

FADE IN

EXT- POSH VIETNAM STREET-DAY

The water in a shimmering moat reflects, upside down, a bronze statue of Ho Chi Minh, arm raised.

The statue is situated on a busy roundabout, orbited by an endless parade of identical, termite-like mopeds. A hot summer's day. Through the eyes of a dragonfly, we sweep towards a roadside café, where a children's birthday party is in full swing. We weave through kids dressed as cutesy fairies and elves, with tiaras and star-topped wands and Santa hats and striped red-and-white breeches, ultimately, stopping by a lonely, parasol-sheltered table at the end.

Observing the children playact dispassionately from a corner table, a tiny china teacup raised to his lips, is a thin boy of about twelve.

This is ARTEMIS FOWL. An adult in all but age. Dark blue eyes to match his navy sharkskin suit. There is an almost VAMPIRISH quality to him.

A SMALL, BALDING WAITER in a green silk robe and cap scurries over, bowed, ever the image of simpering servility.

WAITER

Have you decided yet, sir?

Artemis breaks out of his reverie. In one swift motion, he whisks up the MENU, and makes a brief show of reading through the items.

ARTEMIS

Well, I must say I'm torn between amusement... and...

(he noisily flips a page)

...annoyance.

(he snaps shut the menu and considers the waiter with a frown)

What would you recommend?

WAITER

(perplexed)

Errr... sir?

ARTEMIS

You asked if I had decided yet.

And I told you I was torn between amusement and annoyance... (beat)

As would anybody be if their supposed

contact showed up at a business meeting masquerading as a miserable excuse for a waiter. Don't you agree- MISTER NGUYEN?

WAITER

(defensive)

Sir... but I do not understand... I am not this Mister Nguyen you speak of... I am humble waiter. My name is Le Minh Tan.

(he taps his badge)

You make mistake. Nguyen is very common name here. In fact, sir, if you have child called Nguyen and he get lost in crowd, good luck finding-

ARTEMIS

(interrupting)

Spare me that.

A badly disguised accent.

Five squirts of Caron Poivre, a perfume no minimum wager should be able to afford.

Manicured fingernails, capped teeth.

You, sir, are no more a waiter than I am the Czar of Russia. You are our local contact, Xuan Nguyen.

The waiter, or NGUYEN, is STUNNED. It is evident that the assessment was spot-on.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

(shrugs)

Well, in all honesty, I got your photograph by hacking into your KrazySingles.com account.

No luck this month either, eh? Maybe you ought to lose the moustache.

There is an awkward silence, punctured by unrelated off-screen laughter from the children's party. Fuming, Nguyen stands up to his full, if modest, height, swiftly unstraps the Velcro robe and removes his cap, revealing a single-breasted tuxedo underneath. The affected mannerism dropped, he looks sharper, more REFINED.

NGUYEN

(in a jarringly posh, heavy British accent)

Very good, Master Fowl. But one thing

my profile did not tell you is that I don't waste my time on little clever Dicks like you. I was under the impression that I was here to meet your father. I'm leaving. You can come back when you've grown some hairs on your chin.

He turns to go, but immediately walks into a WALL. Blinking, he steps away to realise it is not a wall at all. From his PoV, LOOMING over him, against the sun's glare, is the silhouette of an absolute GIANT of a man. BALD, wearing ROUND, TINTED SUNGLASSES. This is BUTLER. Nguyen's eyes widen in terror at the sheer size of this individual.

ARTEMIS

(unfazed)

Then perhaps you will find Butler more deserving of your time. Sit down.

Butler's enormous hands squelch over Nguyen's shoulders, buckling his knees and forcing him into a chair. Nguyen gives a squawk of protest.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

Right then. That little performance was to get a stock of our weapons, yes?

A brief shot of Nguyen, shrivelled like a prune in his chair, Butler looming behind him, almost thrice as wide. Sighing, Artemis picks up the kettle and pours out a fresh cup of steaming, pinkish tea. He places the cup on a saucer and pushes it towards Nguyen.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

Drink up, Mister Nguyen. It's very bracing. Now, as for our weapons situation, I am unarmed. But Butler here has a Sig-Sauer in his shoulder holster, two throwing knives in his boots, a two-shot Derringer up his sleeve...

The teacup starts to chatter in the saucer in Nguyen's hand.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

...garrotte wire in his watch, Gorkha kukri on his hip, dry-acid vials in his coat buttons...

The teacup chattering INTENSIFIES.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

...and three stun grenades in various pockets. Does that cover it, Butler?

BUTLER

There's also the tomahawk, sir.

ARTEMIS

Of course. A deer antler tomahawk. It was a gift from an Alaskan tribe. For beating up a grizzly bear that had been menacing them. Don't worry. The Grizzly is fine, they use it to turn a water wheel now.

Nguyen emits a sound half-way between a whimper and a squeak. Looking slightly ill, he downs the hot tea like a tequila shot. His eyes water. He looks quite pathetic.

ARTEMIS

(cheerful)

Oh, don't worry, Mister Nguyen. All overkill. The weapons won't be used on you.

Nguyen risks a wet chuckle. He is relieved, but not entirely convinced.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

No, sir. You are what Butler likes to call "Yowamushi." A human sandbag. Still, I would hate for you to see that side of him. As long as you have the information you promised, you have nothing to worry about.

(he leans closer, his tone is now sinister)

But if find I've been dragged all the way out here just to have my dust allergy triggered, you will be very, very sorry. Now which will it be?

CUT TO:

EXT: A BUSTLING FLEA MARKET- DAY

A cloud of hissing wok smoke. We see Artemis, Butler and Nguyen, threading their way past a riot of noise and colour, sights and smells. Shabby stalls selling everything from earrings to shawls to water puppets to Laughing Buddha statuettes. Hawkers and vendors in surgical masks wave Ha Long bay towels and jailbroken iPhones at passers-by. Seafood shacks and shops selling sticky rice balls. A rich cultural tapestry.

Nguyen walks in front, tripping and stumbling, yelling in Vietnamese at urchins to stay away. Purposeful and stoic, Artemis and Butler stick out like sore thumbs in this place.

CUT TO:

EXT: A DARK, NARROW ALLEY- DAY

Silhouette of a rat scuttling across a low clothesline. Nguyen ducks into view, Artemis and Butler on his heels. Swearing, swatting mosquitoes and splashing in puddles, Nguyen bumbles through the squalor, leading them past skips overflowing with rubbish.

They stop in front of what looks like a little tepee, made of filthy, muddy rags.

NGUYEN

They call her Âu Cơ.

ARTEMIS

(nodding in thought)

After the legendary fairy healer
in Vietnamese mythology. I see.

Butler? The FerroScope, please?

Butler hands Artemis what looks like a SILVER SPYGLASS, covered with dials and buttons.

NGUYEN

(pleading)

It's definitely her. Can I go now?
You can wire me the money later. I
just remembered, I have a dentist
appointment I'm already late for...

ARTEMIS

(busy switching filters on the FerroScope)

Your last dental was a month ago and
your teeth are in mint condition, Mr.

Nguyen, I've seen your records.

THROUGH the round FerroScopic sight-
We see Butler, BRIGHT ORANGE against a BRIGHT BLUE background,
his vitals a bit darker, his various weapons showing up BLACK.
We then switch to Nguyen- also BRIGHT ORANGE. We then switch
to the tepee. The hunched figure squatting inside shows up-
BRIGHT GREEN!
A shot of Artemis, smiling as the lens zooms in.

ARTEMIS

Pay our friend in full, Butler.
Mr. Nguyen, you will not speak of
This encounter to anyone. If you do..
You remember, don't you?

NGUYEN

Yowamushi?

ARTEMIS

(nodding)

Yowamushi.

CUT TO:

INT: MADAM ÂU CO'S TEPEE

Countless fat, burning candles sit on top of woven baskets and
cupboards, casting the place in reddish light. Dead frogs hang
by the legs from wires, like photographs in a darkroom.
Artemis's polished Oxford shoes tiptoe around a carpet of
empty green bottles of rice wine. Butler, taller than the
tepee itself, follows, hunched forward, steadying an empty
birdcage he slightly bumps his head against. A Fea's viper,
snoozing in another cage, looks up.

ARTEMIS

Madam, I have a proposition for you.

MADAME ÂU CỎ is sitting on a duree rug, her body wrapped in
tattered shawls, a wide-brimmed sedge hat inclined over her
face.

ÂU CỎ

(in a very raspy voice)
Wine. English, wine.

Artemis reaches into his coat and hands her a bottle. Slowly, he holds it out, just out of reach. A FLASH OF GREEN. A triumphant expression lights up Artemis's face. Âu Cơ uncorks the bottle with a pop, and glugs in down in one. Artemis patiently waits.

ÂU CƠ

Aaah, delicious. This cannot be English. Pond water, that stuff is.

ARTEMIS

(removing his sunglasses)
Irish, madam. St. Paddy's Delight, 1922, from the vineyards of County Cork. Shall we talk?

ÂU CƠ

(already slightly tipsy)
Yes, of course, Irish. Tell me
What you want. You have the flu?
Bleeding gums?

ARTEMIS

My health is perfectly fine, madam.
What I do want is your Book.

The candles blow out dramatically. Silence and stillness falls.

ÂU CƠ

(through a cloud of candle smoke, cautious)
Book?

ARTEMIS

Yes, madam. Your Book.

ÂU CƠ

(extending an arm to relight the nearby candles)
I don't have no Book. You go library, Irish. There, you find all kind of books. Gardening, cooking, aromatherapy. You want healing, you come to me.

ARTEMIS

Healer?! You are no healer. You

are a fairy, a sprite, to be precise.
Living here in filth, forgotten by
your own people, surrounded by
filth and mud. The most worthless
of your kind, certainly, but a fairy
nonetheless.

(he pauses, considering a thought)

Too worthless, in fact. (to himself)

Enraged, Âu Cơ throws back the hat to reveal- A TERRIBLE
CREATURE! Green skin, yellow eyes, and a long, hooked nose.
Even Butler's hand flinches on instinct towards his shoulder
holster. Artemis, however, is totally unflappable.
Âu Cơ leers at Artemis, flexing her long, hideous fingers.

ÂU CƠ

If you know I am a fairy, human,
you will also know that I can take
your life with a snap of my wrist!

ARTEMIS

I doubt it very much. Alcohol and
Fairy folk don't mix. Centuries of
indulgence and here you are, a pale
shadow of your past self, reduced
to performing only the simplest of
magic- curing headaches and warts.
Pathetic.

I can offer you a way out. All I want
is your book.

ÂU CƠ

(the candle flames crackle)

Begone, Mud Boy! I will never help
You!

ARTEMIS

Or anyone else, ever again, madam.
(he points to the empty wine bottle)
With all that HOLY WATER you just
drank, I doubt you'll be alive to
See the next sunrise.

ÂU CƠ

(clutching her throat)

HOLY WATER! You murderer!

ARTEMIS

(blithe)

English pond water doesn't seem so bad now, does it? Now who will help the local airheads clear up their acne?

ÂU CÔ

So, you just came here to kill me, is it? A poor old fairy, minding her business, trying to earn a living.

ARTEMIS

Why no, madam. Far from it.

(pause)

Far from it.

Âu Co's stomach gives an OMINOUS RUMBLE. She squeezes her clammy green hands around it in pain. Artemis's lip twitches as he senses an imminent victory.

ÂU CÔ

(slowly, defeated)

Alright, Mud Boy. I'm listening.

ARTEMIS

Good. In return for the Book, I will give you the antidote. Butler?

Butler holds up a stoppered vial. CLOSE UP of the vial, filled with a bubbling, transparent liquid with a purple swirl inside it.

ARTEMIS (CONT'D)

Water from the spring of Tara- the most magical place on earth.

ÂU CÔ

So, you blackmail me, basically. I'm exactly where I started off.

ARTEMIS

Aha. There's more. This water from Tara not only has healing properties, but restorative ones, too. Not only will it counteract the holy water, but it will further rid your body of all the alcohol you've thrown in over the

centuries. Regenerate your cells.
Return your powers. Basically, you'll
be able to return you to your old life.
You'll be able to join your own people.
You'll be an outcast no more. Imagine that.

(beat)

Imagine that.

Âu Cồ bites her lip. She's interested.

ARTEMIS

Remember, I could easily run off, wait
for you to die, come back later, and
retrieve the Book from your belongings.
I'd find it sooner or later. But I'm
choosing not to.

Âu Cồ considers Artemis for a long time, perplexed and
intrigued, but too overcome by pain to do more. She knows she
has no choice. Slowly, she reaches into the FOLDS of her
shabby robes and pulls out what looks like a GOLDEN MATCHBOX.
She reaches out and hands it to Artemis.

ÂU CỒ

No use to you, Mud Boy. It's in our
language. Gnommish.

The tiny golden book fits comfortably in Artemis's open palm.
He delicately flips it open. We don't see the contents, but we
do see his face light up, both FIGURATIVELY and LITERALLY.
He quickly checks the display of emotion, not wanting to
convey how much this moment means to him.
Meanwhile, Butler had loaded the syringe into a dart gun. Âu
Cồ sits up on her knees, suddenly looking very excited.

ARTEMIS

Time for my part of the
deal, I suppose. But be warned. The
purging process is neither quick nor
pleasant.

ÂU CỒ

(incensed)

Do I look like I care? I want to
fly again! I want to be beautiful
again! I hate this place! And most of

all, I hate all you Mud People! Greedy, repulsive, the lot of you, thinking you own the Earth! You think of nobody except yourselves! In fact, I wish I could just forget about all of you!

ARTEMIS

Perfect, then.

Immediately, Butler shoots Âu Cơ in the neck with a dart gun. Caught off guard, Âu Cơ collapses on the spot. As she loses consciousness, her gaze finds Artemis. Through her eyes, we see a DUTCH ANGLE SHOT of the impassive boy putting his sunglasses back on and following his bodyguard out the tent. The scene blurs away into a kaleidoscope of technicolours, and arcane symbols swim across the screen. The music swells. Uilleann Pipes.

Most of the symbols fade away into blackness, while the last few crystallise to form the titles...

ARTEMIS FOWL

EXT: BOEING 747- NIGHT

A double-decker plane glides through a navy night, the window belts glowing golden, and navigation lights winking on the tip of its wings.

INT: FIRST CLASS

Things are peaceful, save for the rumble and clinks of the dinner service. Artemis is contemplating the rolling sea of clouds outside the oval window. His face bears no emotion. Butler has reading glasses on, and is flicking through the monthly issue of Guns and Ammo in the yellow of the overhead lamp.

A nearby ping makes Artemis aware of his partial reflection in the window. He leans upright and pulls an eyedrop bottle from his breast pocket.

ARTEMIS

(tapping in eyedrops)

Did you check up on Nguyen?

Butler obediently tucks the magazine back into the seat pocket.

BUTLER

I did. He has a date with a nice woman called Tuyen. Divorced seven years, no kids. An accountant with VietinBank. Enjoys watching horse races, but doesn't gamble. Nguyen made reservations at The Garlik for 8. Non-smoking.

ARTEMIS

(distracted)

Good for him. Good for him.

(beat)

And I'd also like you to schedule a meeting with our family lawyers. I want to renegotiate their terms of service, keeping the future downsizing of our business interests in mind.

Butler stares at him with a mixture of affection and concern. Awed as he is by his ward's brilliance, he is also acutely aware of the weight Artemis is carrying- a boy forced to grow up too soon. The reading glasses make his hulking frame look oddly paternal.

BUTLER

(quietly)

I'll do that, Artemis.

The dinner trolley has finally drawn level with their seats. The stewardess is blonde, curvaceous and cheerful.

STEWARDESS

Dinner for you, sir?

BUTLER

No, thank you.

STEWARDESS

(to Artemis)

And how about you, young man?

But Artemis has already returned to gazing contemplatively out the window.

ARTEMIS

(absently)

No, thank you.

STEWARDESS

Are you sure?

ARTEMIS

Extremely.

STEWARDESS

(winks good-naturedly)

It's roast beef stew, with a chicken-and-pine-nut salad. And ooh, look, strawberry parfait!

Artemis finally looks up, unable to believe this conversation is still going on.

ARTEMIS

Listen... Nancy. If ever someone poisons me, and I require an instant emetic, I shall call for you. In the meantime, why don't you take your dog-and-pony show someplace else?

Looking in equal parts hurt, unnerved and alarmed, Nancy the stewardess speeds the trolley away.

Butler pulls the magazine out again, and flips it open.

BUTLER

(deadpan, from behind the pages)

She seemed nice.

ARTEMIS

High-maintenance, Butler.

(pause)

And definitely a clinger.

Butler smiles to himself.

BUTLER

Will you meet your mother once you get back?

ARTEMIS

Not right now, Butler. There's work to do. A lot of work. In fact, I had better catch up on sleep right now.

He tucks a blue velvet travel pillow behind his neck and a matching sleep mask over his eyes. He plugs in earphones, and CLASSICAL MUSIC starts to play.

Tchaikovsky's Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy.

With the MUSIC STILL PLAYING, we CUT TO:

EXT: FOWL MANOR- DAY

A lingering establishing shot of a lavish, sprawling country estate. A Renaissance-Era mansion, surrounded by acres of forest and pond, gated by a stone wall, guarded by fences, wires and watchtowers. Fort Knox meets a Henry James novel.

SUPER: FOWL MANOR (22 kilometres from Dublin)

(appearing after a beat)

-“A humble sanctuary to protect my children from the wolves and the winter's bite. And those blasted Tudors. God, I hate them.”

-Lord Hugh Fowl,
circa 1525.

A pleasant MUSICAL MONTAGE follows, as we glimpse Artemis and Butler hard at work in their own different ways. The MUSIC gradually SWELLS throughout the montage, building to a CRESCENDO towards the end.

INTERCUT ARTEMIS/ BUTLER

Artemis throws open the door to his study, once a traditional oak-and-leather affair, but recently refurbished with 21st century tech...

Butler presents his younger sister, JULIET (16, ditzy, pretty) with a present wrapped in red silk. She unwraps it, and is delighted to find a Dao Vua knife...

Artemis clamps the Book of the People onto a table, beneath three bright spotlights, as though about to conduct an autopsy...

Butler trains Juliet in the dojo. Both are black belts, though Butler is several Dans higher. He isn't going easy on her, and has her in a headlock...

Artemis's fingers hammering against a keyboard... lines of code being processed on a black computer screen...

Butler in the greenhouse, watering a row of potted plants with one hand, reading a recipe book with another...

Artemis studies an old, leather-bound book with a magnifying glass. He looks annoyed as he slams the book onto the floor with a dusty thud...

Standing in a boat, Butler throws a spear into a pond with remarkable ease, presumably impaling his target...

The pile of unhelpful books has grown much larger. Artemis rubs his face, looking frustrated and challenged, but not defeated...

Butler in the kitchen, drizzling olive oil onto a saucepan over a medium flame...

Artemis shuffles runes in Sanskrit, Gaelic, Zulu and Arabic. He finally frowns at a set of Egyptian hieroglyphics with an "I wonder..." look...

Butler chops onions over a cutting board at jackhammer speed...

Artemis bins a crumpled sheet of paper at the same time as-

Butler bins a fish head...

A couple of Gnommish pictograms turn to English, Artemis's eyes widen...

Butler decorates the cooked carp with raspberry sauce, and tips braised arrocina beans on the side of the plate, accompanied by a few slices of blood orange...

A spiral processor reads the pages of the Book from the centre outwards...

Butler climbs upstairs with a laden tray...

The remaining Gnommish pictograms turn to English... and... THE TRANSLATION IS COMPLETE!

Butler knocks on the door of the study, abruptly KILLING THE MUSIC.

He opens the door to find Artemis collapsed in an armchair, surrounded by stacks of books and sheets of paper. He looks exhausted, but satisfied.

ARTEMIS

Meeting, Butler. Drawing room,
Thirty minutes. Get Juliet.

CUT TO:

INT: DRAWING ROOM- DAY

A sumptuous living room. Juliet is relaxed on the sofa, applying glitter nail paint. Butler is standing- even in this domestic setting he will not lower his guard. Artemis has freshened up, and is going over his notes.

ARTEMIS

So I've gone over the whole thing,
and I've come to the conclusion that
most fairies refrain from coming up
to the Earth's surface if they can help
it, except in one unavoidable situation.

BUTLER

Which is?

ARTEMIS

According to the Book, there's a
ritual they must complete every few
years, to renew their powers. Which,
though we are yet to have seen them,
are considerable.

BUTLER

(frowning)

What's the ritual?

ARTEMIS

They need to pluck and bury an acorn
from a 100-year-old oak tree by a riverbend.
Oh, and on a full moon night. Needless
to say, this cannot to performed
underground. At this time, they are both
exposed and depleted of magic. It is in
this moment of vulnerability, that we
will act.

BUTLER

(nodding)

There'll be quite a few oaks that make the cut. I'll scope out the most inaccessible ones. I bet those are the ones they go for.

Artemis is visibly pleased that Butler is keeping up.

ARTEMIS

Good man.

Juliet, on the other hand..

JULIET

I'm sorry, Arty. What are we doing?

ARTEMIS

(with a touch of exasperation)
We're going to capture a fairy.

JULIET

(shocked)

You can't talk like that, Arty. This isn't the '60s.

ARTEMIS

(annoyed, to Butler)
You didn't brief her?

BUTLER

I didn't know she was to be told, too.

JULIET

(looking from Artemis to Butler)
I was to be told what?

Artemis sighs.

ARTEMIS

That fairies are real, Juliet. Fairies, goblins, pixies, gnomes, elves, dwarves... the lot. All real.
And we are going to capture one alive.

There is a hushed silence. Juliet's mouth is hanging open in childlike wonder.

JULIET

(hushed tones)

Even the Tooth Fairy is real?

ARTEMIS

Probably not. Doubtless the legend has some real-life equivalent with a far less impressive story.

JULIET

And the Blue Fairy, from Pinocchio?

ARTEMIS

(clearing his throat)

That is, as you yourself pointed out just now, a character from a children's story by Carlo Collodi.

JULIET

OOOH! What about Santa Claus?

ARTEMIS

(interrupting)

No, Juliet, no. Fairies are not like that. They don't inhabit edible, gluten-rich houses covered in refined sugar. They don't go about distributing presents to sleeping children. They don't give two hoots whether you're naughty or nice. Fairies are not like that.

JULIET

Sooo... what are they like, Arty?

CUT TO:

INT: HOLLY SHORT'S BEDROOM

A messy one-bedroom flat.
An ALARM is RINGING on a bedside table.
A slim hand smacks over it.

With a grunt and a sigh, HOLLY SHORT kicks off the covers.
Holly is slim and attractive, with shoulder-length hair,

bright green eyes, coffee-coloured skin and traditionally elfin features. She is wearing a cotton tank top and shorts. Holly fumbles around the bedside table for her phone. She has messages.

As the messages play in V.O., we see Holly getting ready for her day.

CUT TO:

INT: BATHROOM

Holly brushing her teeth.

FOALY (V.O)

Hey Short, it's Foaly. You haven't seen my tinfoil hat, have you? I know for a fact you used my last one to spit your chewing gum out in. Just let me know, and I promise I won't get mad.

Holly, still brushing, grins into the mirror.

CUT TO:

INT: BEDROOM

Holly exercising with a resistance band.

CHIX VERBIL(V.O)

Yo Hol, it's Chix. You mind switchin' shifts with me this weekend? I got front row tickets to the Limestone Breezers concert, and there's this little sprite in Forensics I need to impress. Knew I could count on you. Cheers!

Holly groans.

CUT TO:

INT: KITCHEN

Holly pours out a measure of hot espresso, just as two pieces of toast pop out of the toaster.

LILI FROND (V.O)

Oh-mer-garsh, Short. Is it true
you turned Trouble Kelp down?
You are such a loo-hoo-hoo-zer,
Short! He's totally out of your
league anyway. You will die alone.

Holly takes a nonchalant, crunchy bite of toast and a noisy slurp of espresso.

CUT TO:

INT: BATHROOM

Holly in the shower, massaging shampoo into her hair, modestly covered from the upper chest down in very colourful bubbles and steam.

MR. GROUCH (V.O)

Hello, Holly. It's Mr. Grouch. I don't
think you got my last message. Um, I just
wanted to remind you it's the fifth... so...
rent's due... so if you could... actually,
scratch that. You're a good kid, Holly,
and I hate having to do this. Just pay me
back whenever you can. Thanks.

CUT TO:

INT: BEDROOM

Holly zipping up a parsley-coloured jumpsuit and sliding on a helmet.

FOALY (V.O)

Never mind. I found it in the girls'
toilet. Must've been Caballine. Little
gunk. I don't think we'll ever get along.

CUT TO:

INT: HAVEN CITY TUNNELS

Holly rides her GLIDING ZOOMER through an immense, crowded tunnel, overtaking a flying mini occupied by a family of toads, a hang-gliding gremlin, and other such oddities.

The traffic flows on multiple levels, from a subway train system at the bottom, to air channels for flying sprites at the very top.

Up ahead, the end of the tunnel arrives... ORCHESTRAL MUSIC SWELLS... giving us our first look at...

HAVEN CITY.

An incredible underground metropolis, a veritable subterranean Manhattan, that has worked with, as opposed to against nature. TECH-NOIRISH elements are comically juxtaposed against classical FANTASY flourishes. Eight-lane highways weaving between skyscrapers carved out of stalactites. Nightclubs shaped like giant, glowing toadstools. Grimy graffiti proclaiming GOBLIN POWER! Neon signs advertising magic wands on sale. Algae parks full of joggers. Flying blimps and political billboards canvassing species-based votes. Fairy children in a winged yellow school-bus cheer at Holly out their windows, and she, fun-loving elf that she is, smiles and replies with a mock-stern salute.

Though this is all mundane to Holly, we take our time with these scenes to showcase a living, breathing world inhabiting the vast grotto.

Holly finally stops outside an impressive building labelled LEP POLICE HEADQUARTERS.

The HQ façade has a giant projected motion poster, bearing the simpering image of LILI FROND, and a citizen-friendly outreach message.

Holly removes her helmet and grimaces.

INT: LEP POLICE HQ LOBBY

Holly shoves her through the crowded lobby. In spite of the otherworldly setting, the scene remains remarkably familiar. Warty gnomes being mugshotted or fingerprinted, wanted lists being pinned to a notice board, a framed picture of the Officer-of-the-Month, long queues, cells filled with snarling goblins, waiting benches, arguing families, the usual.

At the help desk is LILI FROND- a valley-girl equivalent of a pixie, a sleek-haired brunette with sharp features and a bad case of resting bitchface. She is surrounded by three or four

admirers- former jock types, now uniformed- all vying for her attention.

Fronnd perks up when she notices Holly. Holly pretends not to see her, and picks up the pace. But...

FRONND

Oooh, Short! You're in for it now!
You were supposed to report to OPs
an hour ago. Beetroot's gonna blow a
gasket! Excellent!

HOLLY

(unimpressed)

I'm sure the tunnels can survive
litterers for another hour, Fronnd.

FRONND

Litterers? Nah-uh! You're back on
the front lines!

HOLLY

(stunned)

What?

FRONND

I said you've been reassigned back
to the field!

HOLLY

You're a liar.

FRONND

(with faux innocence)

Have I ever lied to you?

HOLLY

Yes. Routinely.

Fronnd smacks a copy of Holly's transfer order on the table.
Holly picks it up and begins to read-

QUICK FLASH CUTS to the words- CAPTAIN HOLLY SHORT... TUNNEL
SECURITY... HEREBY RELIEVED... TRANSFERRED... SPECIAL OPERATIONS
BRANCH.

Holly's eyes WIDEN IN HORROR.

FROND

Turns out Beetroot lobbied for you with the Council. Said the Hamburg thing wasn't your fault. Said they could lay their entire faith in you. That you would give your one hundred percent, and would never let them down. Way to repay him, right, coming in so late?

(she scoffs)

HOLLY

(in a mutter, still staring at the order)
D'Arvit.

FROND

And as it turns out, there's an Op for you right now. They've been announcing your name over the intercom for the past half-hour.

HOLLY

D'Arvit, D'Arvit, D'Arvit.

FROND

Looks like you've blown your chance again. Prepare for permanent Holly-day, Short! Get it? Holly-Day?

A couple of the suitors laugh sycophantically. Panicking, Holly begins to RUN. One shy fellow raises a couple of timid, hopeful fingers at her as she leaves.

TIMID COP

(in a small voice)

Hey, Holly...

(The others stare at him)

What?

CUT TO:

INT: OPS ROOM

A futuristic looking weapons laboratory. Holly is being decked out by her friend FOALY, a bespectacled, lab-suited centaur. He has his beloved tin-foil hat back on.

HOLLY
Rogue troll, you say?

Foaly is choosing a helmet for her from a triple-decked rack.

FOALY.
Yup. Blasted to the surface near Mount
Etna. Italy. Headed straight for the
Sicilian town of Catania.

He fits the helmet over her head, covering her eyes.

FOALY (CONT'D)
You're very lucky, Holly. Fairies don't
get to see the Mediterranean too often.
It's usually one-off jobs further up
North.

Holly nods, patting around the helmet for the visor toggle.
Foaly smacks her hand off.

FOALY
Don't fidget. I bet you're worried,
right? Your first Op back and Root
sends you after a sun-crazed troll.

HOLLY
(shrugs)
Not really. I'm just glad to be back
on the field.

Foaly is now choosing a set of wings for her. He looks at
butterfly wings, reptilian wings, Pegasus wings... and
eventually choose dragonfly wings. He slips them around her
shoulders, fastening them onto her back.

FOALY
If you're not worried, you're not
prepared. Trolls are mean brutes,
Holly, really mean. Tear you apart
soon as they look at you.

HOLLY
Good to know, Foaly. Anything else
I should be aware of?

FOALY

Yes, it's a reconnaissance mission only. You do not, in any circumstance, engage the troll. Is that clear? That's for the special team we'll send in after your report.

HOLLY

Got it.

Foaly finally picks out a fancy tri-barrelled platinum blaster from a locked cupboard. He charges it up musically and tests the level settings. There are three- the first shows a red-faced smiley CRYING and SWEATING, the second shows the cartoon ON FIRE, and the third shows a PILE of ASH. Foaly almost hands the weapon over to Holly, but then stops.

FOALY

(severely)

This is the LEPRecon, Short. This isn't the LEPReduceEverythingToRubble. This isn't Hamburg.

HOLLY

(grumbling)

I got it, horse-man.

Foaly hands her the gun. Holly twirls the gun and slides it into her hip holster. She looks very happy.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

What next?

JUMP CUT TO:

Holly strapped inside a tiny beetle-shaped pod, riding a railroad track through a dark, narrow chute.

Foaly is on the HEADSET.

FOALY (V.O)

I'm glad you're seeing this as an opportunity, Holly, because Root really wants to show the Committee you've got stuff.

HOLLY

Right now, I'm not seeing anything
at all.

Foaly taps some buttons on his control panel. In the pod,
Holly's visor comes ALIVE, glowing a BRIGHT GREEN.
For a moment, we see the cramped inside of the pod as she sees
it, through a night-vision filter, covered in knobs and
doodads.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Much better. Thanks, Foaly.

The track begins to RISE like a ROLLERCOASTER RAIL. Up ahead
is a bright yellow source of light.

The magma chute.

FOALY
You're like Clarice Starling from
The Silence of the Lambs, basically.
Root's your Jack Crawford.

HOLLY
I'm who? From what?

FOALY
Not important. Anyway, I've uploaded
the coordinates to your visor.

Holly grabs a rubber cylinder from the dashboard, and sticks
it in between her teeth.

HOLLY
Fanks.

FOALY (V.O)
Good luck, Captain Short. I'll see you
on the other side.

There is RADIO silence.

The railroad track planes away, dipping very slightly at its
very edge. It stops at the lip, offering Holly a terrifying
glimpse of the bottomless drop to the centre of the earth.

With a teasing hesitation, the POD DROPS.

There are a few seconds of tense silence as we see the pod shrink into the distance... and then...

THE POD BOOMS UPWARD out of the Earth, borne on a MAGMA FLARE!

CUT TO:

EXT: SICILIAN COUNTRYSIDE- NIGHT

The door of the pod, now on a barren mountainside, pops open with a hiss.

Holly unclips herself from the harness, emerges from a tangle of wires and fried circuits, and dusts herself down.

Kicking her dragonfly wings into action, she hops up and takes off into the Italian night...