

Plan 8 from the Outer Ether

A Steampunk Adventure

by Brian Rust

Inspired by Plan 9 From Outer Space

PLAN 8 FROM THE OUTER ETHER

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CHARACTERS All parts are written to be played by any gender.

Suggested Part Distribution:

NARRATOR, cynical (also plays Ship Voice)

AUTEUR, convinced of their own genius

DETECTIVE, one-third natural talent and two-thirds chaos

CARDIFF, the Detective's loyal protector and conscience

LAWYER, a curmudgeon (also plays Archbishop , Elf 2 ,Clown 1 ,Cosette and Large Blobby Thing)

RILEY, a tough Irish cop (also plays Illuminus, Elf 1, Clown 2 and Old Lady)

MENDOS, a twin of Zandex, a highly energized evil alien (also plays Elephant and The Brit)

ZANDEX, a ruthless if highly caffeinated alien (also plays Bubbles the Sea Monkey)

BELLE, a new and easily confused cast member (also plays Goldenmoon, Dog, and Robot)

(Sound Crew are mostly doing the live sound effects ((anything marked in the script as SFX)) at the foley table, but have a line at the very end)

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Writer's note:

Most scenes are meant to be presented in the style of a live radio show--actors speaking into mikes while holding their scripts, with a foley table providing sound effects. When a scene is set in **Live Radio Show Stage** it should be performed as a normal play.

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~ ACT I ~

Scene 1. A Live Radio Show Stage

As we open, a LAWYER sits in the audience while the rest of the cast, except AUTEUR, is on stage, ostensibly costumed and prepared for a completely different play.

NARRATOR. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you again for joining us tonight. The Abletown Live Radio Players are proud to present “Steampunk Beauty and the Clockwork Beast.”

(Digital FX: Music swells.)

BELLE. *(singing, to the tune of ‘Belle’)* Steampunk town/ full of cogs and flywheels. Every day/ all the streets are gray. Steampunk town!/ Full of steampunk people. Waking up to say...

AUTEUR. *(bursting in holding a pile of scripts)* STOP THE PLAY!!

(Digital FX: Music abruptly ends.)

BELLE. What the flip?!

AUTEUR. We can’t do this play! There’s a LAWYER in the audience! *(pointing accusingly at our Lawyer)* A COPYRIGHT lawyer!

ENTIRE CAST. Gasps of horror!

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LAWYER. I will neither confirm nor deny anything at this time. I will note, though, that the Disney Corporation is watching you with great interest after last year's, ugh, "Steampunk Dumbo" fiasco.

AUTEUR. As god is my witness, I thought elephants could fly.

BELLE. What're we going to do?

NARRATOR. I can't go back to jail! I'd rather die!

CARDIFF. I guess we could let everyone go home? Give them their money back?

AUTEUR. *(panicked)* No!! Give money back?? Actors giving money to an audience?! That's obscene! Even if I hadn't already spent--I mean... anyhow, there's no need! Don't worry! I've got a different script, a LEGAL script, right here!

(Auteur passes the scripts out; the cast flips through them quickly, deeply unhappy.)

ZANDEX. *(dismayed)* This is...something.

BELLE. Didn't we read through this last year?

NARRATOR. And then burn it and dance around the fire?

DETECTIVE. Oh, that's right! Because it was an hour long advertisement for Steampunk Scientology.

AUTEUR. I was going through a bad time. Look, I took in all your feedback. This is totally new. It's the best thing I've ever written!

CARDIFF. That's what you said about Steampunk Nightmare on Elm Street.

ZANDEX. AND Steampunk Equus.

BELLE. And Steampunk Christ Superstar!

NARRATOR. Guys! Guys! Let's focus on what's really important, okay?
(beat, then to Auteur) I'm still the narrator, right?

BELLE. This has a huge cast. Even if we double and triple up, we still don't have enough people.

AUTEUR. Don't worry, I've thought of that. *(to audience)* If I may have everyone's attention? Kindly look under your chairs. Underneath one seat

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is a set of festive plastic beads, and that lucky winner gets to join us on stage! *(to Sound Crew)* See? This is what live theater is all about. Suspense! Risk!

LAWYER. Ahem. *(holds up beads the way someone would hold garbage.)* This is not acceptable.

NARRATOR. Huh. You could look at it this way, this is the ideal way to keep an eye on the script.

LAWYER. But...but...I have no training, no skill as an actor!

AUTEUR. *(eyeing the cast)* So far you fit right in.

LAWYER. Let me be blunt -- I think everything you've ever written is trash!

NARRATOR. *(coldly)* So far you fit right in.

LAWYER. *(getting up and joining the rest of the cast)* Fine. But I'm going to hate every minute of it.

NARRATOR. If I had a nickel for every time I heard that...*(to audience)* Ladies and gentlemen! My name's...Steampunk Anne of Green Gables! Wait, no, Anne of *Steam* Gables! *(pauses to give AUTEUR a proud thumbs up; AUTEUR softly groans.)* And I'd like to welcome you to the world premiere! Of! Plan Eight From the Outer Ether!

Digital fx: ominous music

Dear audience, clamp your top hats down firmly upon your heads, for those cog-encrusted dome-coverings may be the only thing keeping your brains from exploding out of your skulls when you learn of the threat to our existence posed by ALIENS FROM BEYOND THE ETHER!

P.S.....If you do not happen to be wearing a hat, we are truly sorry for what might be about to occur.

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P.S.S....If you are sitting next to a hatless audience member, welcome to what we in the theater refer to as the “splash zone”. Tarps are available for a small fee.

Let us turn our attention now to one innocent city, the sprawling hive known as Yorknetticutt, a place of glittering towers and steam-powered rats, a place where mad scientists giggle as they place electrodes where they are not supposed to go and the most recent mayor was elected with the motto “Let Them Eat Coal.” One honest detective remains, one soul still trying to make a difference. And on this night she faces.....the unknowooooown!

Scene 2. Yorknetticutt Harbor dock, midnight.

DETECTIVE. It was a quiet night down by Yorknetticutt Harbor. The fog was dense, clinging to the buildings like an over-affectionate terrier on the leg of a stranger in the park.

SFX: Dock sounds, waves splashing, foghorn.

DETECTIVE. I’d been celebrating solving the Case of the Mysterious Missing Cat. The grateful owners had paid me in gin, which saved me a lot of time. I had reached the point where I was trying to figure out how to deduct a tablespoonful for taxes when a couple of oddballs hulked into view. They were large for humans, small for circus tents. Beefy, but in this case the beef had fallen off the delivery wagon and gotten run over a few times. Their skin was also bright green, which normally would be the first thing I mentioned, but honestly with these two there was a lot to take in.

MENDOS. Human! You are Bunny Omega, this globe’s best detective, yes?

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DETECTIVE. You're half right, stranger. The last person to call me Bunny took a long walk off a short zeppelin. If this is about hiring me for a case, you should come see me during office hours.

MENDOS. But we want to do the opposite, Bunny Omega.

ZANDEX. Your primitive human mind is too inquisitive. We will not let it derail our plans.

DETECTIVE. You...want to hire me to NOT investigate something?

MENDOS. In a manner of speaking. We understand you enjoy being paid in bottles of Earth alcohol.

DETECTIVE. Don't tell my accountant, but yes I---say, those are awful large bottles.

ZANDEX. Oh, we are very generous.

DETECTIVE. Hey! Hey, what're you doing?!

MENDOS. Paying you in advance!

SFX: Sound of a big bottle breaking over a head

DETECTIVE. Oww!!

MENDOS. Do not forget earth sales tax, Zandex!

SFX: Sound of a smaller bottle breaking over a head.

DETECTIVE. Guh!!

ZANDEX. And remember, Mendos, a good customer leaves a tip!

SFX: Bottle shattering on head sound, smallest of all.

DETECTIVE. They'd rung my bell worse than Quasimodo having a clocktower all-you-can-dingdong party. I took two steps back to give myself some breathing room... unfortunately, the edge of the dock was only one step behind me. Whoa! Whooooaaaaa!!

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SFX: Enormous splash!!

ZANDEX. He appears to have sunk right to the bottom, Mendos.

MENDOS. Should we go after him to make sure he is dead?

ZANDEX. With how badly the humans have polluted this water? My hydro-toxicometer says it is 23 percent arsenic! No, if he is lucky he will have died from our blows and not from the poisons in which he is now marinating.

MENDOS. Very well. Let us be on our way. We still have a lot to do this earth night if we are going to destroy the world!

SFX: Bum-bum-BUM!!!!

Scene 3. The Alien Mothership

NARRATOR. You might think that things look bad for the planet Earth. But things are about to get even worse! For perched high in the sky over Yorknnetticut is a mysterious metallic orb, as silent and dangerous as a great eagle about to plummet on an unsuspecting lamb. And within that orb, a deadly conspiracy is underway!

ILLUMINUS. Mendos, Zandex, report! What is your progress?

MENDOS. We have just returned from eliminating the only native life form who could have posed a threat to our plan, Great Illuminated One. With their detective slowly dissolving in their harbor, everything is in place to begin our Plan.

ILLUMINUS. Right, yes, that. That is the one that involves arming the whales?

ZANDEX. No, that was Plan Four, Great Leader.

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ILLUMINUS. I knew that, I was testing you. This, of course, is the plan that involves weaponizing music, creating a tune so inane yet catchy that it drives all of humanity into frothing insanity?

MENDOS. Plan Eight Seven Seven Kars 4 Kids?

ILLUMINUS. All right, you negative nellys, what plan ARE we doing?

ZANDEX. Plan Eight, Great Illuminated One! And this time we are SURE it will work!

MENDOS. Yes, this time the humans will never see it coming!

ZANDEX. Even though it is right under their noses!

MENDOS. Or, we should say, their FEET! Muhahaha! *(Both Zandex and Mendos bellow out evil laughter. It goes on for a bit. After a moment Illuminus joins in, then stops.)*

ILLUMINUS. Yeah, no, I still don't get it.

Scene 5. A ruined table at noted seafood restaurant The Howling Crab

NARRATOR. Mama mia, that's a spicy foreshadowing amuse bouche! Don't worry though, for far below our villains, at a floating restaurant called the Howling Crab, a familiar face is getting a different sort of appetizer!

SFX: A face getting slapped repeatedly.

RILEY. Omega! Omega, wake up, damn it!

DETECTIVE. *(half-conscious)* Mommy I hate this petting zoo, the pony keeps kicking me...

CARDIFF. Allow me to take over, Sargent Riley. The Detective needs special handling. *(to Detective)* Omega. Someone just said 'free drinks'.

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DETECTIVE. I'm up! Up! Conscious! Present! I...Cardiff? Why are you here, and not in the office? Why are there cops everywhere? Why am I covered in cake?

RILEY. Word from the witnesses here is that you crawled up out of the water and attacked the Archbishop's birthday party, Omega.

ARCHBISHOP. It was horrible, horrible!

DETECTIVE. What? That can't be...wait, I'm starting to remember.

SFX: Flashback noise

GROUP. *(singing)* Happy birthday, Reverend Holiness, Happy--

DETECTIVE *(wildly)* Raaaaarrh!! It takes more than three bottles and a harbor full of poison to put ME down, you gutless bags of...of...guts! Oh hey, cake! *(passes out)*

SFX: the unique and wonderful sound of someone falling into a large cake

SFX: Flash-forward noise

DETECTIVE. Sarge, I didn't attack anybody, I was the one who got attacked! By these two weird green people!

RILEY. Green people.

DETECTIVE. Green as Toulouse Lautrec after a weekend-long absinthe shower! Faces that looked okay from a distance, as long as that distance was a half mile. Down a well. Their eyes had a look like someone had sculpted their faces out of ice cream and then sat them down too close to a hot stove. Feet like--

RILEY. Omega, snap out of it!

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CARDIFF. Detective, take a deep breath. You're hardboiling again. *(to Riley)* Sorry about this, Sargeant. Trying to give physical descriptions brings out the worst in her.

RILEY. So, big green guys attacked you.

DETECTIVE. They came out of nowhere, thumped me on the noggin a couple times and dumped me in the harbor!

CARDIFF. Omega's head does seem to have more lumps and contusions than usual, Sargeant.

RILEY. What a shock, Detective Bunny Omega not popular with someone. Who was it this time, Omega? Upset husbands? Upset wives? Upset mechanical folks who don't even have emotions but still manage to get sick of you?

DETECTIVE. Cross my heart, Riley, I've been finding lost pets just to make ends meet. My life for the past few months has been as flat and boring as that haircut of yours.

CARDIFF. I can attest, Sargeant, that everything my employer has done in the last eight months has been utterly uninteresting.

DETECTIVE. Gee, thanks.

RILEY. Huh. Well Cardiff, *you* I trust. You'll pay for the cake?

DETECTIVE. In a pig's eye--

CARDIFF. *(over her)* It would be only right. But I really should get the detective to a doctor.

DETECTIVE. What? No! I want to live!

RILEY. Alright, alright, I'll go smooth things over with His Holiness. Omega, last warning before I run you in. Stay away from green people. And restaurants. And cakes. And no trips to the circus!

ARCHBISHOP. It was a nightmare! She should be locked up, and never allowed to torment innocent people again!

RILEY. Okay now, your holiness... *(dropping character)* Hey, that was good! I thought you said you can't act.

LAWYER. Who's acting? I'm talking about the writer.

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SFX: Two people walking away rapidly, one with wet shoes.

DETECTIVE. We don't really have to pay for that cake, do we?

CARDIFF. While I work as your faithful servant to pay off my life debt to you, Bunny Omega, I am still from a noble warrior culture. You owe them a cake. It would be dishonorable not to repay them.

DETECTIVE. For the ninety-fifth time, being the second cousin to the Duke of Sussex does not make you a noble warrior, Cardiff.

CARDIFF. Does so.

DETECTIVE. Your family has spent the last eight generations breeding corgis extra-wide so people can use them as footstools.

CARDIFF. I fail to see your point. Do we need to find a doctor? Apart from your concussion, the harbor *is* toxic enough to strip the paint off a tractor.

DETECTIVE. Fortunately for me, I was coated inside and out by a protective layer of cheap alcohol. Now hold on, I have something caught in the back of my mouth.

CARDIFF. Your liver, making one last desperate bid to escape?

DETECTIVE. *(Making several coughs, then a 'ptoo' sound)* Oh, right! The third time they hit me with a bottle, I thought fast and tore off the label with my teeth. And here it is!

CARDIFF. You had a liquor bottle label in your mouth the entire time we have been talking?

DETECTIVE. That's why they call me the best detective in Yorknnetticut!

CARDIFF. Literally no one calls you that.

DETECTIVE. Now let's see...that's strange, Cardiff, the label just looks like pink marshmallows.

CARDIFF. You still have frosting in your eyes.

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DETECTIVE. Oh! Right! (*reads*) ‘Phineas Foghorn’s Effervescent Fizz’. Hang on, I know this one! A complex little beverage with playful notes of iron, damp wool and very damp salamander, can cause baldness, do not drink if pregnant, under four feet tall, or a horse.

CARDIFF. One mystery solved. The city can breathe easier, knowing exactly *which* cheap beverage you were struck with.

DETECTIVE. Ahh but wait! There’s only one place in town that still sells this concoction, so that’s where my mysterious attackers must have come from: the Tavern In the Green!

CARDIFF. How lucky and ironic, that this case will be solved thanks to the same addiction that will inevitably explode your organs and make you die in agony.

DETECTIVE. Cardiff, you’re a buzzkill.

SFX: Bum-bum-BUM stinger!

Scene 6. A Live Radio Show Stage

LAWYER. (*raising hand*) I have a question. More an observation.

AUTEUR. Really?? I’m shocked.

LAWYER. Look, someone has to say it: you’re making a *lot* of alcoholism jokes.

AUTEUR. Omega’s a hardboiled detective! It’s the genre! You might not know it, but every first edition of The Maltese Falcon came with a glass of gin.

LAWYER. I guess I shouldn’t be surprised that you, the person responsible for pink intoxicated elephants rampaging through Medford, are treating a serious addiction like it’s some sort of whimsical character flaw.

AUTEUR. Wait, what? Okay, first off, it was one SMALL elephant--

DETECTIVE. (*agreeing with Lawyer*) She’s right. It *is* the 21st century, you know.

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NARRATOR. And it's true that everything you've written has had a character who was a stumbling drunk.

BELLE. It made my role in 'My Little Steampunk Pony' very uncomfortable.

(The whole cast nods.)

AUTEUR. Okay, fine. FINE, we'll get rid of all the funny drunk scenes. So that's...*(checking script)* everyone, cross out page 12. *(cast complies)* And page 18. And 19. And...oh wait, definitely pages 32 through 39, the 'Giggle Juice Samba'. Now, if we can go on to the next scene?

Scene 7. The Tavern in the Green , an “Elven” sanctuary in the city's only park

NARRATOR. Ahh, the Tavern In the Green. Yorknetticut, as you know, is a place of steam and cobblestones, of copper and soot--and that's just the contents of their lungs! But in every culture there arise...rebels, shall we say. Freethinkers. Those who look at the society around them and go “Naw”. In a world such as ours, these iconoclasts become performance artists. Cult leaders. Even...Canadians. But in a dystopic urban sprawl like Yorknetticut? They reject the coal-burning ways of their parents and take to the trees.

Digital fx: Fantasy harp music begins playing softly

NARRATOR *(continued)*: They turn their backs on the ales and meat pies of their childhood and develop a taste for strange wines and fruits that glow and make strange chiming sounds. They get pointy ear implants. They become...Elfunks. And in the heart of the Yorknetticut Public Garden, in the branches of the few surviving urban trees, they build their feasting hall and gathering place. The Tavern in the Green.

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SFX: The murmur of restaurant background noises rises.

SFX: Creaky rope sounds

DETECTIVE. (*wheezing from exhaustion*) I tell you, Cardiff, I despise this place like a male dog despises a veterinarian holding a large pair of scissors. These are the worst-built stairs I've ever tried to climb.

CARDIFF. It's a rope ladder. Which I am piggy-backing you up. And now my back is covered in frosting.

SFX: Thumping sounds of two people clambering onto a wooden floor.

DETECTIVE. Just look at this wretched hive of first-to-third level characters. Whose crazy idea was it to give an oversized treehouse a liquor license? I tell you, I do not like it in a tree. I do not like it, nosiree. I do not like it, not one bit. In my opinion, this is--

GOLDENMOON THE TRANQUIL. (*interrupting, ((and I can't stress enough how crucial the timing of this interruption is)) with the accent of someone trying very hard to sound magical, or at least Shakespearean*) Blessings of Agwe's shimmering light upon you, far-travellers. Dost thou quest under Selune's smile for the bounty of Huon's harvest? Or shall thee bathe in the joyous tide which overthrew the towers of fair Isindil?

DETECTIVE. Seriously?

CARDIFF. He wants to know if we want to see the food menu, or are just here for drinks.

DETECTIVE. Seriously??

CARDIFF. Allow me to do the talking, Detective. I am fluent in Wood Elf, Sky Elf and Ziggy Stardust Elf.

DETECTIVE. Sure, fine, whatever, I'll just go over here and fit in by making up an 80-line poem about a strawberry or something.

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CARDIFF. I pray thee pardon the gruffness of my charge, radiant one. Upon encountering realms of great beauty, his half-dwarven tongue gets tangled as the thickets of Ungoliath. (*ZANDEX and MENDOS enter. CARDIFF and GOLDENMOON continue talking, but softly, fading into the background noise.*)

ZANDEX. Look at all these pathetic pointy-eared humans! Playing archaic instruments. Gluing horns to the foreheads of their riding animals. It gives me great pleasure to begin Plan 8 here.

MENDOS. But where do we start? I confess to you, I feel as giddy with excitement as a larva on the morning of the great Lurgon stampede!

DETECTIVE. Hey. Greenie. You know the way to the little smurf's room?

ZANDEX and MENDOS. AAAAAA!!!

DETECTIVE. Wait. You guys look familiar.

ZANDEX. The detective! The detective survived our deathtrap!

DETECTIVE. No, I'M the detective, which means..hold on, it's coming to me...

MENDOS. And using the keen mind we feared, it tracked us just the way we feared it would! What a detective!

DETECTIVE. Wait! It's YOU guys! (*to Cardiff*) Cardiff! It's THOSE guys!!

ZANDEX. That's our decision made for us, Mendos. We begin Plan 8 here, with this annoyingly persistent detective! Fire! Fire!!

GOLDENMOON. To arms, Sylvanians! The emerald-hued miscreants wield weapons of fell--

DETECTIVE. Oh for-- GUN! THEY'VE GOT GUNS!!

SFX: Ray gun noises pew-pew!

CROWD. Sounds of panic and alarm!

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SFX: Furniture tipping over and plates shattering

DETECTIVE. Yipes!! (*Dodging*) Scuse me, coming through, one side!

MENDOS. Zandex, you are my partner and cocoon-twin but you are a horrible shot!

ZANDEX. The same can be said about you, beloved sibling! Keep firing!

SFX: Pew! Pew!

ELF 1. I'm hit! I'm--wait, my legs! Roots have sprouted from my legs!

ELF 2. My chest! Is that bark growing up my--

SFX: Creepy sound of bark growing over someone, known from now on as Plant Transformation Sound

ELF 2. mff!!

DETECTIVE. Bartender! You don't mind if I hide back here, do you? Oh wait, you've been turned into a tree. Never mind.

SFX: Pew!

GOLDENMOON. Ahh!!

CARDIFF. Elf-hostess! Are you all right?

GOLDENMOON. I yet live, kind soul, but--(*dropping the Elf accent*) wait, no, I definitely seem to be turning into a willow tree. This sucks.

CARDIFF. No! Let me grab you, I can get you to safety--

GOLDENMOON. Too late! Too late for me! Just remember me in your heart. Oh and also, there's a 5-top coming in at noon tomorrow and one of them has a gluten allergy, so they'll need to be seated--

SFX: Plant transformation sound

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CARDIFF. Nooo!!

SFX: Continuing pew-pews, plant transformations and commotion

DETECTIVE. Cardiff! We have to get out of here, most of the elves are plants now and it's spreading!

CARDIFF. They're blocking the door, detective, and transforming anyone who gets close!

DETECTIVE. Look! Where that bachelorette party turned into pine trees, all their roots have torn up the floor! I can see the city through it!

CARDIFF. It's our only chance! Are you ready?

DETECTIVE. Nope! But let's do it! NOW!

MENDOS. Zandex! Stop them before they reach the hole in the floor!

SFX: Louder, faster pew-pew shots

CARDIFF. We have to hit it just right! Hang on!

DETECTIVE. To WHAT?

SFX: Splintering sounds of a floor giving way

DETECTIVE and CARDIFF (falling)

AAAAAAaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!!

END ACT 1

~ACT 2~

Scene 1. A newly grassified 34th Street, Yorknnetticut

NARRATOR. One hour later...

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Digital fx: forest sounds

RILEY. Omega! Omega!

SFX: The tried and true sounds of a face getting slapped

DETECTIVE. Sergeant Riley! I had the weirdest dream! There was this train with a human face on it, and an enchanted school carriage driven by a witch that would take children right inside active volcanos.

RILEY. Holy Hieronymus Bosch!

DETECTIVE. What am I lying on? It's the comfiest bed I ever felt!

RILEY. Glad you like it, Omega. It's what's left of 34th Street, after it all turned to grass.

DETECTIVE. What?

CARDIFF. Whatever your green foes shot out of their guns, Detective, it did not stop when it transformed the elves. Vegetation has continued to grow in every direction, transforming everything it touches.

RILEY. The park's three times the size it was an hour ago and don't look like it's stopping. The Mayor sent my whole precinct down here, but what she expects us to do I dunno. Handcuff the trees?

DETECTIVE. Poor Riley. Not the sort of case you were pining for, is it?

RILEY. Really? At a time like this?

DETECTIVE. Aww, board with the conversation already?

RILEY. If I shot you right now, no jury would convict me.

DETECTIVE. Oh relax. Don't get all br-oaken up about it. I'm just being knotty. I know I'm probably setting myself up for a big Fall. Cardiff, give me a hand up, would you?

CARDIFF. Um, yes...about that...

SFX: Loud rustling leaf sound.

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DETECTIVE. Paisley Park! Cardiff, your hand! It's...it's vegetation!

CARDIFF. Well spotted, Detective. I suspect it is slowly radiating out from where the Elf Hostess was touching me when he was turned into a tree.

DETECTIVE. Define 'slowly radiating', Cardiff. Months? Years?

CARDIFF. A few hours, I suspect. Or less if I'm exposed to fresh water or clean air.

RILEY. Phew! Small chance of that in THIS town.

DETECTIVE. Well now I'm mad! Trying to kill me is one thing, but no one turns my assistant into a giant lump of mindless wood! I'm angrier than a very thirsty suffragette who spent a night stuck in Dr Jekyll's potion pantry!

RILEY. Terrific! So what's your first step to solving this mess?

DETECTIVE. I have no idea!

RILEY. I liked you better when you were unconscious.

CARDIFF. In a desperate circumstance like this, maybe it is finally time to reconcile with your mentors at the League of Extraordinary Detectives?

DETECTIVE. We're not *that* desperate.

CARDIFF. I. Am. Turning. Into. A. *Tree*.

DETECTIVE. But a nice tree! Look, they're old and useless and they always look at me with those disappointed eyes (*points at Cardiff*) there, Cardiff, just like that, and...um...and they're probably already asleep at this hour! Heck, we'll have better luck with ...Byzantium.

Digital fx: brief circus music sting

CARDIFF. You would rather go to your arch-enemy than the people who raised you and taught you everything you knew.

DETECTIVE. I'm glad you understand. Riley? You coming with?

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RILEY. I've got orders. Us cops are gonna take care of this the old-fashioned way, with billy clubs and a whole lot of yelling.

Scene 2. An old-timey circus

NARRATOR. Step right up, step right up, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, folks of all genders under the sun! Or, if not the sun, the swirling clouds of coal and steam that pass for the sky under which I welcome you to the Circus, our detective's greatest foe!

I hear you ask, how can a circus be someone's arch-enemy? Byzantium is a Hive Mind. Like the Borg, but with clowns! And without the interest in enslaving everybody and taking over the world. Byzantium says it's only interested in putting on the best possible show, and they don't take any more plucky orphans or runaway heiresses than any other circus.

DETECTIVE. Other circuses don't turn their performers into mindless zombies!

NARRATOR. Nothing's been proven! Let's just say that, here in Yorknetticut, when you run off to join the circus you REEEEEALLY join the circus.

SFX: Two pairs of feet walking across gravel, with added leaf rustling for Cardiff.

CARDIFF. I have never seen the circus so dark, Detective. Not a single lamp lit, not a single roustabout rousting. It's almost--

DETECTIVE. Don't say it!

CARDIFF. --TOO quiet.

SFX: Swirling calliope music, animal sounds and insane laughter erupt from all sides.

PLAN 8 FROM THE OUTER ETHER

DETECTIVE. When will you learn? There's no such thing as too quiet! Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, the time to be scared is when things get really LOUD!

CLOWN 1. Well

CLOWN 2. Well

ELEPHANT. Well

BOTH CLOWNS. Detective Omega, in the singular flesh.

BUBBLES THE SEA MONKEY. And Cardiff! Hi Cardy!

CLOWN 1. You're looking well, Detective.

CLOWN 2. And Cardiff, you're looking...greener than usual.

BUBBLES. Your arm's a shrub!

CARDIFF. We seem to be surrounded, Detective.

DETECTIVE. That's the funny thing about elephants, Cardiff, it doesn't take many of them to make you feel outnumbered. *(to the Circus)* You're looking good too, Byzantium. 'Closed' is a nice look for you.

ELEPHANT. A circus needs customers, Bunny. Ones who can do things like eat cotton candy.

CLOWN 1. And clap for the acts.

BUBBLES. No offense, Cardiff.

CARDIFF. None taken.

CLOWN 1. But yes. As the saying goes, I'm off for greener pastures--

CLOWN 2. Except, the exact opposite of greener pastures.

ELEPHANT. You know what I mean.

DETECTIVE. You've been in this city thirty years, Byzantium. I knew you when you were just a dog and pony act playing for pennies in the alley behind the city's fifth largest opium den. You've never run before...or trotted, or...I really have no idea what to call the weird way you move. Point being, you're not even going to try and fight?

BUBBLES. You can't fight these creatures, Bunny.

CLOWN 1. My kind has faced them before, in realms far from here. They are relentless.

PLAN 8 FROM THE OUTER ETHER

CLOWN 2. When one plan fails they will try again--

ELEPHANT. --plan after plan--

CLOWN 1. --until they either win or they have torn reality down around them.

ELEPHANT. Your people don't have a chance.

DETECTIVE. Did you hear that, Cardiff? Someone's telling us it's hopeless and we should just give up.

CARDIFF. It must be a Tuesday.

CLOWN 1. Why are you here, Detective? Was it to warn me about what's coming?

CLOWN 2. Or have you finally decided to run off with me?

BUBBLES. I've always thought you'd look great on my tightrope.

CARDIFF. Was that dirty? I honestly cannot tell.

DETECTIVE. I'm here because you're human too, Byzantium...partly, anyhow...

(The Circus Chorus look around as if counting each other)

ELEPHANT. Around 40 percent, this week?

DETECTIVE. And even if you won't fight, you know things that nothing else in this city does. You know who these jerks are. You might even know how to reverse this.

CLOWN 1. And why would I tell you, even if I knew?

BUBBLES. ...which I kinda doooo....

CARDIFF. Because you yourself said they will never stop, and nowhere you go will be safe?

CLOWN 2. I can buy myself time. Years, if I'm careful...and if two bumbling do-gooders don't get them so angry they speed up their takeover.

DETECTIVE. Listen. If it means saving my friend here, I...I might be willing to make a deal.

CARDIFF. Detective! No!

ELEPHANT. You would join me? After all these years?

PLAN 8 FROM THE OUTER ETHER

DETECTIVE. IF what you tell me leads to a cure for Cardiff, then yeah. He's starting to smell like a big cabbage and it's really nasty.

CLOWN 1. Give me one moment, Bunny. I need to think about this. (*The Circus turns inwards and begins speaking rapidly to each other.*)

CLOWN 1. What could it hurt?

BUBBLES. He's so cute!

CLOWN 2. We're wasting time. We should be out of the city already.

BUBBLES. That tush! Rarr!

ELEPHANT. Does he have any chance at all? What if he does?

CLOWN 1. It *would* be nice to save the world.

CLOWN 2. Surviving's nice too. And the odds of that are getting lower and lower the longer we linger.

ELEPHANT. We should go.

BUBBLES. But but but remember the first time we met him? When he chased those bank robbers?

CLOWN 1. Chased them right through the middle of us!

CLOWN 2. And it was the middle of the clown act, and he got sprayed with all those seltzer bottles?

ELEPHANT. That soaking wet police uniform just clinging to him...

DETECTIVE. I can hear all of this, you know. (*The Circus turns to face him.*)

CLOWN 2. Cardiff, there is a cure. For you, for the city. But it will mean getting into their control room, reversing the energy flow of their Zeronium engines, and re-blastifying everything they have blasted.

CARDIFF. But where is their control room?

CLOWN 1. I'm sorry, that is a second question. Would you like to make another deal? Oh wait, you have nothing to offer us.

BUBBLES. You're too big to make a good bonsai tree!

CARDIFF. In that case we should hurry, Detective. The plants have taken over half the city.

DETECTIVE. Can you tell that with your arm's new plant senses?

PLAN 8 FROM THE OUTER ETHER

CARDIFF. No. I can see the vines climbing the clock tower over there. See?

SFX: Bong! Bong! Bo--sound of a giant bell getting wrapped in vines.

CLOWN 2. Yes, time is short. Goodbye and good luck, Cardiff. If you fail, like you probably will, the part of us which is the Detective will think fondly of you.

DETECTIVE. Now wait a minute. The deal was that I save Cardiff first, then I come with you!

ELEPHANT. Silly. If I let you go off and try that, you will almost definitely be dead or a tree in the next hour.

CLOWN 1. I gave you the information you need to save Cardiff...and now you are mine.

DETECTIVE. Too bad it's already too late for both of us, Byzantium. Look, vines are wrapping around your cotton candy cart!

CLOWN 2. What? No! I just washed that!

DETECTIVE. Quick, Cardiff, while their backs are turned. Run!!!

SFX: A great uproar ensues, elephants trumpeting and music crashing and improvised running noises.

CARDIFF. I think they have stopped pursuing us, Detective.

DETECTIVE. I figured as much. Byzantium's on a tight schedule. The longer it spends chasing us, the less time it has to pack up its trunk and leave.

CARDIFF. Detective, about that deal you made...

DETECTIVE. Get it? Trunk? Cuz, elephants?

CARDIFF. Omega, you offered to sacrifice yourself for me.

PLAN 8 FROM THE OUTER ETHER

DETECTIVE. Yes, wasn't that crazy! I've been taking improv classes, and now sometimes I just open my mouth and I have no idea what'll fall out!

CARDIFF. Yes. How...kooky.

DETECTIVE. Well we know what to do when we find them, but we still don't know where their base is. Let's hope Riley and the city forces can slow them down.

Scene 3: The Corner of Wells and Shelley

NARRATOR. At that very moment...

RILEY. This is your first and only warning! Put down your ray guns and--

SFX: Pew! Pew!

RILEY. Aw, nerts.

SFX: Plant growth sound.

CROWD. *(Appropriate levels of panic for a Godzilla-level crisis)*

SFX: Pew! Pew!

SFX: More plant growth sound

ILLUMINUS. I had my doubts you two slurges could pull it off, Zandex, but Plan 8 is a hoot!

ZANDEX. Great Ruler, the transformation plants were designed to spread automatically. You do not need to be out here shooting every human personally.

PLAN 8 FROM THE OUTER ETHER

ILLUMINUS. I know, but it's fun! Watch this. *(singing)* All the single ladies!

BELLE. *(sings response)* All the single--

SFX: PEW!

BELLE. AAA!

SFX: Plant growth sound

ILLUMINUS. How is my End of the World Party coming together?

ZANDEX. The Martians won't come, they're a big bunch of germophobes. But all the others will be here, Great One.

ILLUMINUS. Splendid! Remember to set one human aside for me. We'll need it for the party.

ZANDEX. Maybe one of these?

COSETTE. Stop! We surrend--!

SFX: Pew!

ILLUMINUS. Sorry, sorry! It's like eating nox chips, once I start I can't stop!

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
ORDER A COPY AT WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.COM***