



(TOM looks at his hands, then rubs them over his face, looking at them)

You see? You are very handsome. Papa is going to be so happy! Papa! Miss Bainbridge! Where are you?!

(Looks around, taking in the environment for the first time. She looks up)

What are those things? They look, for all the world, like lily pads. But they're enormous, and what are they doing up there?

(Looks at the cave)

I don't remember a cave.

(Approaches it. TOM goes to her)

TOM:  
I don't think you should.

ELLIE:  
Why not?

(Crawls into the cave. From inside:)

Hello? Is anyone—?

GRUFF VOICE (in the cave):  
Aaaaaagggggghhhhhh!!!

ELLIE (screams)

(ELLIE scrambles out of the cave, followed by OLD CARP, who is quite large – and quite furious. ELLIE and TOM sprawl)

OLD CARP:  
How many times do I have to tell you Water Babies not to disturb me when I'm napping?!

(Looks at them)

You're new, aren't you. Well, I'm warning you, the next time you bother me, I'll take my tail and whap the both of you silly. I can do it, too.

(Beat)

Well? Crawfish got your tongue?

(Another beat)

Apologize?

ELLIE (hoarsely):  
I'm... sorry.

OLD CARP:  
Oh, how sincere.

(Retreats back into the cave)

Water Babies...

(OLD CARP is gone. ELLIE and TOM don't move for a very long moment. Then ELLIE notices something above her head. Large undulating shadows – from fish – pass over the stage. ELLIE reacts:)

ELLIE:  
They look like sharks! One of them sees us. He's coming!

(ELLIE and TOM scramble to their feet)

Oh!

(A TROUT enters. Smaller than OLD CARP but still quite big)

TROUT:  
Welcome, Water Babies!

ELLIE:  
What are you?

TROUT:  
A trout, obviously.

ELLIE:  
But you're... huge.

TROUT:  
Water Babies aren't all that big.

TOM:  
Are you gonna eat us?

TROUT:

Eat a Water Baby? Good heavens, what a thought. No. I prefer caddis flies which are hatching right now and are quite plump and delicious. I love the way they wriggle in your mouth. Yum.

ELLIE:

Why...?

TROUT:

Yes...?

ELLIE:

Why does everyone keep calling us Water Babies?

TROUT:

Because, my dear darling, that is what you are.

ELLIE:

I'm not your dear darling, and I'm certainly not a baby, and this isn't...

(Looking around, with growing realization)

It's not... It couldn't be...

TROUT:

Hop on and I'll give you the grand tour. It's my specialty. Hop on.

(Neither TOM nor ELLIE move)

You're Water Babies, and it's your job to have fun. Hop on. Hop on!

(ELLIE and TOM tentatively clamber up onto the TROUT's back)

Here we go!

(Traveling MUSIC, bright and uptempo, bluegrassy/Irish jiggy, as TROUT takes ELLIE and TOM on the grand tour)

Isn't this fun?!

TOM:

Yeah!

(TROUT stops near a strange tree-like shape. TOM and ELLIE dismount)

TROUT:

Shake the tree. Go on, shake it.

ELLIE:  
It's not really a tree.

TROUT:  
Shake it. Harder. Harder. Harder!

(TOM and ELLIE vigorously shake the tree.  
Suddenly water monkeys – which might simply be  
flashes of light – drop out of the tree and attack  
TOM and ELLIE)

TOM:  
Ha!

ELLIE:  
What are these things?!

TROUT (laughing):  
Water monkeys! You made 'em mad!

ELLIE:  
They're tickling us!

TROUT:  
Hop on, we'll outswim 'em!

(TOM and ELLIE clamber back on TROUT's back.  
More MUSIC. Then:)

Look.

ELLIE:  
What is it?

(They dismount TROUT and approach a long  
oblong shape – an insect pupa which, as we  
watch, begins to squirm and pulsate)

Oh!

(The pupa splits open and a DRAGONFLY  
emerges, blinking, squinting, stretching. He  
notices the WATER BABIES)

DRAGONFLY:  
Who are you?

TOM:  
We're Water Babies. What are you?

DRAGONFLY:  
I'm a dragonfly, of course.

(His wings start fluttering)

TOM:  
Are you going to fly?

DRAGONFLY:  
Of course I'm going to fly, I'm a dragonfly. From now on, I'll live in the air.

ELLIE:  
Fly to Harthover House, and tell Papa, tell Sir John Harthover, that I'm in the river and that I hope to be back in time for lunch!

DRAGONFLY:  
I don't think dragonflies can talk to humans.

(Wings start beating)

Here I go!

(Flies away. TOM and ELLIE watch him fly out of sight. Moment)

TROUT:  
Right now we're where the river widens out. The sea's just up ahead. Do you want to see it?

TOM:  
Oh, yes.

TROUT:  
Climb on.

(They do. MUSIC continues as the TROUT swims, faster and faster)

Hold your breath! Here we go! Up! Up! Up!

(TROUT jumps. Lights suddenly go bright. TOM and ELLIE look around, holding their breath, amazed. Lights normalize)

Here we go again!

(TROUT jumps again)

Again!

(TROUT jumps again, this time in slow-motion.  
MUSIC ends. They're back where they started,  
by OLD CARP's cave)

TROUT:  
Bye, Water Babies!