

on the Grassy Ocean and I will never graze in the high pasture but I will always be with you. When you hear my hooves, you will know I am near.

BASTIAN. No.

ARTAX. Farewell...and thank you. (*ARTAX slips into the swamp.*)

SCENE ELEVEN: Bastian Mourns Artax

(*There is a blackout onstage.*)

BASTIAN. Noooooo!! That can't happen. Artax is one of the heroes. Heroes don't die until the end of the story. It's too soon. Too soon. Stupid book. (*He slams the book shut and goes to the window. We hear the sound of students in the playground.*) Life is going on as if nothing has happened. And something has happened. Artax is dead and Atreyu is alone. When my mom died, I heard people in the hospital laughing and I wanted to say, "stop laughing, stop laughing, something has happened, my mother has..." I'm not going to eat anything else, ever. No sandwich, no apple, no— (*surprised*) chocolate bar...thanks, Dad. But I'm not going to eat it. I'm staying hungry, with Atreyu. (*He opens the book and continues.*)

SCENE TWELVE: Morla the Aged One

ATREYU. Morla! Morla! I'm going to pull up every tree, every bush, every rock until I find you. Morla! Morla! Artax is gone but (*jumping*) I'm still here!!!

(*There is a creak and a groan and the floor shakes. ATREYU is knocked off balance. The floor of the stage rises into an enormous shell from which MORLA emerges.*)

MORLA. Goodness gracious, who's making all that noise? Jumping on our shell! Waking us up!

ATREYU. I am.

MORLA. Who are you?

ATREYU. I am Atreyu of the Great Quest and I have come for your help.

(*MORLA examines ATREYU.*)

MORLA. Go away.

ATREYU. Wait! I speak for the Childlike Empress.

MORLA. Go away!

ATREYU. I carry the Aurnyn.

MORLA. Oooooo...sparkly.

ATREYU. The Empress is dying.

MORLA. Haven't seen the Aurnyn in a thousand years, have we, old woman? No.

ATREYU. If the Empress dies, so will Fantastica.

MORLA. So?

ATREYU. If Fantastica dies, so will you.

MORLA. Who cares?

ATREYU. You don't care if you die?
 MORLA. Look, tadpole. I'm the oldest being in Fantastica and when you've lived as long as we have nothing matters. Not even death. *(MORLA disappears.)*
 ATREYU. Wait!
 MORLA. Go away!
 ATREYU. But—
 MORLA. And never come back!
 ATREYU. If you're so old, you must be smart.
 MORLA *(from within)*. We are.
 ATREYU. Very smart.
 MORLA *(peeking out)*. We are, aren't we old woman? Oh yes. Very smart.
 ATREYU. Then you must know how the Childlike Empress can be cured.

(MORLA re-appears.)

MORLA. We do! Oh yes, we do! We know exactly how to cure her!
 ATREYU. How?
 MORLA. Why should we tell you?
 ATREYU. Because I want to cure her.
 MORLA. It won't make any difference.
 ATREYU. It will save Fantastica.
 MORLA. I don't care about Fantastica, I don't care about anything.
 ATREYU. You have to care about something.
 MORLA. No I don't.
 ATREYU. Yes you do.
 MORLA. Don't.
 ATREYU. Do.

MORLA. Don't.
 ATREYU. Do.
 MORLA. Don't.
 ATREYU. You care enough not to tell me.
 MORLA *(pause)*. That's true. We don't care a lot, but we do care an itsy bitsy bit! *(Begins to laugh.)*
 ATREYU. So what's the cure?
 MORLA *(roaring with laughter)*. You tricked us. Haven't been tricked like that in a thousand years!
 ATREYU. Tell me the cure!
 MORLA. All right, all right. Goodness gracious. So loud. So rude. So young. *(She clears her throat.)* Could you scratch my ear? The other one. *(ATREYU does so.)*
 Ahhhh... *(She snores.)*
 ATREYU *(calling into her ear)*. Morla? Morla?
 MORLA *(waking)*. Huh?
 ATREYU. What's the cure?
 MORLA. She doesn't need one.
 ATREYU. But she's sick.
 MORLA. Yes, but she's not sick because of the Nothing. Oh no. She's sick because everyone has forgotten her name. Even us! Find her a new name and she will be well and Fantastica will be well and everyone will go on doing useless things forever. *(She begins to go in.)*
 ATREYU. Who can give her a new name?
 MORLA *(going in)*. I don't know.
 ATREYU. You have to know. *(ATREYU pushes into MORLA's shell.)* Who else am I going to ask?
 MORLA *(OFF)*. What are you doing in here?
 ATREYU *(OFF)*. I need to know—

(MORLA sneezes and blows ATREYU out of her shell.)