to understand this, but there are things in this world that neither science, logic, philosophy nor anything else can explain.

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. And this is one of those things?

DIABLO. Of course not! Where science, logic, and philosophy fail, my profound powers of analysis and deduction triumph! I have measured this orb, weighed it, performed the most sophisticated tests imaginable and I can state definitively that while I have no idea what this thing actually is, I know that enough people *believe* that destroying it will destroy the universe, so that is what I intend to do.

ATTENDANT. Isn’t that kind of risky?

DIABLO. Not at all—I have calculated the risk to the very last decimal point and found that the risk is as tiny and insignificant as what passes for your mind.

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. But why bother destroying it at all? What are you doing it for?

DIABLO. For Princess Tabasco, of course.

ATTENDANT. Won't destroying the universe destroy her, too?

DIABLO. Have you even been listening—oh, why do I even bother? Whether or not I destroy the Orb is a purely academic point. I don't actually have to do it. I just need to make Princess Tabasco believe that I am going to do so—it's the power of belief that I'm manipulating. When I tell her that our marriage is the only thing that will stay my hand, she'll see reason and agree to marry me.

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Doesn't all of this seem a little, I don't know, extreme?

DIABLO. Women appreciate grand gestures.

(Enter TABBY, stage right.)

DIABLO. Ah, Princess Tabasco, you've returned.

TABBY. What can I say? I—I just couldn't stay away.

DIABLO. Of course you couldn't. Leave us.

(Exit ATTENDANTS.)

TABBY. I see you have the Orb of Secrets.

DIABLO. I do. Very perceptive.

TABBY. And—and are you still planning on destroying it and in so doing destroy the entire universe?

DIABLO. I am. Very intuitive.

TABBY. Isn't there anything that will change your mind?

DIABLO. My dear, nothing can change my mind once I have decided to do something.

TABBY. Nothing at all?

DIABLO. Yes, nothing at all. And by nothing at all, I mean just one thing.

TABBY. What is that?

DIABLO. I don't really want to destroy the universe, Princess Tabasco, I never have. What I really want is you. Come away with me.

You and I can get married. Then you can have your happily ever after.

TABBY. Marry you?

DIABLO. Yes. Oh, maybe you don't love me now, but you will one day. It's a simple solution—marry me and the universe is saved.

TABBY. That's a big decision.

DIABLO. The biggest.

TABBY. Well, before I decide if I want to marry you, I'd like to get to know you better.

DIABLO. That's sounds fair. What is it you'd like to know?

TABBY. What are you afraid of—more than anything else in the entire world?

DIABLO. An intriguing question. What about you—what is your biggest fear?

TABBY. I did ask you first.

DIABLO. I asked you second, and two is more than one.

TABBY. All right. Badgers.

DIABLO. Badgers?

TABBY. Yes. Hideous, horrible badgers—with teeth that bite and claws that scratch.

DIABLO. Well then, I will assure you a badger-free existence for the rest of your days.

TABBY. Now it's your turn.

DIABLO. You are tenacious—I admire that quality in a woman. Due to my stupendous intellect, I know that most fears are irrational and therefore have no effect on me. It is only madness—that I might one day lose my mind as utterly as those in my care—that I fear.

TABBY. So you're afraid of losing your mind?

DIABLO. Exactly.

TABBY. Well, you've given me a lot to think about. Excuse me, please.

DIABLO. Of course.

(Exit TABBY, stage left, curtain.)

Scene 12

(Curtain rises on DASHING and CASSANDRA, being pushed in a wheelbarrow.)

CASSANDRA. My coral bracelet—it's ruined! These things aren't meant to spend all this time out of the water!

DASHING. Can't you get another one? Isn't the sea full of coral?

CASSANDRA. It had sentimental value, you clod! Don't you understand sentiment? For anything other than Princess Tabasco, that is.

DASHING. Listen, I'm just trying—

CASSANDRA. Oh, save your pathetic explanations. I'm sure you'd like nothing better than for your darling Princess Tabasco to come racing in here right now.

(Enter TABBY, stage left, running.)

TABBY. Dashing! Cassandra!

DASHING. Tabby!

CASSANDRA. Oh, this dramatic irony thing is killing me.

TABBY. Look, I'm sure you're miserable, heart-broken, a shell of a man, everything—but there's no time for us to talk about that right now! Doctor Diablo is going to destroy the universe and I have to stop him!

CASSANDRA. Everything is about you, isn't it?

(Enter ATTENDANTS, stage right.)

ATTENDANT. Look, there he is!

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. Ask him! Ask him!

ATTENDANT. Excuse us, sir, but you wouldn't happen to be the charming Prince Dashing by any chance, would you?

DASHING. Oh, for the last time, no. He's my— Oh, wait, yes. I am Prince Dashing.

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. See, I told you.

ATTENDANT. I'm sorry, sir, I can't believe we didn't recognize you before.

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. We're big fans.

ATTENDANT. Everyone else goes on and on about your cousin, the dashing Prince Charming, but you—

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. You're like our hero, sir.

DASHING. Your hero? Really?

ATTENDANT. Absolutely. You're the best.

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. We've read all the adventure books Lady Marmalade wrote about you.

ATTENDANT. Yeah, the Pit of Doom, the Cave of Doom, the Tunnel of Doom...

TABBY. What are you doing spending all your time in pits and caves and tunnels?

DASHING. Well, that's where all the doom is. It's a hero thing.

TABBY. Wow, I'm kind of impressed.

CASSANDRA. Wow, I'm really being ignored.

ANOTHER ATTENDANT. We'd do anything for you, sir.

DASHING. Well, it's always nice to hear from fans. But right now—

TABBY. Actually, could you excuse us for a moment?

(TABBY, CASSANDRA, and DASHING huddle together for a few moments, speaking in low voices. They break the huddle.)

DASHING. Actually, there is one thing you can do for me.

(Curtain.)

Scene 13

(Curtain opens on DIABLO, pacing.)

(Enter TABBY, stage right.)

DIABLO. Ah, Princess Tabasco, you've returned. Do you have an answer for me?

TABBY. Swaggle boom clop flipple mish.

DIABLO. I'm sorry, I didn't quite understand that.

TABBY. Wurble bimp norx flomp yoodle.

DIABLO. Princess—you're speaking gibberish!

TABBY. Yeeble jerb bloy nink zabble.

DIABLO. Oh, this is horrible! My beloved has gone mad! Attendants! Come at once. Oh, my dear, dear Princess. I'm afraid I'm going to have to commit you. I promise you that this will hurt me more than it will hurt you. I mean, you'll experience all of the physical pain, but emotionally, I will suffer far, far more.

(Enter DASHING, pushing CASSANDRA in a wheelbarrow, both dressed as ATTENDANTS.)

DIABLO. Ah, there you are my faithful, slow-witted attendants. I don't know why I don't recognize either of you, or why one of you is in a wheelbarrow, but I don't have time for such minor details as those. Princess Tabasco has gone mad—imprison her at once.

DASHING. Gungle flop roible doible?

CASSANDRA. Tring naf glonk jeeb?

DIABLO. What is this? Has everyone gone mad but me?

DASHING. Hoil gar nop.

CASSANDRA. Zeeble flitz.

TABBY. Gunwash?

DIABLO. No, no—if it was just one of them, maybe, but if it's all three then, then, then logically I must be the one who is mad! Attendant! Lock me up at once!

DASHING. Baba glargle.

(Exit DASHING, leading DIABLO.)

TABBY. It worked—now we can bring the Orb back to the cave and in so doing, save the universe!

CASSANDRA. I can't believe I let you talk me into this. These clothes you gawky two-legged mistakes wear is intolerable. Oh, what I wouldn't do for a gown of seaweed and clamshells right now.

TABBY. I know you're uncomfortable, but we *are* saving the universe.

CASSANDRA. Oh, sure—saving the universe. The only reason you care so much about saving the universe is that you think that you're the center of it. Well let me tell you something—you're not the center of the universe—I am.

TABBY. Then shouldn't you care just as much—even more so, really—about saving it, then?

CASSANDRA. Oh, you're missing the point. It's just that, if all of this was a play, your name would be the first thing in the title.

TABBY. Well, this is a play and my name is the first thing in the title.

CASSANDRA. Oh, just go—I'm tired of talking about this.

TABBY. *(Picking up the Orb:)* All right—you and Prince Dashing meet up with us in the cave as soon as you can.

(Exit TABBY, stage right.)

(Curtain.)

Scene 14

(Curtain rises on SAFFRON, SEBASTIAN, GUNTHER, ARIEL, and LILY, digging through rubble, stage right.)

ARIEL. *(To GUNTHER:)* My, you are strong.

GUNTHER. We Cyclopes usually are.

ARIEL. And handsome.

GUNTHER. Why, uh, thank you.

ARIEL. So, are you seeing anyone?

GUNTHER. I don't really date much.

ARIEL. Why not?

GUNTHER. I think it has something to do with this gigantic eyeball in the middle of my forehead.

ARIEL. You have a gigantic eyeball in the middle of your forehead? Really? I hadn't noticed.

GUNTHER. You're not very perceptive, are you—I mean, we've been standing here talking for awhile now and—

ARIEL. Of course I noticed it. It's just the kind of thing you say when you're flirting with someone.

GUNTHER. Oh.

ARIEL. Girls don't flirt with you very often, do they?

GUNTHER. Does running away screaming in terror count as flirting?

ARIEL. Not usually, no.

GUNTHER. I guess not, then.

SEBASTIAN. Excuse me, but I couldn't help but notice that you were flirting with him.

ARIEL. Well, yes, but actually—

SEBASTIAN. It's just that I'm not very good at flirting and I was wondering if you could give me a few pointers.

ARIEL. Listen, this is kind of a private moment.

SAFFRON. Sebastian—stop bothering those two and get back to digging! This isn't the time for a great meeting of the minds.

SEBASTIAN. You know, Miss Saffron, I never noticed the gigantic eyeball in the middle of your forehead before.

SAFFRON. Don't know what you're talking about. Don't care.

LILY. So what do you do as a temple priestess?

AUDREY. Oh, there's lot to do—greeting visitors, keeping the incense lit, chanting. Quite a lot of chanting, actually. What's it like being a sprite?

LILY. Oh, well, you know—a lot of woodland frolic, occasionally appearing before weird loners and small children and then vanishing before they can run and show someone else. And then nobody believes them—that's the important part.

AUDREY. That sounds like fun.

LILY. I guess it is. I was thinking of getting into chanting, though. Maybe you can teach me a few when this is all over.

AUDREY. Sure.

(Enter MAX, through rubble.)

GUNTHER. We've broken through!

MAX. Is everyone all right?

GUNTHER. We're fine.

SAFFRON. Where's Tabby?

(Enter TABBY, carrying the Orb.)

TABBY. I'm right here.

SEBASTIAN. The compound is ready.

LILY. I'll take that. *(Takes vial from SEBASTIAN.)* Here, give me the orb—I'll put everything back the way it needs to be. *(Takes Orb from TABBY.)*

(Exit LILY, stage right.)

(Enter NARRATOR, stage right, with MESSENGER, no longer wearing eye patch.)

NARRATOR. I found him! I found the guy who kept locking me in my dressing room!

AUDREY. It's the Messenger from Scene 1—what's his name, Herman?

MESSENGER. Hermie!

TABBY. That's right, the brave, noble, and courageous Hermie—

MESSENGER. You forgot lovable!

(Enter DASHING, pushing CASSANDRA in the wheelbarrow.)

CASSANDRA. There he is! That's the man who kidnapped me and brought me to that horrible insane asylum!

MAX. Hey, I know him, too.

MESSENGER. I find that highly unlikely.

TABBY. How do you know him, Max?

MAX. Years ago, when I was a young troll, there was a girl troll—Edwina—who I wanted to marry. I wanted to do something special, so I hired him—a respectable messenger—to deliver my proposal. When I never heard back from her, I assumed the answer was no. Five years later, I saw her again. She had married someone else. When I asked her why she turned me down, she didn't know what I was talking about. She never got the message!

MESSENGER. That message was beneath my skill as a messenger to deliver!

GUNTHER. Is anyone else confused?

SAFFRON. He didn't like being a minor character, so he tried to ruin the play for the rest of us.

SEBASTIAN. And he disguised himself as the Narrator to confuse and misguide us.

SAFFRON. How is that any different from what I just said?

MESSENGER. Yes! And I would have gotten away with it too, if it wasn't for you lousy kids!

TABBY. What should we do with him?

MAX. Maybe we should lock him up in that Insane Asylum.

MESSENGER. What! No! You can't do that!

MAX. Be thankful that's all I'm doing.

MESSENGER. What do you mean?

MAX. Well, this is a special occasion. And I'm in a bad mood. And I'm hungry.

MESSENGER. What do you mean, hungry?

MAX. Hungry for brains.

(Exit MAX, holding MESSENGER, stage right.)

DASHING. *(Setting down CASSANDRA's wheelbarrow:)* Princess Tabasco. Finally, we can talk.

CASSANDRA. *(Indignant:)* Hey!

TABBY. Oh, you. Hi.

DASHING. Well, it looks like you're all done with your little adventure. Are you ready to come back with me now so we can pick up where we left off with the wedding?

TABBY. No. I can't marry you, Prince Dashing. You're a great guy and all, but it would never work out. You're not my true love, and neither of us should marry someone who isn't. Besides, wouldn't you rather marry someone who wanted to marry you?

DASHING. Who?

TABBY. I don't know...maybe there's another Princess in the room... *(Nods towards CASSANDRA.)*

DASHING. Her? Well, I... *(Kneels in front of CASSANDRA.)* Princess Cassandra, will you—

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