

Producing a European Native Transmedia Project

A case study

Submitted by Jean Pierre Magro to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

The delivery of fiction across multiple platforms is becoming an increasingly important component of the contemporary media landscape. Transmedia storytelling is no longer a mere buzzword. Content creators, seeking to expand the lifespan of their IP's and their revenues, are looking for ways to exploit the migratory consumption patterns of today's media users. However, to date, storytellers have been unable to fully exploit the possibilities transmedia provides.

This practice-led PhD was inspired by the necessity to understand transmedia at a stage when a new grammatical language for creators is needed, as well as updated business models. Rather than examining transmedia from an exclusively theoretical standpoint, this work uses *The Tower of Fables*, a project created to re-launch fairytales to the hyperlinked kids of today, as a case study. Using research and subsequent assessments, this work aims to shed light on the current situation in Europe, examining the forces at play that influence the way practitioners conceive and design a fictional world meant to unfold across distinct media. Media production is always subject to external pressures, influences and constraints.

This practice-led PhD offers a breakdown of the actual development phase of my native transmedia project. Every choice is backed up by a series of theories in the hope that these practical guideposts can be used by others. The finished work was then taken to the market with the intention of investigating the aesthetic and industrial implications on the creative and financing process, and ultimately to evaluate how they affect the final product.

From this it was concluded that media convergence does not necessarily lead to industry convergence. This thesis formulates a case for the urgent need of the creation of formats to facilitate dialogue between creators and investors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While reading a book on medieval art, I came across a very interesting story. In 1194, the Cathedral of Chartres was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. Christendom trembled. Was this some dark omen? Pope Honorius II rallied the faithful and urged them to action. Thousands heeded his call. Master builders, artists, labourers, clowns, noblemen, and simple folk from every corner of Europe, descended on Chartres with one aim – to rebuild the house of God. They toiled for years and years in harsh conditions. Many died in the process. But in 1250, the Cathedral welcomed its first worshippers. Its beauty and splendour is a testament to those anonymous people who worked selflessly to see it completed.

I see many parallels between this story and my present endeavours. Many people have aided me in this journey. I can never take full credit for this work. A kind word, a smile, a pat on the back; all of these gestures were invaluable. A big thank you goes to all those anonymous people.

Particular gratitude goes to Dr James Lyons, who appeared at the right time, a precious mentor and guide. He supported and encouraged my wild explorations, but also helped me to articulate my findings in an academic manner. This was a most challenging task, but also an extremely fruitful one.

I would also like to thank all the other practitioners who have shared their work and their stories with me over the last few years. Michel Reilhac, Nuno Bernardo, Jeff Gomez, Juliana Loh, Alison Norrington, and Adam Siegel are just a few of these champions. You have enriched me, personally and professionally. I also want to thank Dean O'Toole for some really neat conversations and inspiration.

I extend my gratitude to all the people I met at various events, conferences, and workshops. Your curiosity, confusion, diffidence and excitement helped me understand how this phenomenon is perceived by others. These interactions sharpened my ideas and shaped my work.

Finally, a special thank you goes to all my family who had to understand my constant absence. I have missed so many occasions. I was a hermit. I am sorry. I simply pray that the end result will make all of those who have contributed proud.

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INTRODUCTION

Transmedia production has no set of standard best practices. Despite the plethora of pioneering handbooks ¹ and countless workshops that have mushroomed on both sides of the Atlantic,² transmedia storytelling still lacks its own proper grammar. Even the term itself is open to misinterpretation. Media theorist Henry Jenkins laments that this situation of uncertainty persists because so far we have witnessed “too few fully transmedia stories for media makers to act with certainty about what would constitute the best uses of this new mode of storytelling” (*Convergence Culture* 97).

As a transmedia producer operating in Europe, I have repeatedly noted that practitioners, financiers and policy makers are all speaking different languages when it comes to transmedia. This deficiency hinders development, and minimizes the potential at our disposal. As a result, I feel the urgency for the development of a shared language akin to the language of cinema, as well as a set of standard best practices. In their influential text *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960*, film scholars David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson clearly identified standardization as a major component for the growth of film as an art form and as a business (497). The repetition of formats and effective practices created standards of excellence. Transmedia is in dire need of such systems.

Media scholar Geoffrey Long insists that only the continuous analysis of individual projects can really help the industry grow as a recognizable, respectable art form (*How to Ride a Lion* 3). This PhD was undertaken with the spirit of augmenting that very conversation. It is for this reason, that *The Tower of Fables*, a children’s project based on fairytales, was created.

Undeniably, as media scholar David P. Marshall rightly notes, every new form of expression is influenced by technological, cultural and economic forces (1). Hence, this case study not only investigates the process, context and potential of transmedia storytelling, but also documents the practical and commercial realities. Media production is not devoid of external pressures, influences and constraints. I argue that culture, society and commerce need to be added to the study of the text. All these factors have always directly impacted content creation.

During these last years, I was in a very privileged position as my peers granted me access to their work and experiments. These countless exchanges with other narrative designers, filmmakers and storytellers have provided me with a deeper insight into the problems faced by transmedia practitioners today. I was also in constant contact with decision makers and other executives. Naturally, this methodology of collecting interviews with practitioners to augment research is nothing new. Researchers Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren point out that between the 1920s to the 1950s, a handful of scholars started looking at Hollywood from the “bottom up.” Dialogues with active industry players and participants were commonly employed to understand the processes and tensions involved in making meaning (5). Such work provided a rich, detailed analysis of the industry.

This written analysis begins by charting the development process in detail. In transmedia, it has been rather neglected by academia, mainly because it is invisible. This stage provides producers with a blueprint to facilitate the construction of each component. Unlike novels, plays and screenplays, which are studied in many courses, the transmedia development “bible”, as it is referred to in the industry, is rarely examined in itself. The creativity involved in building such a document is rarely acknowledged since it is mostly considered part of an industrial process, and thus branded as craft. It is also during this

crucial phase that a producer must identify potential challenges, and be flexible enough to make changes where necessary.

While *The Tower of Fables* is central to any argument I make, this dissertation will not only explore the limitations and possibilities of my project, but will consequently shed light on the current market situation. Although I do dwell briefly on what is happening in the US and Canada, my main area of focus is always Europe. This choice was mainly determined by the fact that I operate within this continent, and have a personal interest in understanding the current structures.

Luckily, my work generated a lot of interest. I was invited to give talks about this particular project by the Media Desks in Malta, Poland, Lithuania and Croatia, as well as numerous conferences: the Torino Film Lab in Torino, Hyper City in Stockholm, Storyworld Conference in San Francisco, Cross-Media Forum in London, and Cartoon 360 in Munich. This practice-led PhD has also allowed me to experiment in a safe environment, protected and encouraged by my tutors. Their support was vital for me to retain an objective perspective during the analyses of my work. Today, I can say I am a stronger writer/producer for having undertaken this process.

CHAPTER 1: BUILDING THE CASE STUDY

- 1.1. MY BEGINNING**
- 1.2. THE PRESENT RESEARCH**
- 1.3. WELCOME TO BABEL**
- 1.4. THESIS STRUCTURE**
- 1.5. THE TRANSMEDIA PRODUCER**
- 1.6. CONCLUSION**

1.1. MY BEGINNING

“Technology is creating new opportunities to engage with narratives—but it’s not just about accessing more content in more places; it’s about the opportunity to bring stories out of the screen and into our lives,” says Neela Sakaria, EVP of Latitude (qtd. in Gaskins). Many scholars and practitioners agree. They argue that storytelling is in a period of great flux where a new form of narrative is being created. Producers are now able to expand their canvas, and share more of their vision with their most dedicated fans. Henry Jenkins, Frank Rose and Jonathan Gottschall are ardent advocates of these new intoxicating possibilities on offer. Academic and narrative designer Christy Dena rightly claims that transmedia “provides a unique window to the world” (*How the Internet is Holding the Centre of Conjured Universes* 2).

Unfortunately, a gaping divide lies between theory and reality. A large number of industry players view transmedia as nothing more than a highly profitable 21st century promotion and marketing tool, rather than a ground-breaking new aesthetic (Örnebring 457). In many cases, transmedia has been reduced to a mere business plan. Marketing teams expand their text as far as possible, encouraging audiences to consume the same IP from different outlets. Director of Worldwide Publishing at 20th Century Fox Debbie Olsham clearly states: “It’s such a competitive market, the more you reach out through as many channels as possible to get your property noticed, the better” (qtd. in Maas 23). Although the economic logic is obviously quite compelling, I argue that such mediocre extensions risk stifling cultural innovation. *The Hunger Games*, one of the most successful film franchises of 2012, is a case in point. When the first film was released, a series of poor tie-ins followed that did nothing to enhance the story, the characters or the world. Instead, the transmedia components morphed into silly puzzles, games, blog competitions, toys, nail polish, and other kinds of superfluous merchandise. One could easily equate such thoughtless entertainment

with fast food. Stealing a term from American sociologist George Ritzer; it seems that many extensions are going through the process of “McDonaldization” (1). Internet researcher Alex Leavitt notes that, as of yet:

There have been no creators of transmedia works that have been able to successfully construct a unified project that harnesses the power of each medium (whether through the producer’s skills or collaboration with other creative people) to its largest potential.

At present, transmedia seems to be little more than a millennial sideshow distraction. This unfortunate situation has prompted some scholars, like Espen Aarseth, to dismiss it as nothing more than a branding ploy. However, I couldn’t disagree more with such an unforgiving analysis. Like Jenkins, I believe transmedia storytelling should be approached from a creative perspective, not just from an economic one (*Convergence Culture* 254).

Adalbert Konzal rightly argues that this sorry state of affairs persists also because today’s producers lack the necessary knowledge and skills to maximize the potential of their stories (11). Understanding how so many different disciplines can be precisely combined and coordinated, so as to offer an exciting experience, is not easy. Jenkins, Ravi Purushotma, Margaret Weigel, Kate Clinton, and Alice J. Robinson state:

Each medium has its own affordances, its own systems of representation, its own strategies for producing and organizing knowledge. Producers need to learn to navigate these different and sometimes conflicting modes of representation and to make meaningful choices about the best ways to express their ideas in each context. (87-88)

Undoubtedly, producers are facing a series of new challenges: creative, organizational, and financial (Konzal 3). Bestselling authors Alexander Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur clearly show that innovation is essential when new technology is introduced (5).

Film maker Lance Weiler, during his speech “Storyworlds – The Art and Craft of Storytelling in the 21st century” at The Pixel Lab 2011, suggested that experimentation is the answer to the present quagmire. Weiler equated transmedia’s current stage with that of film during the silent era, when new creative approaches for moving pictures were constantly being tested. In fact, pioneer Sergei Eisenstein’s experiments with montage proved to be essential for the creation of what is now accepted as film grammar. Transmedia needs a similar course of action.

But experimentation can be costly for a company. It was in 2009, while working in LA as Head of Development for FishCorb Films, that I became acquainted with the notion of transmedia. The discovery of this emerging ecosystem of texts and paratexts, and their organization was fascinating. Extensive reading of books and specialised blogs, as well as trips to attend various seminars followed.¹ However, I was never allowed to stray from what was known. My bosses insisted that transmedia should be used only to cross-promote the main text, thus equating it with licensing. Most extensions produced were of a poor quality, haphazardly assembled with very meagre budgets. I was eager to learn how to tell old stories in new ways, but experimentation in the real world is tough. Money and reputation are always on the line. It was then that I decided to shelve my career in Hollywood, return to Europe and experiment with the form. Therefore, the next logical step for me was to enrol for a PhD.

1.2. THE PRESENT RESEARCH

Many aspects of this emerging form have already been analysed by countless scholars, investigated from numerous angles. Marshall focused on culture. Holt and Perren tackled the industry. Author Tyler Weaver examined the relationship between comics and transmedia. Game designer and writer Chris Crawford dealt with interactivity. Media academic M. J.

Clarke explored the television angle. Jenkins, together with scholars Sam Ford and Joshua Green, analysed distribution. Professor of Law Lawrence Lessig talked about legal issues. Film theorist Kirstin Thompson probed Hollywood. All these works have proven instrumental, both for my personal growth, and my work. However, I always felt that interpretative theories leave us merely scratching the surface when it comes to transmedia. They alone are insufficient to fully understand this phenomenon. Numerous media researchers have said that insider information is as valid as semiotic analysis (John Caldwell 201; Todd Gitlin xii; Horace Newcomb 266-70), and I firmly agree. On this point, I always cite a particular story that Sidney Lumet recounts in his book *Making Movies*, about a conversation he had with Akira Kurosawa. Lumet was curious about a shot in *Ran*, and wanted to know why the director chose to frame it in the particular way he did. Kurosawa simply answered that if he'd panned the camera to the left, the Sony factory would have been in shot, and if he panned the camera an inch to the right, the airport would have been in view. "Only the person who's made a movie knows what goes into the decisions that result in any piece of work. They can be anything from budget requirements to divine inspiration," concluded Lumet (ix).

The next step in my research was to study other transmedia projects. I looked for narratives that offered the audience a fictional experience of great length, depth and breadth. Unfortunately, I soon realised that there is a huge lack of case studies and analyses that explore the most effective models to adopt. It is for this reason that I opted for practice-based research.

During the last three years, I developed a transmedia project for children and took it to the market with the hope of going into production. Each stage was meticulously traced and analysed. This critical text not only tackles the form and the decision-making process, but

also offers propositions. I believe that documenting such experimentation can lead to the expansion of any enterprise, and possibly also inspire the creation of wholly new enterprises.

As a part time lecturer at the University of Malta in Screenwriting, I have always strived to contextualize theory into a market framework. This gives students a better understanding of the powers at play. Experience showed me that such a sensibility can only refine one's vision. Taking *The Tower of Fables* to the market, testing the aesthetics created against the rules of commerce, was essential. Philip M. Napoli, in "Regulation and the Law: A Critical Cultural Citizenship Approach", also argues that:

Understanding the economic dynamics underlying the production, distribution and exhibition of media content, as well as the dynamics underlying the buying, producing and selling of media audiences, can lead to more well rounded research on media industries. (161)

To make my case study more realistic, I needed to live the life of a European transmedia producer. That was when I opened a new company called Immortal Transmedia.² Like other producers in Europe, I built a slate of projects which were then developed concurrently. During this time, I managed to produce a full length feature film called *We are Monster* which was shot at Twickenham Studios (see fig. 1). The film has now been selected for the Edinburgh Film Festival and is nominated for the Michael Powell Award.³

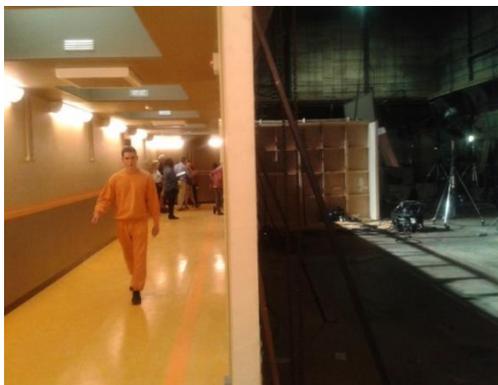


Fig. 1. Magro, Jean Pierre. *We Are Monster*, 2013. JPEG.

Among others, I co-produced a short film called *Clouds* with Shadeena Pictures, a documentary called *Ultratrail* with ex-head of ARTE Cinema Michel Reilhac and Arte, as well as a comic and iPad game with and Emmy nominee Nuno Bernardo, based on Paul Finch's award-winning book *Cape Wrath*.

This real life approach provided me with a first-hand understanding of the many challenges European producers face while creating a native transmedia project. This process also brought forth numerous questions: What are the economic constraints and incentives under which European producers operate? How does this affect the decisions they must take?

The study of transmedia within a commercial framework is, to date, significantly under-researched. That said; in no way do I even consider this work to be a definitive opera. It is but one small piece in a massive puzzle. The ultimate hope is that the document will not only be useful to researchers, but also to other producers.

1.3. WELCOME TO BABEL

Terminology has always been slippery, but the term “transmedia” has stirred up quite a debate. In an interview with journalist Stephanie Klose, leading transmedia designer Jay Bushman shared an inside joke from the transmedia community; “If you put two transmedia creators in a room, pretty soon you’ll have three definitions of transmedia.” Many argue that the word transmedia is too vague, and should be replaced with “cross media”. I, however, find the two terms to be almost synonymous. As academic and producer Drew Davidson notes, both refer to interrelated and integrated media experiences (*Cross Media Communications* 6). A number of other academics have also used the terms interchangeably (Marie-Laurie Ryan; Marsha Kinder; Sara Gwenllian-Jones and Roberta Pearson). In the professional world, this happens regularly as both expressions have already begun to crossbreed, becoming even more indistinguishable. I personally prefer the term transmedia

because I feel that it conveys more. Cross media gives the impression that the actual work is all about the rabbit holes and migratory cues that aid the user with the transition from one medium to the next, while transmedia implies that one must go beyond media, thus placing more emphasis on the actual story.

During my research, I also frequently encountered a number of similar terms: environment (Dena, *Transmedia Practice*), landscape (Jenkins et al.), worlds (Wolf), platforms (Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*), and migratory cues (Ruppel). All these words are suggestive of a physical space. In fact, transmedia is frequently equalled to worldbuilding (Long, *Transmedia Storytelling* 45). Jenkins adds that the creation of a robust storyworld has become the new creative paradigm by which transmedia producers work (*Convergence Culture* 116-17).

Unfortunately, to date, the transmedia label has been applied indiscriminately to anything that is even remotely interactive, participatory, pervasive or multi-platform. Confusion is bound to arise, in part, due to this field's infancy, both as a subject of enquiry, and as a practice. As Marshall rightly points out; "with every change in the way we communicate in our culture there is a new struggle over meaning, significance, knowledge and power" (1). However, this current state is rather worrisome. Like author and game designer Andrea Phillips, I believe this lack of clarity is a huge problem that impedes the evolution of a common grammar (*A Creator's Guide to Transmedia Storytelling* 13-20). I also add that it complicates relationships with other stakeholders, especially with financiers.

The actual word "transmedia" was coined by Kinder. In 1991, she described cartoon characters that appeared across multiple media as "transmedia intertextuality" (1). Jenkins later appropriated the term and reframed it in "Transmedia 202: Further Reflections":

Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the

purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience.

Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story (see fig. 2).

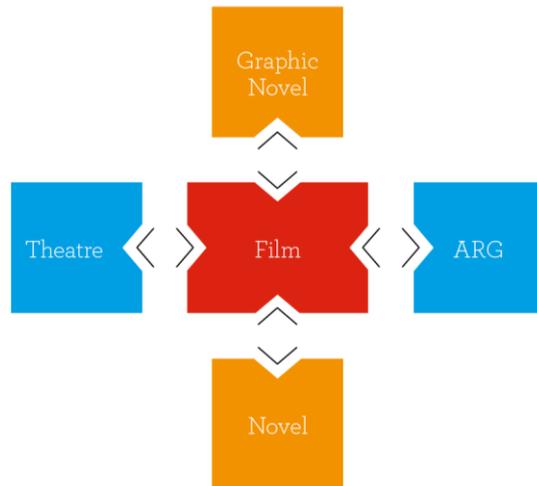


Fig. 2. Diagram illustrating Jenkins' concept of transmedia storytelling in which each medium used in a transmedia project makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story.

Jenkins also adds that each entry needs to be self-contained. Thus, a consumer does not need to watch the film in order to enjoy the game. He also insists that each new text must make a “distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole” (*Convergence Culture* 98). Theoretically, each spinoff could be consumed and enjoyed separately, offering the public more gateways into the narrative franchise.

While acknowledging Jenkins' invaluable academic work to legitimize ancillary work, I have to respectfully conclude that his definition is quite vague, allowing properties constructed purely as business manoeuvres to be labelled as transmedia storytelling. I argue that multiplatform licensing strategies use transmedial methods to expand their story, but are very different from transmedia storytelling. These extensions are primarily motivated by financial gain, as in the case of the majority of video game tie-ins. In his article “Yep, It Plays

like a Movie Tie-in.”, *Los Angeles Times* reporter Pete Metzger describes such iterations as uninventive, rushed and horrible, created only to cater to a built-in audience.

I argue for the differentiation between native and adoptive transmedia. Currently, the dominant business model is the latter. When a property gains popularity, producers try to ride that wave, and boost revenue by flooding the market with tie-ins. Alternatively, native transmedia is built from the ground up with the sole intention of moving across platforms.

Jenkins’ definition uses the word “ideally” when talking about the unique contribution each story segment brings to the whole story. I believe “ideally” should be removed from the definition, making it read as such: “Each medium *needs* to make its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story.” Hence, the release of every extension should add more tension to the entire narrative arc, while building the whole story towards a satisfactory conclusion.

Dena, on the other hand, prefers a more rigid definition of transmedia storytelling. According to her, each component should add a piece to the same puzzle. Dena is not interested in backstories or minor characters. Her concept, which she dubs “transfiction” (*Current State of Cross Media Storytelling* 3), is concerned with one story. For example, her narrative starts as a film, continues as a graphic novel, and ends in a game (see fig. 3).

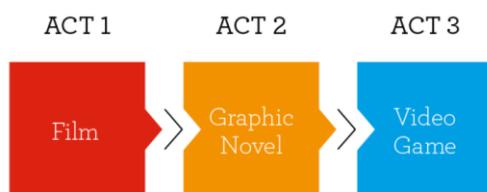


Fig. 3. Diagram illustrating Dena’s concept of “transfiction” sees the same story unfold, using a different medium for each iteration.

What Dena is really trying to do is create a format, an undertaking I fully agree with. A common, accepted structure, a frame for transmedia, will facilitate dialogue and funding.

This would be a certain step in the right direction. However, I would not impose the rigid rule of having only one story. I argue that transmedia storytelling is the story of a world/universe. Having different stories set against that world is equally engaging and satisfactory. I suggest that the sum of each component should make the experience more complete.

What I also find most interesting about Jenkins' take, is his emphasis on value. But how do we generate value? Jenkins sees worth in extensions that serve one or more of the following functions: 1. Offers backstory; 2. Maps the world; 3. Offers other characters' perspectives on the action; 4. Deepens audience engagement (qtd. in Rose, "Why Transmedia is like a Walk in Patagonia").

While I do not contest any of this, I argue that more value can be generated through the organisation and choreographed release of each extension. Serialized storytelling can teach us quite a lot on how to generate value. In *Storytelling across Worlds*, Tom Dowd, Michael Fry, Michael Nierman, and Josef Steiff tell us that:

Serialized storytelling establishes a goal and then individual episode goals allow us to play with the ways the arcs are expressed within the show. Once we know where the season is going we can begin to structure the ebb and flow of a larger story across multiple episodes in order to get us closer and closer to the season goal. (116)

This technique is usually referred to as "chunking" (Jenkins, "Transmedia 202"). I argue that transmedia storytelling needs to be organised in a similar fashion. What I suggest is that producers of native transmedia projects adopt Frank Daniel's sequence method for screenwriters (qtd. in Howard 267-82). These principles, which will be debated at length in the following chapter, will help practitioners construct a more powerful overall experience. I do not believe that we should reinvent the wheel. After all, every other art form in the past took elements from its predecessors.

Naturally, the debate around the term will not cease easily. For me, transmedia is an art form that invites the audience to become an active participant of a world. Each different component has to be unique, not repurposed content, adding meaning, and increasing tension to the whole universe, while also upholding the same canon, style and tonality of the primary text. I also argue that the roll out of each component or extension plays a vital part in the telling of the entire narrative, creating a richer experience. This can be achieved only if properly planned, with each component enhancing the consumer's experience (see fig. 4).

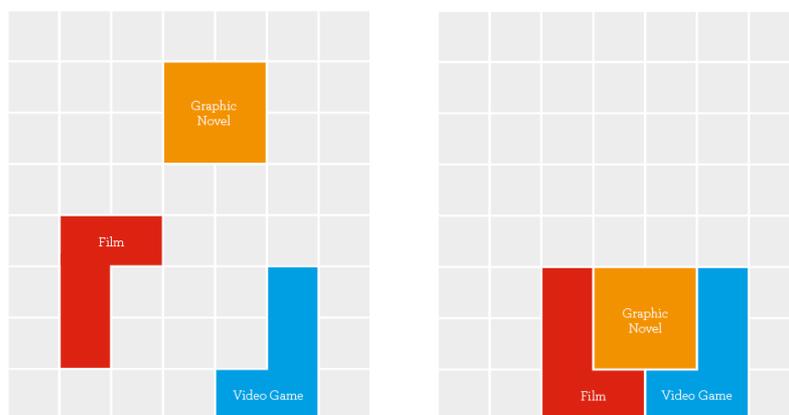


Fig. 4. Diagram illustrating my concept of transmedia storytelling, highlighting the importance of each component, and their release, to create a more unified experience.

1.4. THESIS STRUCTURE

All research needs to exist within a clear framework. As I have said previously, at the core of this thesis is a project that was created and designed to act as a case study. During the development phase, a literature review was outlined, and then augmented periodically. Hence, this work has influenced the actual writing of the transmedia story.

The development of this project started in January 2011 and ended in January 2013. I felt that three years was more than sufficient to develop the text, and build the intended universe on paper. Once the story was completed, it was taken to the market. I attended a

considerable number of trade fairs, collecting first hand data. This was a very interesting part of my study as knowledge of the markets helped polish my ideas further. Napoli argues that, “an understanding of the economics of media is vital to a thorough understanding of the factors shaping the evolution, behaviour, content output and ultimately, the impact of media industries” (“Regulation and the Law” 161). I fully concur with his analysis. In Europe, there is the tendency of viewing the media industry as a cultural and political entity, however the economic aspect cannot be denied. In the past, this division was compounded by the fact that economic and cultural systems were usually addressed by different academic disciplines. However, in this age of convergence, I argue that scholars must converge intellectually.

I was interested in testing out theories, observing how they play out in the real world. Hence, I tried to follow paths forged by those who came before, but also to experiment with new ones, exploring all the choices available. To add to this, I carried out a series of in-depth interviews, either in person, via Skype, or email, questioning a number of fellow practitioners, many of whom I have since befriended and collaborated with.

The thesis is divided into four chapters, each one constructed to augment the debate, but also offer practical solutions. This first chapter introduces transmedia, outlining briefly the various definitions and theories at play. It poses a number of questions that serve as the foundation to this work. The second chapter deals with the development of *The Tower of Fables*, mainly discussing worldbuilding, and providing an in-depth review of the decision making process I undertook to build the actual world. Chapter three is based on my fieldwork, focusing on various financing structures, and the industry composition within Europe. It clearly outlines the tensions that arise between old and new systems, exploring how one can engage with both, and determine if it is possible to subvert or manipulate them. The final chapter consists of a summary of all the problems encountered, and offers new

insights into the creation of transmedia projects within a European framework. It ends with a discussion of the implications for future research.

In certain parts of this work, the reader will find instructions to refer to the Creative document that accompanies this Critical commentary. Also, visual documentation of work pertaining to my personal development and to the development of *The Tower of Fables* is to be found on the accompanying USB memory stick. It is advisable that this material is viewed in the order indicated.

1.5. THE TRANSMEDIA PRODUCER

I feel it is of vital importance to identify the protagonist of this adventure. Film producers are the closest thing we have to transmedia producers. Having served in this position on a number of occasions, I always felt that the job description combines art with craft, commerce with technology, and leadership with collaboration. I saw myself as part matchmaker, part marketer, part artist and part businessman. Above all, a producer needs to be a lifelong learner, persistently researching, seeking new opportunities, asking questions and collecting feedback from both employees and financiers.

Developing, financing, and overseeing the completion of one narrative over one platform is a daunting task in itself. It requires the person within that role to think about the whole, to constantly envision the entire picture. A transmedia producer, however, must deal with multiple storylines on various platforms. This new profession demands an understanding of a significant number of media cultures, all with their own hierarchies, production protocols, politics, and policies. Transmedia producers need to be multilingual when it comes to these media cultures. It is the producer's job to make them work together despite their differences, facilitating collaboration and co-creation. Weaver effectively explains this role by drawing the elegant parallel between the transmedia producer and the orchestra conductor

who must blend in a whole sea of instruments to perfection in order to create the right tonality (54).

In *Producing for TV and New Media*, Catherine Kellison, Dustin Morrow and Kacey Morrow claim that there isn't one producer in transmedia who has yet mastered all the tricks of the trade. This is compounded by the different requirements of each project (2). What is important, however, is that producers never stop listening or asking questions. I fully concur with multi-platform producer Gary Hayes, who in a blog post, entitled "What Makes the Perfect Transmedia Producer?", says that anyone "willing to put themselves in the spotlight and experiment, try something new and original across multi platforms, take risks, keep away from trending formulaic previous experiments, should, in my mind, be awarded the job."

1.6. CONCLUSION

In his book *Media Work*, media scholar Mark Deuze points to the collapsing boundaries between work and leisure (30). *The Tower of Fables* has consumed my life for the last three years, and will hopefully continue doing so for many more to come. Transmedia properties require long-term planning, both on the content creation and media/product rollout side. It is the intention of this work to search for conventions in an ever more complex environment. Sociologist Howard Becker defines conventions "as the shared decisions and techniques buried implicitly and explicitly in a field of expression that make the collective construction and maintenance of an art world possible" (qtd. in Clarke 39).

This text refuses to segregate the spheres of aesthetics and economics. Above all, this study is about these complicated interactions in the production of a native transmedia narrative. Fundamentally, I am interested in examining the practicality of transmedia properties. I want to discover whether the industrial and organizational structure of media production in Europe supports or impedes the integration of commercial transmedia projects.

CHAPTER 2: DEVELOPING CONTENT

- 2.1. ADOPTIVE TRANSMEDIA VS. NATIVE TRANSMEDIA**
- 2.2. ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A TOWER**
- 2.3. WHERE ARE THE KIDS?**
- 2.4. WE'RE PROBABLY GOING TO NEED MORE THAN SIX DAYS**
 - 2.4.1. The Map**
 - 2.4.2. The Timeline**
 - 2.4.3. The Genealogy**
- 2.5. DESIGNING THE CONTENT AND THE BRAND**

- 2.1. ADOPTIVE TRANSMEDIA VS. NATIVE TRANSMEDIA**

Many of the properties we currently define as transmedia stories include iterations that were conceived sequentially, not simultaneously (Dowd et al. 6). Adoptive transmedia narratives use what I define as “retroactive” development and planning. Ridley Scott’s *Alien* is a perfect example of a project that started off as a standalone feature, then burgeoned into a franchise, branching out into graphic novels, games and a number of other sequels (Hughes 95).

Since my goal was to create a native transmedia story, I developed the world of *The Tower of Fables*, and its narratives, concurrently. Even though such an approach can be more costly, both in terms of time and money, particularly in the early stages, I argue that it is more effective in the long term. Firstly, it protects the story from future meddling and avoids inconsistencies that would disrupt the audience’s experience. For example, industry leading game developer Bioware had major issues with cross-property continuity in *Mass Effect: Deception* by William C. Dietz. The novel was riddled with significant errors in continuity, infuriating fans. Secondly, a producer will not waste time going back into development if his narrative hits the jackpot. During his speech “Transmedia Can Empower Producers” at The Pixel Lab 2011, Bernardo cited the case of *Angry Birds*. The game rapidly became a tremendous success, but Zynga, the company behind it, could not capitalize fast enough on the property because no story development was ready. As a result, merchandizing was the only revenue stream available.

The development of a native transmedia story requires a great deal of upfront thinking, economic planning and decision-making. Every development period acts as an incubator where ideas are researched, tested and nurtured. Each new addition must capture the imagination of audiences and coax them into moving on to the next platform. This stage usually concludes with a “bible”.

More often than not, transmedia storytelling involves various teams of writers developing different stories for different strands of media. The bible acts as a project

blueprint; providing important guidelines about the entire property, focusing on key story points and design, while also highlighting the rules of engagement, and establishing the project's style and tone. Ranging from ten to a hundred pages, it helps each development team maintain consistency across all platforms.

President of Pixar animation Ed Catmull argues that unique ideas, characters and story twists are generally found through a lengthy process of discovery. Their definition of the word discovery is: "You don't know the answers when you start" (151). For me, building the bible served this exact purpose. However, like Dowd et al., I see it as a living document that must be regularly updated and improved (266).

Both Bernardo (*The Producer's Guide to Transmedia* 21-31) and Hayes ("How to Write a Transmedia Production Bible") have created formulaic templates for producers to follow, however, I found both proposals to be very time consuming, requiring too much information in the initial stages. In no way am I implying that being thorough is a flaw, but, realistically, both templates seem more applicable to large teams with decent sized budgets.

In Europe, the creative industries are generally viewed as art. As media researcher John Hartley argues, "[this] generates a negative model" (235) that, in turn, creates a sort of welfare model. European film-makers have been accustomed to this system of accessing generous state aid to develop their projects. Unfortunately, transmedia producers do not have the same luxury. Development funds for transmedia in Europe are way too few (Bernardo, *Producer's Guide to Transmedia* 35-43), meaning producers are forced to cut corners. This was a constant complaint in most of my interactions with other practitioners. Therefore, it is more likely that individuals would be constructing the universe on their own, as was the case on my project. For this reason, I created my own personal template that is extremely easy to follow. It starts by building the world using three simple steps: 1. Drawing up a map; 2. Outlining the genealogy; 3. Establishing a timeline. This work aids the writer to have a

clearer picture of the whole universe, including its characters and major storylines. I prefer to have a bible that is story-centric. I have discussed this three step approach with my peers in various conferences that I was invited to. **Please refer to Section M of the Creative document for a detailed list of markets and conferences attended during these last three years. Many producers and writers have written back to inform me that they found this method easy to use and more efficient. However more data needs to be collected to verify if this approach is really that successful.**

My goal for this chapter is to separate fact from fiction; describe in detail the development process I undertook, and explain how and why certain decisions were taken. Such an endeavour aims to showcase the importance of this thought process.

This chapter is divided into four parts: the story, the audience, worldbuilding and the brand. Evidence is presented together with explanations as to why these areas were important research topics for the development phase of my project. Due to the limitation of the word count, I will only synthesize a select number of theories that shaped my creative decisions. Embedded within this same text is my critical analysis. As already explained, at certain specific points the reader will be invited to read material found in the accompanying Creative document or to view visual material from the USB memory stick.

2.2. ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS A TOWER

There is a strong tendency for the media industry to dismiss innovative, original content, choosing instead to opt for proven formulas. Reliance on past successes is the closest thing to a risk-reducing strategy that executives have at their disposal. This modus operandi is understandable considering the high costs of productions, and the unpredictability of consumer response. Sociology Professors William Bielby and Denise Bielby, in their article “All Hits are Flukes”, argue that the practice of using branded material is now almost

institutionalized (1311). Commenting on international markets, Walt Disney Studios' chairman Alan Horn said; "they want four-quadrant movies, and they want stars or characters such as *Harry Potter* that they know. Those are the products that travel well" (qtd. in Elberse 25). Obviously, big money lies behind this strategy of saturating the market with adaptations, re-imaginings, remakes, prequels and sequels.

Unfortunately, transmedia seems to be heading down the exact same path. In an attempt to mitigate risk, broadcasters and studios interested in financing transmedia are mostly looking for brand-named material. Such expensive collaborative art forms become safer bets with a property that already has an audience (Hutcheon 5). Screenwriter Christy Marx agrees, and clearly spells out the importance for small independent companies to control branded properties in order to be relevant in the industry (xvii). However, this can prove to be a thorny issue for independent producers. Optioning material can be costly. Renewing options every 12 to 18 months is even more so. Bearing these costs in mind, I sought out branded material that was copyright free but with the potential to cross borders.

By either fate or chance, my initial search led me straight to fairytales. I immediately noted how these old tales changed, adapting themselves across cultures and generations. The narratives were like shape-shifters; mysterious, mutable and capable of wearing many different forms. Fairytale characters' popularity, in both Europe and the US, was also a massive benefit. Little Red Riding Hood, for example, is as famous in England as she is in America or Malta. These characters have become icons, much like Brad Pitt, Johnny Depp or Marilyn Monroe, many times outpacing their real world rivals for significance.

All this got me thinking. What if I could re-launch fairytales to the hyperlinked kids of today? Knowing that I wanted to fuse the old familiar with a new quality, I started by exploring the works of scholar Jack Zipes¹ and child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim. As Dowd et al. advise; "unless you are venturing into completely unknown market territory, look

at what's come before you" (11). After all, clarity of form cannot be achieved before there is clarity in the designer's mind and actions.

Both Zipes (*Happily Ever After* 1-22) and Bettelheim (3-28) pointed out how the fairytale provides a means through which children can distance themselves psychologically from their present lives, and be transported to a utopic world full of magic and hope.

However, fairytales are more than just escapist literature. They also help individuals further their critical consciousness (*Breaking the Magic Spell* 210). Zipes adds that:

The fairy tale becomes a broad arena for presenting and representing our wishes and desires. It frequently takes the form of a mammoth discourse in which we carry on struggles over family, sexuality, gender roles, rituals, values and sociopolitical power. (*Happily Ever After* 9)

I also studied the intersections between oral, literal, audio and digital forms of fairytales. Giovanni Francesco Straparola, Giambattista Basile, Charles Perrault, the Grimm Brothers, and Hans Christian Andersen were valuable mentors, exhibiting great skill in the way they transformed stories to suit their different audiences. The works of the great Walt Disney were also reviewed thoroughly. It was highly interesting to read how Disney developed comic books to help keep the worlds of his animation properties alive. He also created Disneyland for the exact same reason. Disney argued that investing in such an expensive venture would help maintain the public's interest in his films (Schell 304).

I wanted to build a universe where popular fairytale characters from different stories lived together, experiencing the contemporary troubles familiar to today's children. The idea intrigued me. At its core, it was also in line with Jenkins' notion that children are compulsively intertextual, constantly mixing and matching their favourite shows during play (*The Wow Climax* 183). I myself was prone to the same. During my childhood years, He-Man and the ThunderCats battled it out countless times on my bedroom floor. Being a comic book

geek my whole life, I also remembered reading that way back in 1940, Martin Goodman, publisher of Timely Comics, had overseen the first crossover of two different fictional universes. In *Marvel Mystery Comic #7*, the world of the Human Torch and that of Prince Namor were combined into one story (Howe 21). This was the beginning of what became known as the Marvel Universe. Rivals DC created their own expansive canvas only in 1961 under the tutelage of Julius Schwartz. These crossovers turned out to be lucrative affairs (Morrison 111-14). In 2012, Joss Whedon's movie *The Avengers* revamped the model for the movie industry, raking in a staggering \$1.5 billion in ticket sales alone (Elberse 55). DC and Warner Bros. have followed suit with the recent announcement of *Batman versus Superman*. The increasing popularity of such initiatives was quite encouraging for my vision of bringing together various mythical creatures into one universe. Weaver rightly clarifies:

Crossovers, team-ups, multiverses; they were all cool ways to tell a great story. They did not come from deep thought and pontificated upon ideas based around technological fashions of the time. They came out of the constants in storytelling: story, character and the desire to be entertained. (257)

It was then that I started putting pen to paper. Thus, the idea of *The Tower of Fables* came to be. The premise was extremely simple:

Once upon a time, in a land far far away, there was an enchanted kingdom called Storyville... It was told that its magical inhabitants were the happiest creatures on the planet. Guarding them all was the legendary TOWER OF FABLES... Kept safe within its walls were the greatest fairytales known to man... Every happy ending secured forever... Or so it was thought! One cruel day, UTREK, the MOST EVIL OF DARK WIZARDS, unleashed his powers and took over the Tower...Utrek changed the happy ending of every fairytale,

making all the bad guys win... Who will rise to rectify this abomination? Who will right this wrong? The fate of Storyville lies in your own hands...

I registered the initial idea with the WGA, but before committing to the story I emailed it to my manager in the US, and to a number of colleagues. The feedback was astounding. Even at that very early stage of development, I received a number of offers which I politely turned down. The story was still fuzzy and lots of work needed to be done. Accepting then would have been an error. I wanted to find new ways to reach out to children, to stimulate their thinking, and provide deep entertainment.

To further develop my thoughts, I applied to the Power to the Pixel Lab in Potsdam, and was accepted. There, I was lucky to be mentored by Michel Reilhac, Lance Weiler and Nuno Bernardo. It immediately became obvious that I needed to start with an origin story. This was to serve as a basis for the entire narrative. Whether it was to be developed further, or adapted for any other platform, remained to be seen.

Please refer to Section A in the Creative document for the story. There, the reader will see how all the ideas discussed in this segment have shaped the narrative.

In the following months, I was invited to showcase my ideas at the Torino Film Lab and the Storyworld Conference in San Francisco. To better describe my story, I prepared a small animated video. At that stage, my focus was more on showcasing the core elements of the story, rather than the actual design. A copy of the video can be found on the accompanying USB memory stick under the heading “Initial Pitch”. These trips were extremely beneficial, helping not only to hone my goals, but also to push development further.

2.3. WHERE ARE THE KIDS?

At all the conferences I attended, experts seemed to agree that in this age of technological convergence and textual divergence, where content is extremely fluid, thus harder to control and capitalize upon, knowledge about the audience is vital. Dowd et al. add that “nailing down who your audience is and how big an audience you are going for will tell you a lot about how you’re going to tell your stories” (11). Geoffrey Long also points out that there is always the possibility that audiences may not engage with all platforms due to “resistance to tracking down unfamiliar content types” (*Transmedia Storytelling* 147). Time, personal preferences and monetary constraints should also be considered. Miller also reiterates that by researching the audience, “we can glean useful clues about what works in terms of subject matter, tone, humor, characters and style” (131).

Who is the audience of *The Tower of Fables*? The content I was designing was clearly aimed at children. The children’s market is known to be notoriously volatile. For every success, there are hundreds of failures. Education Professors David Buckingham and Julian Sefton-Green argue that fragmentation in terms of age and gender are important issues that every producer must deal with:

As they get older, children repeatedly (and often fiercely) reject their former enthusiasms: differences of as little as a couple of years carry enormous significance. Meanwhile, the large majority of boys are extremely resistant to anything “girly”; and while girls may be more likely share in boys’ pleasures, they have markedly less enthusiasm for traditionally “boyish occupations”.
(15)

After lengthy talks with book publishers and broadcasters I decided to target children from the age of seven to eleven. During one of our meetings, Eric Huang, Director of Penguin’s New Business and Acquisitions unit, presented me with data collected by the publisher which showed that children from six onwards are better able to focus on activities

for longer periods of time. The data also showed that they have a stronger capacity to remember and imagine. This information was supported by Rima Shore's research in *The Power of POW! WHAM! Children, Digital Media & Our Nation's Future* (13). In 2012, broadcasters I engaged with at the Cartoon Forum in Lyon were of the same notion. This was a very important factor to consider in the case of *The Tower of Fables* because the story being created was inspired by fairytales, and it was essential that the audience be aware of the source material.

Once the target audience was identified, my focus shifted upon the habits, culture, aspirations and values of this age group. What are they doing while watching television? Do they multitask? How have these new technologies impacted the way they interact with the world? What special considerations must I be aware of when designing my narrative? How much of a role do parents play in determining what they watch?

Between 2010 and 2012, I attended the CineKid Conference,² the Children's Media Conference,³ the Storyworld Conference,⁴ and Cartoon Forum⁵ in the bid to augment my research. The consensus among the professionals I met was that young consumers quickly embrace new technologies because they do not know any different. Children in developed nations often have a recorded video presence before they are even born. In *The Economist* article "Child's Play", it is rightly pointed out that "Most children experience a character in digital form long before physical play." Their world is defined by simultaneous digital content consumption. Researcher Magda De Lange rightly claims that "Children's environments are no longer restricted to only the outdoor and the indoor home, school and the local, but now include the virtual and significantly more of the global." The success of *Club Penguin*⁶ is a clear example of children's experimentation with social networking. Gideon Spanier noted that Disney UK's official Facebook page for *Toy Story 3* had half a million followers. Shore believes this is possible because between the ages of six and eleven

kids experience life beyond the confines of the family home. It is also during this stretch that they start to deal with literacy and numeracy, as well as further develop their social integration, critical thinking and problem solving skills (8).

During these conferences, it also became apparent that live events are being considered ever more important for this iPad generation. In his speech “The End of the Beginning” at The Pixel Lab 2011, as well as during my one-on-one meeting with him, Reilhac insisted that live events offer a unique opportunity for consumers to engage emotionally with a fictional world, and that they needed to be seriously considered. While he might have failed to disclose his metrics of judgement, making it difficult to compare such different experiences together, evidence couldn’t be denied. Euro Disney had seen a seven percent increase in revenue over the third quarter of that year (Spanier).

At this point, I realised I needed more specific data on digital media’s role in shaping what and how children think. However, I found that very little actually exists, thus implying that no one anticipated the extent of children’s involvement in the online world. Kurt Squire, a professor at the University of Wisconsin, sums it up perfectly when he points to SimCity, and notes that despite there being a whole generation of young people who have grown up with edutainment, very little is known “about what they are learning playing these games (if anything).” Like Jenkins, I believe children are perceived as victims, rather than eloquent users of media (*The Wow Climax* 160-62). In fact, most studies available focus on that fine line between intense engagement and overstimulation. Since the publication of Fredric Wertham’s *The Seduction of the Innocent* in 1954 and his crusade against comics, popular culture has often been accused of stirring up too many emotions, leaving children in a state of frenzied excitement, but such debates were not of much interest to me.

Most surprising of all was the small number of studies conducted from the children’s perspective. Professor of Education Joseph Tobin argues that both Neo-Marxist scholars and

those of the American School of cultural studies, when writing about children and popular culture, tend to carry out their work without directly studying the children themselves. Hence, it can be said that a priori theoretical stances are preferred to empirical data (8). Lecturers Anna Sparrman and Anne-Li Lindgren claim that:

Applying a child perspective means not just observing children and displaying visual artefacts concerning them on notice boards, but also talking with children about how they perceive visual documentation, i.e., applying both a child perspective in analysing what is said about children and children's perspectives capturing children's own meaning making. (260)

This lack of data prompted me to question my nephews about their favourite shows. Nine-year-old Gabriel and seven-year-old Daniel were crazy about *Ben 10*. The protagonist, a ten-year-old boy armed with an alien watch-like device that allows him to transform into different creatures, fights against the evil Vilgax and his minions.

At first glance, the show seemed like a marketing ploy. However, Gabriel and Daniel both insisted that the story was, and I quote, "*super cool and funny.*" Like Ben, they wanted to save the world and fight evil. When watching a few episodes with them, it was impressive how engaged and animated they became throughout the show, cheering on their favourite aliens and booing the bad guys.

Jenkins describes children's shows as sensation-centred programming. In fact, his research puts forth the idea that children desire intense spectacles and heightened sensations (*The Wow Climax* 162-64). However, this does not mean kids are not interested in great stories and strong characters. In reality, experts on both sides of the Atlantic agree that children are sophisticated viewers. Ellen Meier, of Columbia University's Teachers College, argues that besides the striking visuals, children seek powerful narratives (qtd. in Shore 40). Davidson suggests that we are not only *Homo Ludens* but also *Homo Narrans*. "We learn to

play about our world, but we tell stories to contextualize, relate and remember what we have learned” (*Stories in Between* 49). Gabriel frequently turned to me to explain the ramifications of the story we were watching. In fact, the narrative proved to be very intricate, shattering my erroneous belief that children’s stories needed to be sheltered from complexities. Numerous academics argue that this “dumbing down” of stories is wrong. After all, as Eliza Dresang points out, children are exposed to the adult world on a daily basis (72).

Watching the Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon and the Disney Channel with my nephews became a ritual. Every week, for three months, I made it a point to spend time observing them as they watched TV. This experience was extremely revealing. It became evident that for them watching TV was a kind of play. Jenkins too saw similar behaviour in his research (*The Wow Climax* 162-63). Developmental psychologist Jean Piaget rightly remarked that play was serious business for kids, involving constant imitating and assimilating (3). I also noted the way both my nephews held on to their *Onimatrix* alien watches, replicas of the one Ben carries, throughout the entire show. For them, this wasn’t a mere piece of plastic, but something more significant. Gwennlian-Jones and Pearson describe toys as “talismans of fantasy that serve as prompts to the imagination, synecdochally invoking the beloved fictional world” (86). Jenkins adds that toys can “became resources for the children’s own imaginations, tokens which they use to claim a space for themselves within the stories” (“He Man and the Masters of Transmedia”).

There are a number of detractors who accuse content creators of turning cartoons into advertisements for toys, cards and other glitzy merchandize. Academic and critic Henry A. Giroux argues that this “total entertainment” experience promised is nothing more than an extended commercial environment (xvi). While it is true that in the 1980s, toy companies joined forces with media production companies to create content based on their products as a way of bypassing restrictive advertising laws, this does not mean that the stories were of low

aesthetic value. Like Buckingham and Sefton-Green, I argue that it is a huge mistake to underestimate children and their tastes (27). The market weeds out products which are substandard. A clear example of this would be the movie adaptation of the multimillion-dollar video game franchise *Sonic the Hedgehog*. In attempt to capitalize on the game's success, Hollywood churned out an animated film that impressed no one. It was quickly forgotten as a result (Hughes 205).

Jenkins also argues that pop culture demands much more of children than schools do. He considers the Pokémon universe a more challenging system than many fourth-grade textbooks (qtd. in Shore 44). A quick glance at the guide books and websites that support the Pokémon universe reveals a rich, dense narrative that is incomprehensible, and largely impenetrable, to outsiders. Turning to my nephews once more, they quickly demonstrated how impressively multifaceted the Pokémon card game was. Indeed it was much harder to grasp than expected, and involved a lot of memory work. I was also highly impressed with their ability to sustain endless conversations about this universe.

My ritual viewing of children's shows noted the high number of scatological jokes aired. My nephews were in fits every time something outrageous happened. In his book *On Ugliness*, Umberto Eco points out that children love to hear or make jokes about excrement (131). Jenkins adds insight to this observation, saying that:

Children find these gross things appealing because parents find them so unappealing. Their meaning comes through opposition, through allowing youngsters to carve for themselves a cultural space “just for kids” to construct a society that is responsive to their whims and that allows them a momentary release from adult control. (*The Wow Climax* 170)

The appeal of content created “just for kids” is supported by data in Screen Australia's *Child's Play: Issues in Australian Children's Television 2013*. The report clearly

states that children prefer content made specifically for them (1). However, speaking to a number of parents, it quickly became clear that their influence over what children watched was very strong, leading me to the natural conclusion that anything created for children within my selected age group (seven to eleven) still needed the approval of parents.

Obviously, pleasing both parties is far from easy. Award-winning Hollywood screenwriter Carolyn Handler Miller says parents seek content offering high quality entertainment which is educational and supportive of family values. They are also averse to any sort of graphic violence and have an inherent mistrust for the internet (135). During our one-on-one meeting at the Pixel Lab in Potsdam, Bernardo confirmed this. He suggested that if I plan to build an online world, then I should be extremely careful and invest in making sure that it is a secure environment.

When asking my nephews about their favourite apps, iPad games and books, all of the examples they gave were linked to their favourite shows. My nephews were not unique in this respect. Stuart Dredge's look into the most popular apps clearly shows that top picks are all closely linked to well-known brands. A quick search through the Apple charts on my iPad also provides the same results. Dr. Seuss and Disney lead the pack.

At the beginning of this segment, the aim was to know more about the audience, their preferences, and where to find them. While it is quite obvious that thorough research yields better results, most producers must rely on secondary data due to limited funds which usually only cover the writing and polishing of the script.⁷ As much as possible, I tried to use a combination of both. What became extremely clear from the data collected was that for children, no single communications channel is dominant. They leap from one medium to the next with great ease, following their favourite storylines. My nephews were constantly shifting from one medium to another, without pause for thought. Many times, they were making use of more than one screen at the same time. Screen Australia backed the

observation up in *Child's Play: Focus on the Child Audience*, saying that children aged between two and fourteen frequently make use of multiple applications and platforms, often simultaneously (3). No wonder Handler Miller is quite vociferous about producers of children's programs building multitasking components into their ecosystems (130). All this was extremely good news for my project. I was clearly spoilt for choice in choosing the appropriate platforms. However, I refrained making any immediate decisions. I wanted to focus first on building the storyworld.

2.4. WE'RE PROBABLY GOING TO NEED MORE THAN SIX DAYS

While differences in perspectives remain, scholars seem to be in agreement that a storyworld is one of the formalising principles of transmedia. In fact, there has been a consistent rise in scholarly work about fictional worlds. Media scholars Lisbeth Klastrup and Susana Tosca describe transmedia worlds as an "abstract content system from which a repertoire of fictional stories and characters can be actualized or derived across a variety of media forms" (1). In simpler terms, the duo is describing the world as a story space. Long uses a similar allusion, comparing the world of a transmedia project to a stage on which all drama unfolds (*Transmedia Storytelling* 48).

Game designer and acclaimed author Jesse Schell argues that while people easily throw a magazine away, the same cannot be said for comic books because they contain a world within their pages (301). Massive properties like *Marvel Comics*, *Harry Potter*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Star Wars*, *Pokémon*, and so many others that have hardcore fans, all have a world at their core. "More than the enjoyment of a good storyline, or the appreciation of interesting characters, the desire to enter a fantasy world seems to be what propels these fans to such extremes," states Schell (303). Academic Janet Murray states that:

When we enter a fictional world, we do not merely “suspend” a critical faculty; we also exercise a creative faculty. We do not suspend disbelief so much as we actively create belief. Because of our desire to experience immersion, we focus our attention on the enveloping world and we use our intelligence to reinforce rather than question the reality of the experience.

(110)

It must be said that the advancement of technology has greatly empowered our imaginations, giving us the ability to shape our dreams and nightmares. However, this does not give any creator license to build thoughtlessly. The real world is not like the movie *Field of Dreams*. “Build and they will come” should be changed to “Build *well* and they will come”. Audiences will respond positively only when the entire world is solid and engaging. The *Star Trek* universe is one such example, boasting over 500 hours of television, eleven feature films and hundreds of novels. Games, graphic novels and encyclopaedias also abound (Hughes 45-46).

Creators of storyworlds have repeatedly been compared to architects. Both build structures that can make us feel enclosed, liberated or suspended. Both lead us through a physical space. Both must ask the same question: how does one build something credible using emptiness as a construction material? Taking the notion further, I propose that transmedia creators need not only be architects, but also art directors, costume designers and set decorators. Using detailed descriptions, they must depict every aspect of this fictional world to different teams. Speaking at Cinekid 2010, Starlight Runner CEO Jeff Gomez rightly warned professionals that “it’s not just about fine characters and beautiful settings. (The whole world) has to stand up to scrutiny and deep analysis. It needs to be rich and worthy of being explored” (qtd. in van Gool). Loosely citing Aristotle’s principles of dramatic unity, the world created must be consistent across all platforms (105). This is

especially crucial in transmedia as audiences will inevitably experience the narrative over numerous sittings.

This segment will show the reader the steps taken to build the world of Storyville. However, the methodology presented here should not be considered a how-to guide. Creating such credible environments is extremely difficult. Worldbuilding not only requires huge amounts of attention in the collection and integration of detail, but also a lot of time, energy and money. After all, as media academic Mark J. P. Wolf says, a sloppily designed world can seriously damage credibility by weakening the overall work (43). Dissatisfaction in a storyworld results not only in lost investment and interest, but also lost revenue for the producer.

Every culture has created and engaged with fictional worlds (Holland 328). Looking into the past, I saw how other writers dealt with creating their worlds, then applied the best solutions to my work. Varying approaches were not difficult to come by. After all, the conjuring of strange realms, alien territories and unexplored lands is nothing new. Comics have been creating similar immersive tapestries for decades. Both DC and Marvel have intelligently constructed complex super-systems that are characterized by “seriality, multiple creators, long term continuity, a character backlog, contemporary ties to a deep history, and a sense of permanence” (Jenkins and Ford 304).

Bestselling fantasy author Patricia C. Wrede has fashioned an intricate list of questions for fantasy worldbuilders. In reality, the list can be extrapolated for any kind of worldbuilding, and has been highly recommended by many practitioners. Personally, I preferred to seek out other methods that did not rely so heavily on the written word. While it is true that most worlds are born in that form, due to it being the fastest, most inexpensive and most malleable approaches, the written word can also cause problems. Although evocative, words depend too much upon the reader’s experience. As legendary author J. R. R.

Tolkien said; “Literature works from mind to mind and thus is more progenitive” (67).

Therefore, I argue that more visual methods should be applied so as to minimize confusion when the written word is handed down to other team members.

Fairytales have been around for centuries and people’s imaginations have already been colonized by particular interpretations. Because I was working with iconic characters and settings, it was obvious that the audience would be coming in with a fixed set of expectations. Making Little Red Riding Hood wear blue instead of red would have been irresponsible and confusing. Hence, certain canons became sacred and material was treated as a collage of adaptations. This was about taking familiar characters and placing them within a new story. Anthropologist Franz Boas’ observation reassured me: “It would seem that mythological worlds have been built up only to be shattered again, and that new worlds were built from the fragments” (qtd. in Levi-Strauss 428).

I started by collecting as much information as possible on various characters and locations. Luckily, fairytale characters never age or follow any organised timeline. This was very helpful to my cause. Once again, in creating the world of Storyville, I tried to come up with a simple system that was not so taxing and time consuming. Filmmaker George Lucas, speaking to Claire Clouzot in 1977 for an interview in *Ecran*, rightly claimed that you can spend a whole lifetime perfecting a new world when you create its every piece (qtd. in Kline 58). No European producer can permit such a luxury. Therefore, I focused on three basic elements: 1. The physical space (map); 2. The time span (timeline); 3. The type of characters that inhabit the environment (genealogy). These three organizational structures are almost always found in an imaginary world, providing the infrastructure needed to build the illusion of completeness. What follows is a discussion on each tool and how it helped me create my world.

2.4.1. The Map

In an interview with the BBC, Tolkien suggested that “if you’re going to have a complicated story you must work to a map” (qtd. in Carpenter 195). I fully agree. Maps help an author remain consistent. In *Oz and Beyond: The Fantasy World of L. Frank Baum*, media scholar Michael O. Riley shows how the vastness of the land described in *The Wizard of Oz* became rather ambiguous in subsequent books. In fact, in *Ozma of Oz* the journey from the desert to the Emerald city takes no more than a day. These inconsistencies of the landscape were resolved only in 1917 with the publishing of *The Lost Princess of Oz*. Riley suggests this was because Baum had finally drawn a map of Oz (176-77).

Maps of imaginary worlds appeared as early as the 1500’s. Thomas More’s *Utopia* is one of the first examples of maps that were printed to accompany their stories (see fig. 5).



Fig 5. More, Thomas. *Illustration of Utopia*. 1516. *Utopia*. 1st ed. School of Museum Studies. 16th-century woodcut.

Today, maps are often extremely important in fantasy fiction. *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant*, *The Unbeliever* and *A Game of Thrones* are the first five books I picked out of my library. Each of them contains a clear map in the

all kinds of magical creatures known to legend and tale. It had to provoke a sense of awe and wonder.

Every choice made with regards to the storyworld also needed to facilitate dramatic possibilities (Dowd et al. 23-24). Each landscape had to have potential for heroic events to be weaved within. Howard writes; stories don't "just happen", but are created by some kind of collision between conflicting forces. He also identifies three kinds of collisions: 1. A collision with an opposing character; 2. A collision between two aspects of the same character; 3. A collision with the world of the story (11). This last notion became crucial when creating the physical world. I wanted the lands outside Storyville to be antagonistic towards our heroes. Danger and death had to lurk under every stone. Enchanted forests, secret caves, underwater kingdoms, desolate canyons, underground cities, rabid volcanoes, secret portals, dark lairs, wild wastelands, prohibited terrains; all became part of this rich tapestry.

On this subject, Gwennlian-Jones and Pearson advise that:

Successful fictional worlds are a matter not only of textual surface but also of environmental texture. They create an impression of spatial presence and of a solid geography, of gravity, height, distance, terrain, climate and so on. The blizzards of the fictional world must rage coldly against the skin; its cliffs must induce a dizzying fear of heights; its nights must amaze with its stars; its silences must drown out the noisy traffic of actuality. (83-84)

I argue that the level of detail will always vary from creative to creative, and story to story. In this case, I opted to create a simple, basic map with clear descriptions of all the locations. I also took note of Lin Carter's advice in *Imaginary Worlds: The Art of Fantasy*. There, she rightly points out that maps must be created with nature in mind:

It behoves the would-be author of an imaginary world fantasy to think a little before sketching out his map. You cannot really have a lush rainforest smack

up against a parched desert of burning sands, you know. It pays to do a bit of reading into climatology so as to understand the interplay of forces that create deserts and rainforests, jungles and grasslands and so on. (180)

Even Tolkien was guilty of such errors. In one of his letters, he admits that the narrative was the driving force behind the shaping of the world of the Third Age (qtd. in Carpenter 224). To create the map, a number of geologists and urban planners from the University of Malta were consulted. It is not an uncommon practice for producers to seek help from other experts in other fields.

Please refer to Section B of the Creative document to view the first sketch of the map of Storyville, followed by a brief description of the major places. These documents were later handed to a professional designer who enhanced and transformed them into presentable material. Please refer to Section C of the Creative document before proceeding.

2.4.2. The Timeline

In the late 70's and early 80s, the comic book industry started publishing what is now known as the "event" storyline in the bid to persuade fans to buy more titles. Media academic Roz Kaveney describes these standalone books as mere publicity stunts (176-77). However, in time, they developed from exciting premises, to powerful story arcs, written by the hottest writers on the market, with repercussions on the entire universe. A prime example of this is the *Death and Return of Superman*, a wildly publicised event even in the mainstream media. The way I devised *The Tower of Fables* closely resembles this format. I decided to create a number of separate stories within the same universe, each occurring in a different era, having repercussions on the ones that follow.

To be able to write about these immortal creatures in a magical land, I needed organization and consistency. A timeline was essential to achieve this.

I argue that creators of a transmedia project must dedicate time to the development and documentation of their worlds' timelines. Timelines are vital in giving historical context to small events. Gomez adds that a chronology of events can also aid future explorations and add authenticity to the story (qtd. in van Gool). I fully agree with this thesis. To create a rich world, there has to be a strong sense of history. Building a timeline allowed me to condense the vast narrative into a more manageable system. Tolkien scholar, Richard C. West also speaks of the importance of having an "uncluttered narrative line in which there is a single major theme to which a limited number of other themes may be related so long as they are kept subordinate" (qtd. in Lobell 76). Wolf also argues in favour of them because:

Timelines tie backstory into a story's current events and help an audience to fill in gaps, such as characters' ages or travel times, or their participation in events described in broader scale. Timelines also allow simultaneous strands of actions, narratives, or other casual chains to be compared alongside each other, providing both synchronic and diachronic context for events. (165)

The size of these documents will vary since creators usually fill them in with whatever they deem necessary. However, it is essential that such a document is not shared with potential audiences due to the spoilers it would obviously contain. Timelines and chronologies should only be published when the entire project has run its course. While Anderson and Wallace's *Star Wars: The Essential Chronology* proved to be a valuable resource, should such a document have fallen into my hands prior to my watching the whole *Star Wars* saga, I would have found out that Darth Vader was Luke's father from the start.

Please refer to Section D of the Creative document for the timeline of my narrative.

2.4.3. The Genealogy

The third element I found essential in constructing my imaginary world is genealogy. Charts depicting family trees connecting ancestors and descendants provided me with continuity. Wolf rightly points out that genealogies help to give context to characters (170). Knowing about Aragorn's lineage and the failings of his ancestor Ilidur can only intensify the tension of the actual narrative in *The Lord of the Rings*.

For me, the most important factor of genealogies is that ability to connect and link the life histories of various characters into the overall narrative of the entire world, thus extending it beyond the confines of one particular story. It is important to note that in transmedia stories minor characters on one platform can become protagonists on another. In *The Tower of Fables*, I make use of a similar interlaced structure. The first novel introduces us to Storm, an obnoxious bully who mistreats young Jimmy at school. The pest follows Jimmy through the magic portal and ends up in Storyville. He is then transformed into a frog and forgotten, only to resurface in last book of the trilogy where his sacrifice helps Jimmy and the inhabitants of Storyville rid themselves of Utrek. In the animated series, however, a much older Storm becomes a protagonist. Together with Jimmy, he is running the Storyville Police Department Academy.

Please refer to Section E of the Creative document for the "Storyville's Registry", a compilation of brief profiles on all the characters and a list of creatures, monsters and other entities that inhabit the world, along with some preliminary character designs, followed by the genealogy.

2.5. DESIGNING THE CONTENT AND THE BRAND

Unlike other creative arts, there is yet no real transmedia school. The new "software" is being written by practitioners who are risk wary, slow and cautious. It is, however, with good reason. Dowd et al. liken transmedia storytelling to the dangerous act of juggling chainsaws,

a highly demanding endeavour requiring precise coordination between various texts (34-35).

As Jenkins says;

Each medium has its own affordances, its own systems of representation, its own strategies for producing and organizing knowledge. Producers need to learn to navigate these different and sometimes conflicting modes of representation and to make meaningful choices about the best ways to express their ideas in each context. (*Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture* 87-88)

To build my stories, I followed paths forged by those who came before. Eisenstein was more than happy to admit that the theories of montage, both his and those of D.W. Griffith, had been heavily influenced by the literary devices used by Charles Dickens in his novels (*Film Form* 195). Quoting Marshall McLuhan's fourth law of media, Miles states that "the initial development of a new medium will retrieve forms from prior mediums" (4).

So how does one find the right story? Howard immediately distances himself from any magic formulas and recipes (xix). Screenwriting guru Robert McKee also insists that:

It begins with talent. You must be born with the creative power to put things together in a way no one has ever dreamed. Then you must bring to the work a vision that's driven by fresh insights into human nature and society, coupled with in-depth knowledge of your characters and your world. (11)

Being a professionally trained story analyst and a produced screenwriter, I took it upon myself to create the whole narrative. While this was the most cost effective method of doing things, it was also a necessity since development funds for transmedia projects are quite poor in Europe. European producers are forced to cannibalize their budgets, reducing expenses from other areas. I feel that this lack of funding is a huge hurdle, but, with that said,

since canon and continuity maintenance are mandatory for transmedia storytelling, I still believe that the initial development phase would benefit if led by one or few writers.

I started by developing a logline that defines the attributes of the whole narrative: “Every fairytale needs a hero. Are you ready to become one?” This became my guiding principle. Over the course of a year, I developed the entire tale that spans across centuries. I started with the outlines for every story, a part of the process I will not present as it is too cryptic for anyone to understand. For months, I explored various structures, researching and taking thousands of annotations. When I was fully satisfied, I expanded the work, writing detailed treatments for each medium. Writing for multiplatform is something rather new, however, as already stated, this is not intended to be a how-to segment. The following are a set of principles I applied to create *The Tower of Fables*.

The first rule of writing is, “Don’t be boring!” Stories need to be exciting. Every time I sat down to write a new narrative for a different platform, I asked the same questions: Why would anyone want to engage with this story? Who is the hero? Who is/are the villain/s? What do they want? Is there more than one conflict? What is the fiction of Storyville trying to say? I tried to identify the recurrent archetypes within each narrative.

We are all consumers of stories. We can learn a lot by watching and playing. However, I believe instinct is not enough. The ability to make any creative decision consciously is crucial. Characterization, conflict, rising tensions, character arcs, pivotal decisions, main characters’ passion and subplots are essential tools for any storyteller. In this case, I found theme to be most important. Howard writes; “The theme of the story is the aspect of the “human dilemma” that it will explore.” He also adds that there should be no value judgments in a theme, otherwise it becomes a thesis (131). In his interview “Transmedia and Jeff Gomez”, journalist David Tiley recounts a fantastic anecdote Gomez used to emphasise the importance of themes:

Two dudes in robes, whacking each other with light sticks does not equal Star Wars. The theme that George Lucas infuses into each piece of the Star Wars story is what makes the story great... And it is the presence of this theme that authenticates each new addition to the universe.

The Tower of Fables is about choices. The focus is on characters dealing with physical and emotional challenges. I wanted to follow them as they chose sides in the eternal battle of Good versus Evil. Christophe Erbes, an international consultant in development and strategy for children and youths media for Ubisoft, confirmed to me that my chosen audience is very concerned with identity and with finding their place in society. Zipes is also of the belief that:

Good literature for children provokes them to think seriously and critically for themselves, against the grain and provides hope that they can find the moral and ethical vigor not simply to survive but also to live happily with social codes and arrangements that they create themselves and enjoy to their heart's content. (*Why Fairytales Stick* 231)

Taking a brief look at Batman; what is it really about? Redemption. Bruce Wayne, after seeing his parents murdered, decides to don the mask and become Gotham's saviour. Bruce doesn't want to feel helpless as he did that fatal day. Thus, everything related to this property should derive from that fact.

It is obvious that I was heavily influenced by the superhero genre. Superheroes are generally equipped with powers superior to the common man. Hercules, Superman, the Flash, Peter Pan; all these characters have become ingrained in today's pop culture. However, I was more drawn to the Batman mythos: a human being without any powers who walks amongst "gods" (Brooker 5). For me, the superhero genre is not just about powers and superhuman feats, but about men and women who never give up the struggle to be good. Batman's

greatest superpower is his humanity. Batman also made me believe in David Bowie's promise that we could all be "Heroes". This was what I wanted to write about.

I looked to combine our world with the magical realms of fairytales. I wanted children to be the protagonists of my story. Illustrator William Steig argues that children are the hope of humanity. I fully concur with his thoughts when he says that "if children are going to change the world, they have to start off optimistically. I wouldn't consider writing a depressing book for children" (qtd. in Silvey 626).

Another important inspiration has been Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Campbell theorized that most stories use the same narrative structures, character models and patterns. He identified a recurrent pattern: the hero, called to adventure, leaves his ordinary world, and enters a strange and dangerous world. There, he must overcome a number of tests, including facing his arch enemy. The hero tastes death (metaphorical or real), then obtains his boon, which could be anything from a sword to a treasure to personal growth.

Howard tells us that:

In order for the protagonist's story to resonate for the audience, for us to find it compelling enough to warrant our time, our attention and emotional involvement, he or she needs to face significant obstacles to achieving the want. These obstacles are often, but far from always, personified in one person, the antagonist of the story. (77)

My source material had an array of interesting villains, all figments of our deepest fears; ogres, witches, ghosts, wolves, mad scientists, giants, wizards, and many more. The relationships between heroes and villains in fairytales are usually explored over a single story. The very nature of the transmedia narrative, however, allowed me to deepen these connections and create an ongoing antagonistic relationship. Story arcs became a possibility.

Please refer to Section F of the Creative document to read a synopsis of all the stories. The 1st draft of the bible is found in Section G of the same document.

Having created all this content, I still felt that the project was not ready to be taken to the market. I always argued that building a transmedia property is very similar to creating a brand. The visual element is an integral part of the canon. The fonts used for franchises like *Bioshock* or *Star Wars* immediately set the tonality of the IP. I argue that each iteration must carry the same emotional identity and style so that it is instantly recognizable. Both Nuno Bernardo and literary agent Julian Friedmann supported my thesis, and encouraged me to pursue this route. Unfortunately, I have seen many producers dismiss this part of the development process. During my frequent exchanges with other producers it was very common to hear a number of my peers argue that having some colours, some fonts, a logo, and a slogan would be enough. It is now my belief that many colleagues were simply trying to cut costs. However, I argue that the benefits of this exercise far outweigh the extra cost as it also allows broadcasters and financiers to see a snippet of the vision being proposed.

Zipes rightly points out that when anyone hears or reads the phrase, “Once upon a time,” they are immediately disposed to register pre-existing metaphors in the brain (*Why Fairytales Stick* xi). I wanted to make sure that potential investors could have a foretaste of the final product. Original. Genuine. Sincere. Authentic. Those were the keywords I used during the brainstorming session with my designer. *The Tower of Fables*, like all other stories, is about creating an authentic and engaging experience. I firmly believe that the basis of the whole project is about celebrating the beauty of story. That became my core principle. Everything I created needed to showcase that notion.

I started with building the logo. I wanted to create something simple, memorable and appropriate. Versatility was also important. The logo needed to be transferable to different platforms as well as various forms of merchandise.

Of course, my budget was very tight but I was still keen on having a focus group. I invited friends of mine who had children between the ages of six and eleven for a small gathering. During the staged event, I explained to each and every child (13 in all) that we needed their help to find the best design for a story I was building. I showed them three different copies and asked them to choose one. Ultimately, the firm favourite was also my own as it encompassed the spirit of Storyville; playful, fun and energetic (see fig.7).



Fig. 7. *The Tower of Fables* logo as designed by Christiane Stelberg.

After creating the logo, I moved on to seek a designer who could translate my vision of Storyville and the Tower of Fables, and provide me with their accurate visual representations. Finding the right designer was a long process. Funding was obtained through the Malta Arts Fund,⁸ a mechanism which aims to help Maltese creators internationalise their work. I used the €3,500 obtained to experiment with various artists including Oscar-nominated Geza M. Toth. Please refer to Section H of the Creative document for examples of his work. I was extremely pleased with the work presented, even though the characters were very different in style from the requirements of the project. Unfortunately, frictions surfaced when Geza asked for a €200,000 fee to complete the research and finish the work. No small or medium company can afford such exorbitant prices. Geza's name would have provided us

with an important selling point, but it was financially impossible to sustain such a relationship.

In the end, I opted for the work of lesser-known German illustrator Christiane Stelberg. Her fees were more affordable, but another factor that aided my decision was the fact that Christiane was also experienced in creating work for various platforms; from TV to video games, clothes to books. Her experience in these various fields provided her with an understanding of the powers and limits of character design for different platforms. She was skilled at finding the right balance needed to build recognizable characters that are easily translatable from one medium to another. Her university studies in architecture would also prove beneficial to the design of the city of Storyville and the rest of the world of *The Tower of Fables*. Please refer to Section I of the Creative document for examples of the chosen work.

CHAPTER 3: THE ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

3.1. OUTLINE

3.2. FINANCING TRANSMEDIA TODAY

3.3. IS THERE A YELLOW BRICK ROAD?

3.3.1. Structure

3.3.2. *The Tower of Fables: Restructured*

3.4. CONCLUSION

3.1. OUTLINE

Developing multiple nodes on various platforms is not only labour intensive, but also extremely costly (Bernardo, *The Producer's Guide to Transmedia* 66). This chapter outlines the analysis of the economic implications on the further development of my bible.

I contend that the development stage of a project does not end with the completion of the bible's first draft. Aesthetics and commerce are highly interdependent. This symbiosis can be seen across numerous industries. In McGraw Hill's *SmartMarket Report*, Steven Jones tells us:

For decades, aerospace, automotive and shipbuilding companies have designed their complex products virtually, working closely with their suppliers, and used the models to drive their fabrication equipment. In effect they build the product twice, once virtually to ensure optimization, then physically in exact compliance with the model, at high level of quality and production efficiency, in safe clean conditions with a skilled well trained workforce. This has contributed enormously to improved productivity, safety and product quality in those industries. (21)

This chapter will also shed light on the current state of the European market itself. While most seem to be in agreement that high engagement yields high payoffs (Phillips, "Transmedia Is Not Marketing"), effective ways to finance transmedia still need to be found. Until then, uncertainty will continue to impact the scale and scope of a property. Using *The Tower of Fables* as the case study, I keep raising uncomfortable questions: How can a European producer finance such an elaborate mode of storytelling? Can native transmedia become a reality?

This chapter aims to provide a sober and critically informed baseline for examination. It allows for an analysis that is not speculative, but based on findings from extensive

fieldwork that started way back in 2010. Most of my observations and conclusions are the results of direct contact with well-placed individuals within the publishing, broadcasting and gaming industries. All this is augmented by information gathered from the various markets I visited, and conferences I attended. **Please refer to Section M of the Creative document for a detailed list of meetings, markets and conferences attended during these last three years.** It is important to note that identifying all the problems producers may face within this chapter would be an impossible task; however, I do intend it to be the basis for further discussion.

3.2. FINANCING TRANSMEDIA TODAY

It was clear from the start that *The Tower of Fables* would entail a lot of negotiation with various institutions. Understanding the current market was essential for the formulation of a proper plan on how to position my story. Emmy-winning producer Jay Ferguson rightly compares the current market to the Wild West; “There’s continual frustration in terms of how to finance it, where it’s going to go, how to get audiences to watch it” (qtd. in CBC News). During my research, I encountered a prevailing fear amongst many practitioners. The fact that very few projects were actually making money was a repeated complaint. In fact, the lack of business models for native transmedia creation is a pressing issue.

In 2011, 4th Wall Studios, one of the pioneers of native transmedia storytelling, managed to attract a staggering \$200 million in funds to create new content (Roettgers). Because Hollywood is notorious for being a very conservative town and most studios had previously utilized “transmedia” solely for PR efforts to promote movies and television shows, this news was hailed as a major breakthrough by the transmedia community. 4th Wall’s founders promised to create properties that would “define the future”¹. However, in 2012, less than two months after winning an Emmy Award for *Dirty Work*, their major financier pulled the plug on all the new content in development, and the company was forced

to lay people off (Nelson). 4th Wall Studios then announced that it was shifting its focus and putting all its energies on building cutting edge technology (Roettgers). The move sent shudders down the spine of the entire transmedia community. Why did this happen? No one knows for sure. What is certain is that the sudden change in direction sent many negative signals to potential investors all over the world.

Business Strategies President Louise Levison laments that we are facing one of the worst economic crises. Speaking about film financing, she says:

Shuffle a pack of playing cards. Now spread them out face down and pick one card. If it is the ace of spades, you win; if it is not, you lose. Your chances of getting the right card are 1 out of 52. These odds are better than the odds of finding independent money for your film. (155)

If the movie industry, with all its specialized markets and links to broadcasters, is finding it tough, then what about transmedia? In Europe, there is a serious lack of funds specifically aimed at the transmedia industry. The newly revamped Media Fund has forgotten all about transmedia. The closest funds available are those for interactive projects, offering grants of up to €150,000. What I find disconcerting is the Commission's definition of interactive projects. This scheme targets digital interactive content that complements an audio-visual project, which is specifically designed for the internet, PC, console, handheld device or interactive TV.² My main issue is with the emphasis placed on digital works. Live events can also be interactive. I find that this scheme limits creativity and gives the impression that transmedia is only technology-based. This understanding of the word interactive weakens all the arguments transmedia creators and lobbyists like Transmedia Europe & Alliance have been trying to make.

Transmedia's lack of recognition is the biggest problem practitioners are currently facing. According to the UK Ofcom *Communications Market Report*, just ten percent of

public money is spent on developing multiplatform projects. The report suggests that the UK may be putting public funds into less engaging media, however this sad trend is comparable all over Europe (Hayes, “10 Reasons Public Multi-Platform Funding is Broken & Ways to Fix It”).

Educating European executives on the needs of transmedia producers is extremely important for the development of the craft. I would also add that this process needs to be reciprocal. Producers need to listen to the requirements and fears of the executives. A consensus can only be reached through dialogue.

Transmedia productions in Europe today can easily be divided in two strands: 1. Brand marketing that seeks new ways to engage with an audience; 2. Extensions of an already existing property (licensing or franchising). While both strands are gaining in popularity, I argue that these modes of storytelling make use of transmedial methods to relay their message; to sell a film, or a video game, or soap, or cereal, or toys. In this case, transmedia serves a mere tactical function that grows out of a market demand. Creativity is an afterthought in this model. Thus, I argue that the end product is nothing more than cross media promotion. Phillips also agrees, comparing such commissioned works to marketing campaigns (*A Creator's Guide to Transmedia Storytelling* 224). Entertainment and marketing become fused into one. In *The Art of Immersion*, Rose explains that our lives are being transformed into entertainment venues (34), and that the lines of reality and illusion are becoming more and more blurred (15).

Franchising and licensing gained popularity as soon as the commercial potential of such ventures was identified. Both can provide a solid stream of cash to producers, with little or no financial risk attached. While there have been plenty of less-than-successful ventures, intelligent use of licensing or franchising can aid the actual work. Linda Hutcheon, in *A Theory of Adaptation*, points out how *Star Wars* merchandize helped maintain a constant

brand presence and acted as a bridge between film releases (189). In 2012, speaking at *Transmedia, What?* in Malta, Bernardo argued that such deals can help attract a wider audience by giving people the opportunity to discover the brand on more than one platform. It also helps to create more press buzz. However, in his book, Bernardo provided a clear warning:

These types of deals don't just fall out of the sky, as the licensing professionals will only consider a deal with you if you have a very strong track record and a very high public presence. They not only need to know your show will have the level of exposure necessary to drive sales, but that it possesses the longevity to sustain them. (*The Producer's Guide to Transmedia* 29)

Jenkins predicts that in future licensing and franchising will give way to co-creation, where “companies collaborate from the beginning to create content they know plays well in each of their sectors, allowing each medium to generate new experiences for the consumer and expand points of entry” (*Convergence Culture* 107). One can only hope that such words will become reality. At the moment, this remains wishful thinking. In more than three years of working on *The Tower of Fables*, I encountered a very different scenario.

3.3. IS THERE A YELLOW BRICK ROAD?

European media producers, unlike their US counterparts, have always relied heavily on government grants and funds. However, as already stated, there are hardly any funds to aid the development of a native transmedia project. This has thrown European transmedia producers into a sort of panic. Having worked on both sides of the Atlantic, I find European producers ill-equipped to face the present situation. I argue that American producers are more entrepreneurial. The traditional European financing methods need to be put aside,

making way for new ones. The current widespread *modus operandi* in Europe sees creators seeking funds for one component, usually film, then distributing the money awarded to each segment, based on the producer's best judgement. I find this situation quite worrisome, as it enforces a trend where more work is expected of producers for less money. I also argue that it hinders growth.

In my one-to-one meetings at the Pixel Lab 2011, Bernardo jokingly advised me to move to Canada. Earlier that morning, Loc Dao, an executive producer with the National Film Board of Canada, showed us how the Experimental Stream funding initiative is managing to support and nurture innovative native transmedia projects.³ It is clear that Europe should be following Canada's lead, or run the risk of falling behind, unable to compete with North America.

For fairness' sake, it should be noted that some countries, such as France and Germany, have been quite active in trying to redress this situation. ARTE/ZDF has been a fervent supporter of such initiatives. HQV (working title), a project I am co-producing with Michel Reilhac and Elzevir Films, has recently received development funding from this station. The money covers all the segments; app, game, documentary, film, as well as the live event. This is not surprising when one considers how the French government has always been an avid supporter of the culture industry, regulating it constantly to ensure that French companies invest in new works. Quotas are also imposed on the airing and distribution of French music and film (Harrison 89).

During the same one-to-one, Bernardo also suggested looking out for regional funds specifically tailored for new media start-ups. I took his advice, sourcing out what was available in Malta. In 2011, I went on to apply for the INVEX Fund⁴ as a result, and was awarded €75,000 over a three-year period. Because the regulations of the scheme insisted that the money was to be invested in the company, not into one particular project, I used the funds

to open an office in both Malta and London, and to attend various fairs, markets and conferences. The finances also permitted me to increase the workforce. With two new part-timers to our team, I was allowed to devote more time to *The Tower of Fables* and invest my energy into the writing. The development of a project of this magnitude would cost a European producer around €150,000. Since I was both the creator and the writer, I was able to keep the costs well below normal standards.

Crowdsourcing has become one of the most popular ways producers deal with the chronic lack of funding. In essence, crowdsourcing is the process of organising labour, where work is distributed among some form of (normally online) community (Whitla 16). Media strategist Simone Cicero believes that these peer to peer communities will change the world. But while one cannot deny that such initiatives are promising, and indeed exhibit the many positives of crowdsourcing, many producers arguably abuse this system. Indeed, some critics have called crowdsourcing exploitative labour. Scholar Tiziana Terranova states that commercial enterprises shamefully exploit willing audiences into working for free (33-58). Crunchyroll.com, a video sharing platform for Anime, is a clear example. Their business model relied on fans to provide all content (Li 23). Thus, it can be said that the EU needs to look into improving its current funding structures not just for the development of transmedia as an art form, but also as part of its fight against precarious jobs.

As things stand today, successful transmedia stories rely a lot on institutional relationships (Dowd et. al 36-37). Early into the development stage, I started talking to various broadcasters and publishers about my narrative. There was a general agreement that the project had lots of potential. I was given various suggestions, as well as a list of desirables, including writers and directors that they would be interested in. However, the requests of both parties were extremely conflicting, making the process quite confusing. Publishers saw the books being aimed at young teens, and hence wanted them to be much

darker than what I was proposing. Conversely, the broadcaster said the series should contain more slapstick, so it would appeal to an even younger demographic. It was extremely challenging to come to an agreement on the target audience, and establish a common tonality for the entire project. I was repeatedly told by various executives at both Penguin Publishers and Turner Broadcasting that they saw their platform as the dominant one. It was very clear that each institution was unwilling to cooperate, or share control of the project.

Executives across various industries always insisted, in public, that today's narratives should live in three dimensions, engaging audiences on multiple platforms. However, those same executives behaved in a completely different manner when seated behind a desk. Experimentation is something that is very often nipped in the bud. Budgets are always described as a major concern. Transmedia is generally limited to the creation of some web presence.

That said, in all my interactions with these executives, I noted that the real concern was always with power, or the loss of it. Most institutions have adopted a siege mentality, harbouring a deep-seated fear of any form of change. Media convergence does not necessarily lead to industry convergence. Jordan Levin, Executive Vice President at Xbox Entertainment Studios, was right when he argued that the tone and tenor of conducting a creative enterprise has hardened (262).

Transmedia designer Jörg Ihle, during his speech "Building Storyworlds for Transmedia" at Cross Media Zen 2014 in Lithuania, said producers needed to stop dreaming and start looking at what is really possible to finance. Referring specifically to Germany, he pointed to the problems that arise due to the fact that no one really knows who will pay for what. Commissioning editors refuse to finance other iterations they deem to be mere marketing ploys, while the marketing department refuses to fund content. He confirmed that

most institutions need to reorganise their infrastructure to facilitate dialogue between different departments. Clearly, the need for new strategies is extremely urgent.

Speaking with my American counterparts, the situation seems to be slightly brighter across the Atlantic. Through various acquisitions and mergers, mega corporations such as Viacom, Time Warner and Disney have developed divisions for the creation of comics, films, TV, shows, toys, clothing, video games, and more. This allowed them to then develop and produce ancillary material or spinoffs of the tent-pole product (Meehan, *Holy Commodity Fetish, Batman!* 49). As Jenkins notes:

A media conglomerate has an incentive to spread its brand or expand its franchises across as many different media platforms as possible. Consider, for example, the comic books published in advance of the release of such films as *Batman Begins* and *Superman Returns* by DC (owned by Warner Brothers, the studio that released these films). These comics provided back-story which enhanced the viewer's experience of the film even as they also help to publicize the forthcoming release (thus blurring the line between marketing and entertainment). (*Transmedia Storytelling* 101)

This set up clearly allows for better dialogue between various departments. Marvel's recent work under the leadership of Kevin Feige is a perfect example of this flawless synergy.

The European industry has so far been very slow in reacting to these changes. Major players in broadcasting, mostly government-owned, are yet to invest in other areas like the internet. This fragmentation of institutions creates more hurdles for European producers; however, this does not mean that nothing is being done. ARTE have recently created the position of a transmedia commissioning editor. Nevertheless, experimentation is moving at too slow a pace.

Many European producers I've met over the last years have genuinely expressed the fear that Europe might fall behind to the US. At face value, I agree that US media conglomerates can facilitate financing for native transmedia projects, however, this is a complex subject that merits further investigation and can be a good basis for another thesis.

In the meantime, while I was attempting to manoeuvre among executives abroad, the Maltese government set up a theatre festival aimed at children called The *ŽiguŽajg* Festival.⁶ I believed getting at least a part of the *Tower of Fables* project into production so early in development would help me sell the rest of the iterations. Besides allowing me to showcase the versatility of the universe, the play would also serve as a litmus test for the idea. Collecting raw data to present to other investors is nothing new. Danish director Rune Bendixon explained how most Danish producers test their ideas by producing low budget films in Scandinavia. Audience response is then measured, and presented to Hollywood executives. If successful, the films are then remade in the US. Clearly, such data can be a very valuable asset when talking to risk wary institutions. During my time at FishCorb, we had adopted a similar strategy, purchasing a number of Israeli productions that were successful on home soil. The numbers obtained on audience reception after its initial release helped us make a better case with Hollywood executives.

I approached *ŽiguŽajg* Festival Director Toni Attard and proposed a story within my universe. Knowing from other sources that the festival was looking to commission plays that could be put on outside the normal theatre setting, I took the opportunity and produced the play in Malta's National Library which was built in 1565 by the Knights of Malta.

Beyond the wow factor the Library itself exudes, the confined space also presented us with the opportunity to write a play that could travel to various other small locations, such as a book shop or a school library, at a later stage. The festival director was immediately

enthusiastic, accepting all my budget claims. Unfortunately, I was presented with a Faustian proposal: the production had to cater to children between the ages of three and five.

Once again, the tonality of the project was being tampered with. I tried once more to explain the importance of guarding the entire vision, repeatedly emphasising that this work would serve as the entrance to a network of other texts. But my attempts to educate the festival director on transmedia and story canon were unsuccessful. He remained indifferent to my reasoning, insisting that the needs of his festival were more important. As with executives abroad, power and control were the factors dominating the exchange. The play also ended up being in Maltese despite numerous efforts from my part to have it in English. Ultimately, I had no real leverage. Unlike the Wachowskis, who acted as gatekeepers of their Matrix universe by having final say on every release, hence protecting the canon (Vasile), I wielded no such power. I understand that it is of paramount importance to protect the original feel by having tailor-made agreements, but this is not always possible. I finally accepted the demands being made on the reasoning that it was preferable to have something in hand that I can use at a later stage to promote the versatility of the whole narrative.

McLuhan noted how society organises thought around the dominant medium of the era (*Understanding Media* 6). Today, the “lean back” approach is being replaced with a “lean in approach” (Bernardo, “Transmedia Can Empower Producers”). This was my maxim for the play. I wanted to create something interactive. Hence, the play had numerous instances where the children were encouraged to contribute to the development of the narrative by joining the fight against the evil Utrek, and helping the Guardians to rectify the damage done. After sketching an outline, I enlisted the help of Malcolm Galea, a Maltese playwright who had a string of successes at the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh and London’s West End. Since I had never written for theatre, I thought it wiser to employ someone with some experience.

The schedule called for over fourteen performances over a two week period. The play was sold out within two days. A recording of the play can be found on the USB memory stick under the heading “The Play”. The translated script can be found in Section J of the Creative document.

The audience, children and parents alike, enjoyed the play. They laughed at the right moments, participated loudly, and interacted with the cast repeatedly. The production was so well-received, it even featured in the evening news on one of the main local television stations.⁷ Since then, the Maltese Embassy in New Delhi also invited me to tour Indian schools in 2014.

Despite this apparent success, however, I was very unhappy with the end result. Firstly, the data collected from the experience was rather useless due to the audience being made up of children between three and five. Previous research had clearly shown that kids at that age have a very different aesthetic view compared to the older kids I actually wanted to target. Secondly, the play’s text had to be tweaked to include explanations of the actual fairytales, while the original text assumed that older children would be already familiar with the characters. In hindsight, I would not have accepted, and fought harder.

A number of other practitioners⁸ advised me to look at crowdfunding⁸ to secure funds to build a pilot. Filmmaker and social science researcher Aurite Kouts describes crowdfunding as a mechanism to pre-sell projects at development stage to the public (244). The proposition was interesting. Looking back, Kouts argues that audiences have always been active within media. Studies on soap operas clearly show that viewers held a certain degree of influence on the actual narrative. Producers have always been susceptible to the likes and dislikes of fans. In the past, they made their opinions known through letters and fan magazines, and while this “was still rather indirect participation” (246), its effectiveness cannot be denied. Nowadays, the same system is still essentially in place, but thanks to the

advancement of technology and the development of Web 2.0, we are seeing “more active modes of spectatorship” (Jenkins, “Interactive Audiences?” 157).

The non-profit sector was the first to realise the potential of crowdfunding. One of the most often quoted examples is President Barack Obama’s successful election campaign in 2008. *Iron Sky*⁹ is also probably one of the most successful examples. In his speech “Producing with the Audience: Star Wreck and Iron Sky” at the Pixel Lab 2011, director Timo Vuorensola explained how the production company managed to harness the power of the net to attract almost €1 million through an investment scheme offered to the public. Merchandise sales also proved beneficial. This injection of financial support boosted their position with traditional funders, aiding their efforts to secure the remaining €6 million.

Current statistics are impressive. According to Crowdsourcing LLC’s *Crowdfunding Industry Report*, as of April 2012 there were over 450 active crowdfunding platforms online around the globe, most of which are based in North America and Western Europe (18). Another study by Massolution revealed that in 2012 alone over \$2.7 billion were raised through crowdfunding platforms globally.

A crowdfunding campaign can be extremely beneficial because it serves as a beta test, or a proof of concept. Peers argue that such campaigns also provide producers with the immediate feedback required to meet the expressed needs and desires of the intended target audience. It would also generate publicity for the proposed project. Funders can act as project ambassadors, influencing their respective networks through social media. What is essential is that the promotional materials used are of professional quality, so as to inspire confidence in the potential contributor.

From my observations, I concluded that beside the project being compelling, the campaign needs to not only be well thought out, but also carefully, strategically and intelligently implemented. Undoubtedly, crowdfunding requires a savvy promoter and a

highly engaged audience to succeed. In fact, the India Innovation Institute highlights that successful campaigns always recount a compelling, shareable story to their identified target audience (10). Kellison, Morrow and Morrow suggest that producers aiming to use such systems should first study other crowdfunding campaigns that have reached or exceeded their funding goals. Promotional material, merchandizing and incentives have to be prepared. Time and energy needs to be put into courting potential investors. Successful campaigns engage the audience and keep them updated regularly. If a producer doesn't have the necessary skills to carry out these various activities, additional human resources would need to be employed (88-89). All of this comes at a heavy cost.

It was obvious that this synergy between creator and audience has great potential, but I remained very hesitant. What would happen should the funding not be met? Would such unwarranted publicity hurt my reputation? Or the project's chances in future? Maltese feature film *Shimshar* became a case in point. This art house film by a first-time director was unsuccessful in its bid to raise the amount needed. News of the team's failure went viral and became extremely counter-productive to the effort of securing the rest of the funding needed. In the end, the film had to be shot on a shoestring budget. It was a far cry from all the hype that was created.

So far, the majority of projects have failed to secure the intended sum and a few deliberate acts of fraud have exposed the inherent fragility of the actual crowdfunding mechanism. 2013 also saw major players engage with crowdfunding. Recognised professionals like Spike Lee, Zach Braff, James Franco and Rob Thomas for *Veronica Mars*, in an attempt to shift costs and risk from themselves to their customers, asked their fans to contribute to the funding of already well-established projects. It will be interesting to track how this development will play out in the future.

For *The Tower of Fables*, I was more interested in looking at brand patronage. There was a time when the advertising industry was a very simple business. Company A had a product X to sell. Their ad agency came up with a way to sell it. They bought airtime or print space and the message was out. If that message was captivating, consumers rushed to the stores to buy product X. But this system doesn't work anymore (Rose 218). Media academic Cynthia Meyers rightly says that:

Television is no longer an appliance watched by entire family in the living room. Viewers placeshift when viewing programs on mobile-devices – laptops, cell phones, game consoles, iPods etc – and timeshift by using digital video recorders and online streaming. (77)

Controlling content to organise trade is now almost impossible. This presents a miserable scenario to advertising agencies. Brands, like everyone in media today, need to rethink their strategies, and formulate new ways to engage with their audiences directly. So what are brands to do? It seems to make more sense for them to embrace and support content that shares their same values, rather than to create their own. This is called patronage. In the Middle Ages, kings and popes acted as patrons, sponsoring the arts to glorify their reigns. Today, we are seeing a similar mechanism emerge, with brands and organizations replacing monarchs and ecclesiastics. Brian Clark, CEO and founder of GMD Studios, in “Transmedia Business Models Part Two”, points out that this phenomenon of patronage repeats itself every time there is a revolution in how media gets delivered. He points to soap operas as one of the first examples of branded entertainment, getting their name from the soap manufacturers that sponsored them in their early days because the content was aimed at their target audience. Clark believes this is the first step towards creating more complex ecosystems from which an industry will emerge.

Through my professional network, I was introduced to Platinum Rye, an agency that represents a large number of well-known brands, including Mothercare and Fairy Soap. Damon Bryant, head of New Business, was very interested in the project and saw huge potential in marrying my work with one of the brands he represented. In less than two weeks, we were in talks with Procter and Gamble. A series of virtual meetings led to a number of interesting propositions. Procter and Gamble wanted to create an original character inspired by one of the products from the Fairy Soap range. This funny character was supposed to be obsessed with cleanliness. His costume design also had to reference the colours of the brand. Various web games and apps were to be developed, with side missions that featured him battling *Utrek's* minions. The executives were quite adamant about these requirements. Brands are used to being protagonists of their adverts, so it was obvious that convincing them that the product should not overpower the show was going to be an issue. I opted to silence my fears in the bid to secure the financing.

The next stage was to prepare a detailed development budget and present it to Procter and Gamble. As soon as they saw the figure I was requesting for development, €250,000, their enthusiasm turned lukewarm. Procter and Gamble highlighted their concern that no broadcasters were attached, and asked for assurances that their investment would be fruitful. They were reluctant to launch the animation series online, insisting that I return to them only when a TV broadcaster had committed to the project.

Once again, I was back where I started, at the mercy of various industries. The lack of a common language clearly hindered earlier negotiations. Lengthy talks led me to conclude that most executives identify transmedia extensions primarily as “promotion”. This led to the inevitable questions; were the goals set for the project overly optimistic and naïve? Should I have focussed solely on developing one area, then when successful pushed for other extensions? Would these institutions with very unequal interests ever operate in unison?

In his book *Franchising Dreams: The Lure of Entrepreneurship in America*, Peter Birkeland underlines that many of the conflicts and tensions between franchisor and franchisee are usually framed around misaligned goals and the misuse of shared resources. He adds that solutions can only be achieved through the readjustment of interests (169). I needed to go back to the drawing board and come up with an easy way to explain my vision to each sector.

In my regular interactions with industry professionals, I tried to sell one brand, one overall narrative. I tried to make them care about the universe. But I was failing. A persistent apprehension surfaced amongst many executives in different media fields. How does one create a seamless transition from one platform to another?

Konzal defined transmedia as a complex blend of story (the various narratives), play (immersion and engagement) and dance (the collective endeavours). More interestingly, he compared the actual design and production of a transmedia narrative to an architectural work. He proposed that in the same way a building needs mortar to hold the bricks together, a transmedia story needs some form of glue to link all the narratives together across the various platforms (92). But how do we create that “glue”? I believe cracking this conundrum will solve the monetization problem transmedia producers are facing. Without some form of “glue” or “mortar”, transmedia projects are nothing more than an accumulation of videos, pixels, words, pictures and games. That is why the definition of transmedia is so slippery. If producers are to convince different media players to sit down and talk, they need to understand what that “glue” is. Nobel laureates Gary Becker and George Stigler speak at length of beneficially addictive goods (78). In simple terms, these are products where the more you consume, the more benefits you get. I argue that this is what the “glue” that Konzal speaks of should look like.

At FishCorb Films, I faced strong resistance every time I proposed developing a whole universe around particular properties the company owned. I was repeatedly told the transmedia components would only be added if a project was successful. My arguments about a nomadic audience were left unheeded. Quoting Brian Boyd was useless; “For children, direction, narration and enactment flow readily and naturally into one another. So long as the story-play continues, consistency of medium or mode does not matter” (117). Transmedia creator John Johnson’s musings didn’t convince them either; “A generation from now, nobody’s going to be thinking in terms of trans-media, because it will be so ubiquitous that it will become absolutely transparent” (qtd. in Dinehart). My ex-bosses remain sceptical about native transmedia stories to this day. The reality is that, as Clark rightly laments in *Transmedia’s Failures as a Scene*, so far, transmedia has “offered only vague promises of a proactive sort, rarely articulated beyond, “Storytelling will never be the same again!””

So, the question returns to the metaphor of the “glue”. What is this “glue”? How do we generate value to every party involved? While I agree with Boyd and Johnson, I understand that we do require more than gut feelings and predictions.

To facilitate migration from one platform to another, Long proposed six hermeneutic codes, questions or narrative gaps to be planted within a story, leading the audience through the various platforms (61-69). Narrative gaps are very common in serialized television shows, used as a way of leaving the audience wanting more. These codes work in the same way, serving as hooks to generate more interest in the world and its narrative, the answers or ‘pay offs’ to which would be found within another story, on another platform. Could these be the “glue” Konzal refers to?

The hermeneutic codes Long proposes are:

1. Cultural. Boba Fett’s scalps raise a number of questions about how the bounty hunter obtained them.

2. Character. Initially, Anakin Skywalker exists only in Obi-Wan's stories.

3. Chronological. The audience gets to know about the Clone Wars in the first *Star Wars* trilogy.

4. Geographic. In the early *Star Trek* TV series, the audience obtained all the information about the planet Vulcan from Spock.

5. Environmental. The Sarlacc in the Great Pit of Carkoon in the *Return of the Jedi*.

6. Ontological. The 1999 horror sensation *The Blair Witch Project*.

In building my own narrative for *The Tower of Fables*, I used four of the above codes extensively. The following are just a few examples:

1. Character. The villainous treachery committed by the Guardians is spoken of in the books but never seen. It is only in the TV series that we revisit that gruesome episode, when one of the Guardians wants to exact revenge on the Chief of Police.

2. Chronological. The audience gets to know about Utrek and his sister Maliora in the play. Hints are planted throughout each other segment, but the conclusion of their story will only happen in the console game.

3. Geographic. In the play, the audience is introduced to Storyville. The city is also described in the books, but it is only seen in the TV series, the online world and the game.

4. Environmental. The Dalians, strange and mysterious creatures, are mentioned in the third book, but only appear later in the TV series, console and online games.

This cross-linking, coupled with questions raised within each text, helps weave a complex multi-layered story. Klastrup and Tosca believe these hermeneutic codes also serve as a call to action, inviting audiences to dig deeper into the narrative (5). Jenkins refers to this as "additive comprehension" ("How Transmedia Storytelling Begat Transmedia Planning"). However, although valuable, Klastrup and Tosca's thesis relies on the assumption that the

audience will try to fill in the gaps by actively looking at other texts, rather than creating their own answers. I believe we cannot rely solely on such ruses.

Konzal is right in pointing that something is still missing. However, I disagree with calling it “glue”. I believe the term should be replaced with “structure”. That said, by no means am I arguing that there should be only one kind of structure. Transmedia is robust enough to encompass various structures or formats. What follows is a discussion centred on the structure I experimented with.

3.3.1. Structure

Over the last three years, my research has led me to conclude that transmedia storytelling needs not only more sustained funding and greater methodological clarity, but also better coordination in its release strategy. While touring various conferences, broadcasters and publishers often asked about my intended release strategy. Initially, I lied and invented anything that sounded intelligent and plausible. It then dawned on me, however, that a synchronized, sequential release strategy could add value to the overall experience and transform the ethereal concept of transmedia into a tangible form with a distinct “format”. So far, transmedia scholarship has barely touched on the importance of the release strategy.

Accustomed to the economics of sequels, other iterations of a story are usually commissioned only after a particular property proves successful. I suggest that such an approach uses transmedial methods to expand an existing universe. For transmedia to be taken seriously as a craft, practitioners need to build clear formats and structures. Pumping out random additions set in one world could be considered lazy, despite the fact that unsystematically released material can still be engaging, as in the case of many iterations of the *Star Wars* saga. However, as Weaver rightly states; “what separates transmedia from a franchise is how media fragments play with one another” (32).

Comparing each platform to a Lego piece, I needed to work out how to build a more powerful story brick by brick. Would we expect an audience to follow a serialised TV show if each episode did not air in the right order? I seriously doubt it. To give a recent example, when J.J. Abrams was hired to revamp and reboot the *Star Trek* franchise for the silver screen, he signed a deal with IDW Publishing and released a four issue prequel, introducing apprehensive Trekkies to his vision (Rasmus). Therefore, one can easily argue that *Star Trek: Countdown* served as the first act to a bigger narrative. If the prequel issues were published after the movie, it certainly wouldn't have been as effective.

During this research phase, I was reminded of Oscar-winning producer Frank Daniel's sequence approach to screenwriting (Howard 267-84). In simple terms, Daniel sought ways to make screenplays more manageable for writers. Daniel's analysis contributed to the division of a feature-length script into a number of sequences. Like chapters in a book, sequences build on one another, together creating the whole. In his book *How to Build a Great Screenplay: A Master Class in Storytelling for Film*, Howard, a protégé of Daniel's, discusses sequences extensively (267-84), explaining that each one is a story in its own right. Howard describes it as a self-contained portion of the overall narrative, with its own short term tension, with its own beginning, middle and end. Thus, instead of only one tension getting the audience through the whole story, there is a series of them. Orchestrating these tensions, all varying in intensity, allows for heightened involvement. Another important aspect of sequences is that they can belong to secondary characters; antagonist, love interest, best friend etc. This allows for the writer to strengthen audience identification with more than one character. Howard adds that sequences aid writers in creating more emotional shifts within the course of the story. Each sequence also merges with the one before and after it. In its most classic structure, Howard explains that Daniel divided the screenplay into eight

sequences; two in the first act, four in the second, and another two in the third. Howard then goes on highlight each sequence's role within the whole screenplay:

1. First Sequence. The story has not begun yet. With the audience still unaware of what the main tension is, the writer must create a new one. This sequence establishes the style of the story, and the worldview the audience is entering.

2. Second Sequence. Creates and establishes the main tension. This is where the first collisions occur.

3. Third Sequence. Found at the beginning of the second act, it elaborates on the main tension and the world of the story.

4. Fourth Sequence. Sees the protagonist's first concerted effort to solve the problem. The pivotal centre of the film, it ends in failure. It is generally characterized by sharp contrasts, resulting in the lowest point of the movie.

5. Fifth Sequence. After the intensity of the fourth sequence, there is a tendency for the story to suffer. This is why focus is directed towards secondary characters.

6. Sixth Sequence. This is where the protagonist mounts the major assault and tries to obtain the want. This sequence also marks a change in our protagonist. The character arc is completed.

7. Seventh Sequence. This first sequence in the third act is often referred to as the "False Resolution". As a result of the previous culmination, the story seems to have a straightforward ending. But this is where the much spoken about "twist" takes place.

8. Eighth Sequence. The real resolution. The audience witnesses the protagonist during his hardest test.

I realised that within the *Tower of Fables* universe, each individual story acted like a sequence, driving the narrative of this world forward. I decided to apply Daniel's sequence method to orchestrate a release schedule in the hope of creating beneficially addictive goods.

This roll out strategy, in turn, was creating a format. I compare it to when Will Eisner decided to write *The Spirit*, a comic with adults as its target audience. Despite being a simple concept, no one was actually doing it at the time.

This structure is something I can easily explain to third parties, working in a similar fashion to a complete TV series. Each season has a main overarching tension, while each episode has its own particular tension. These various tensions work together to bring the story to its ultimate culmination. Referring back to the earlier economic argument, this method potentially creates more consumption capital by making each subsequent encounter with the story (on various platforms) more valuable.

It is very common for different media to take elements from what came before them. The classical structure of a screenplay, often vilified as the Hollywood formula (Howard 318), is not a product of the US. In reality, the first screenwriters were theatre writers who brought with them all the tricks of their trade. Thus, Aristotle's influence found its way into screenwriting, the same way it did into world theatre, and literature before that. One clear remnant of Aristotle is the principle that one event should follow another in apparently necessary sequence (66).

The above approach does share similarities to Dena's idea of *transfiction*. However, her rigid theory dictates that a single narrative should start on one medium, continue on another, and end on another (*Current State of Cross Media Storytelling* 3). As already stated, I am not a fan of having one single story. From a producer's point of view, working this way can be quite costly. Bringing primary actors to work in lower yield media like webisodes can increase costs exponentially. Using secondary characters makes more sense from a budgetary perspective. Also, aesthetically, it can give the audience a different angle into the story. *Battlestar Galactica's* webisode series, *The Face of the Enemy*, used this technique, focusing on the narrative of Felix Gaeta, a previously marginalized character in the TV series.

I applied Daniel’s method to my project. I hoped this approach would help executives understand why each segment is of equal importance, facilitate dialogue, and thus play a role in creating a common language amongst all parties. I restructured the release strategy of *The Tower of Fables* (see fig. 8).



Fig. 8. The release strategy was restructured, in line with the Frank Daniel’s approach to screenwriting. Thus, every piece would naturally follow the other, adding further to the narrative, enriching it.

I argue that if this order is followed, the audience will not just deepen its knowledge about the world, but also experience a rising tension, with the stakes intensifying until the final culmination. Detractors of my proposal will immediately comment that producers have no control over their audience; people can decide to engage with only one platform. While this is indeed correct, such actions would not, and indeed should not, affect their enjoyment of the story. Citing an example from personal experience, while I never liked the TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, I was still an avid consumer of the comic series.

When I started discussing this “format” with other practitioners, I soon discovered a strong consensus. My peers agreed that this method simplified complex explanations.

3.3.2. The Tower of Fables: Restructured

First segment: The play

The live theatre play has been rewritten, but has kept the intimacy of the setting of the first show. I still wanted a play that was inexpensive to produce and had the ability to travel in a book shop or school, however, the script needed to fit the tonality of the entire project. I chose this segment because it works as an introduction to the entire world. It introduces the audience to the Tower of Fables and to the Guardians. Utrek, the most evil of dark wizards, still weak after thousands of years imprisoned in ice, attacks the Tower, bent on changing the endings of each and every fairytale. This play will work as a first act which incorporates the first and second sequence of Daniel's approach.

Second segment: The trilogy

The narrative of the books starts with Utrek taking over the Tower and crushing Storyville. Two Guardians manage to escape with the enchanted Book of Fables. Meanwhile, in the boring town of Narrative High, we meet the young Jimmy Jones, the protagonist of this text. Unbeknownst to him, and everyone else, his grandfather's well is nothing but a wishing well of legend that acts as a portal between Storyville and the Old World. Together with the two remaining loyal Guardians, Jimmy helps protect the magical Book of Fables. At the end of the trilogy, he and his friends lead a rebellion against Utrek, defeating the evil wizard, saving both Storyville and the Old World. It is clear that if the books are taken as a whole, there is an intensification of the conflict and the audience learns more about Storyville, the Tower of Fables and the history of both. The books would therefore serve as a third sequence.

Third segment: The first three seasons of the TV series

In the TV series, we return to Storyville many years later. Jimmy Jones is now the Chief of the SPD (Storyville Police Department). After his adventures in Storyville, he chose never to

return to the Old World. He married Gretel with whom he had a son, but Utrek killed him for his part in bringing him down. Unlike the other inhabitants, Jimmy has no magic powers, and has grown old. The story narrates the adventures of Jumper Jones, Jimmy's grandson, who has just been accepted to the SPD Academy. The whole series sees Utrek and his minions attacking the Tower repeatedly, but each attempt is thwarted by Jumper and his friends. Although each episode ends with Utrek and his minions being defeated, the officers are always unable to subdue him permanently. Hence, each segment keeps giving the audience more information about the rich history of the world, old alliances and archenemies. Over time, Jumper, who is an irresponsible but kind-hearted boy, grows and matures. He manages to acquire the coveted SPD badge and become a valiant officer, just like his father and his grandfather before him. In the last episode of season three, Utrek manipulates the Time Pirates into joining his attack on Storyville. In the final showdown, Jumper and his friends must confront the pirates, but inadvertently destroy the navigational system disappearing with the ship into another dimension. This becomes the mid-point of the first wave. Storyville loses its most valiant hero. The first three seasons act as the fourth sequence.

Fourth Segment: MMORPG

The MMORPG allows participants to explore Storyville and the Tower of Fables. Children are invited to join the SPD Academy and defend the Tower from Utrek's clutches. Minor characters in the books and TV series become the players' guides in the online game. This release gives children the opportunity to get to know the world on a much deeper level. This is the most interactive part of the whole transmedia experience and acts as the fifth sequence.

Fifth Segment: The fourth season of the TV series

The fourth season will serve as the sixth sequence. Our heroes return to Storyville to find that Utrek has taken over. Armed with the powerful Book of Fables, he has changed everything,

twisting the minds of every character. For the entire season, Jumper must battle the evil forces pitted against him in the shape of a warped version of his family and friends to save Storyville. This is the greatest exertion so far. At the end, Utrek is defeated... or so they think.

Sixth Segment: Feature film

Once again, this story takes places years after the TV series. Utrek is gone, and Storyville is enjoying this hard earned peace to the fullest. As a result, the police have become rather complacent. Jumper's own son, Tim Tom, joins the SPD. But unlike his father and grandfather before him, he is the clumsiest person in Storyville. Then, one day, Utrek returns, and Tim Tom inadvertently helps him take over the Tower. The film follows Tim Tom as he then sets off on a quest to right his wrongs. This segment works exactly as the seventh sequence with the resolution at the end of the film being a false one. Utrek is not entirely defeated.

Seventh Segment: Console game

The console game begins exactly where the film ends. Utrek returns to exact revenge on Tim Tom, kidnapping his girlfriend Little Bo Peep. Users must play as Tim Tom to save his beloved. This final chapter will bring the whole story to its ultimate conclusion. Utrek will be defeated once and for all. Many writers milk their characters to death. However, I am against such strategies. As McKee rightly says; "To be entertained is to be immersed in the ceremony of story to an intellectually and emotionally satisfying end" (12).

I argue that once the producer identifies the "format" it should then be announced to the public. This information will guide the audience, allowing them to follow the story in the desired way. It is similar to a TV series; the audience knows how many episodes it contains and when they will be aired (despite the fact that with current technology the audience can watch online whenever they want). There is a sort of ritual, a tacit agreement between audience, content creator and distributor. Transmedia needs to create this kind of ritual. If we

are to recognise that a fundamental aspect of transmedia is this relationship between story and its audience, then practitioners must do something to communicate our intentions, as well as enhance their story experience with every added engagement. Unless the project is a gamified experience that requires secrecy and code breaking, I argue that the public should be told how to engage with the whole universe and where to find the material. When Marvel Studios President Kevin Feige launched the Marvel Cinematic universe, every aspect of each phase was clearly communicated, and he continues to do this even now (Eisenberg). People know that they can enjoy any superhero film they want, but watching the whole franchise in a particular sequence creates a more complete experience. The Dallas Comic Con also serves as a platform for many companies to announce their properties to the public.

I suggest that these announcements should be considered a priority as they allow the audience to familiarize itself with the proposed structure. I always insisted my transmedia story did not have a dominant platform, but simply consisted of seven iterations. I call this the “first wave”. Once this wave is concluded, a second one can start with new characters and new stories. The world built allows for such things.

Having set up this theory, I returned to the various players with the aim of persuading them to get on board. Compromise from all parties involved was essential for *The Tower of Fables* to work, however this has been impossible to achieve so far. In the end, I was the only one willing to compromise. *The Tower of Fables* is by no means dead. The project is very much alive. The only change is that my synchronized release plan will not materialize. I feel it is too demanding, and too early in the evolution of transmedia as an industry. My new strategy is to focus on the TV series. With David Howard recently joining the writing team, his work on the Emmy award-winning *Rugrats* is sure to be beneficial to our cause.

3.4. CONCLUSION

Financing native transmedia as I proposed is extremely difficult, but not impossible. It requires a great deal of negotiating skills, patience and time. The lack of a universal language and common business models does nothing to aid this situation. However, this fact should not frighten practitioners. Transmedia is extremely complex by nature. It might be the case that we are simply asking too much of an industry in a moment of chaos.

Franchising is the closest comparison available. If franchising is taken as a precursor to transmedia storytelling, it is easy to see how innovators dealt with comparable issues in the early days. Eventually, systems were created to facilitate the sharing of resources across a number of independent media. Even more importantly, an understanding was developed which saw each player performing his part on cue. Looking at the relationship Hollywood has had over the years with various industries like record labels or multinational fast food companies, the synchronized release of materials to maximize the experience and profit has already been present for a while. This clearly shows that my model is not unfeasible. Eventually, these relationships will solidify as transmedia continues to develop.

Franchising went through a steep learning curve before the horizontal integration model could be applied successfully. Practitioners should look closer at these models, using them as examples to help executives understand the exigencies of the actual story, and how it plays out in this multi-platformed serial. Practitioners should study franchising for its instructive potential as a historical precedent. There is a lot to draw from and improve.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1. SUMMING UP**
- 4.2. TERMINOLOGY**
- 4.3. THE INDUSTRY**
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- 4.10. SUGGESTIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**
- 4.11. CLOSING STATEMENT**

4.1. SUMMING UP

Media academic Bryan Alexander argues that “we are living in a time of immense creativity, with new opportunities for creators appearing nearly every day” (3). While I subscribe to this point of view, I also recognise that this particular moment of disruption is also presenting producers with numerous challenges.

Deuze argues that if academia is to have any role in shaping better practices, it cannot rely on assumptions regarding how the media industries operate. Understanding the working lives of the people within the creative industries is essential (*Convergence Culture and Media Work* 145). Caldwell argues that insider information is as important as semiotic analysis (qtd. in Clarke 15). This document is just that; a study of a specific project. In a broad sense, it investigates how it is possible to make progress in uncertainty. It is about those creative and commercial trials that European producers are facing.

Over three years ago, in an interview with *Wired*'s Tom Cheshire and Charlie Burton, Gomez stated:

We are going to see visionaries who understand the value of each media platform as if it's a separate musical instrument, who'll create symphonic narratives which leverage each of these multimedia platforms in a way that will create something we haven't encountered yet.

When I started this thesis, like Gomez, I believed in this techno-utopic discourse. I saw many more production opportunities, and a lot more potential for dialogue with like-minded audiences. Today, however, I am marginally more mature. During these last years, I came to realise that the conditions required for native transmedia storytelling to flourish in Europe are still not available. My case study showed that there are serious lacunas in Europe's funding structures. There are too few forward thinking commissioners putting up

money. Transmedia producers are still expected to fit within the tight perimeters set by previous media. Additionally, there is also a lack of trans-industry synergy hindering progress. However, this does not mean I no longer believe in transmedia storytelling. On the contrary, its potential for poetic innovation and story expansion remains astounding. I am still intrigued by the new forms and meanings that can emerge from the creative integration or combination of texts and platforms. The work done on *The Tower of Fables* is a testament to this.

As already stated in previous chapters, producing a native transmedia project is extremely complex. The massive organisational output through a variety of different outlets requires more collaborators, more money and more time. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I argued that these conditions give rise to serious concerns about the capacity of independent European producers to respond to the opportunities provided by the digital age. In the second chapter, I attempted to formulate very simple methods to facilitate the creation of a universe, using my project as a case study. Through the construction of *The Tower of Fables*, as well as my constant interaction with broadcasters, game developers, publishers, academics and other practitioners, it was possible to investigate grammar, formats and markets. Thus, the third chapter dealt with the influences of commerce on aesthetics.

What I argued in many of my meetings was that stronger synergies, relying on story, can lead to bigger revenues. Companies also have the possibility to share risk and resources. While today, such compromises remain difficult to obtain, I am sure that they will become the norm eventually. I say this because research on my audience (children aged seven to eleven) clearly showed that they are nomadic viewers, moving from one platform to another without hesitating, expecting each extension to be equal to the source material in terms of quality. Thus, brands are easily harmed when substandard material is released on other

platforms. As a result, the media industry will eventually adopt a multi-modal way of thinking in terms of creative storytelling.

My investigation showed that the current predominant business model is rather simple. Companies and institutions wait for a particular IP to become successful, then rush to capitalise on that success. I argued that although this method has produced some interesting projects, like *Twin Peaks* and its tie-in novel *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer* in the early 1990s, its use of transmedial methods to expand a product is motivated by commerce.

During my observational fieldwork, talking to various industry players, I also realised that native transmedia storytelling has no real format. That lack of structure can be extremely unsettling to potential investors. With this in mind, I used Frank Daniel's sequence approach for screenwriting to create a clear format that focused on a coordinated release of each expansion. I argued that each segment of the narrative, irrespective of the platform, needed to contribute to the overall experience if consumed in the appropriate manner. Initially, I worked on this kind of model in order to facilitate dialogue, to show each industry player why native transmedia has no dominant platform. However, as it developed I realised that it could hold the key to pushing forward the whole experience. All this was reinforced by other practitioners who decided to adopt this model for their own projects.

While sharing my views with broadcasters and publishers, I always encountered a lot of resistance. I rebutted their negativity by referring back to the history of franchising. Independents were the ones to realise the potential of a synergistic exploitation of IPs. It was New Line Cinema and Mirage Comics who saw the potential of creating further iterations of the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. The model created by these small players was then adopted by the major studios, only much later. While it is understood that the current situation is far from perfect, someone needs to start somewhere. The most important thing is to never give up. Any success depends primarily upon risk and perseverance.

Unfortunately, for *The Tower of Fables*, in the end, no one budged. Media scholar William Uricchio rightly points out that:

Tensions between innovation and standardization, the determining potentials of various intermediately situated prototypes, the struggles to find a place in the media landscape and the threats to existing patterns of social organization are all factors that each new medium has faced. (228)

I finally opted to join the herd and focus primarily on the TV series. I did so because, as a writer/producer with a decade of experience in that field, I am confident that I can go into production by 2015. I have developed three screenplays and the project has just been selected for the Cartoon Forum¹ to be held in Toulouse from the 23rd to 26th of September, 2014 where I will be pitching the animation project to over 200 financiers. Please refer to Section K of the Creative document for the scripts. I have also already obtained a letter of interest from the Maltese broadcaster, together with two recommendations from Michel Reilhac and David Howard. Please refer to Section L of the Creative document for these letters.

However, I must emphasise that this same model I proposed is being implemented on another project of mine. I have been successful in convincing the Valletta 2018 Foundation, for which I am working as a transmedia consultant, to adopt my release methodology in their programming schedule until 2018 when Valletta becomes the European City of Culture. Granted, the fact that I was dealing with a single institution made things much easier. With *The Tower of Fables*, a larger budget was needed; therefore numerous entities had to be approached. Problems arose when each one tried to take complete control of the entire project, and mould it around their interests. From my part, I must also admit that I was proposing a more elaborate scheme, requiring extensive preparations and funds.

Things will only change when a successful business model is finally found to capitalize on transmedia's non-linear, storytelling potential. Using the research from my fieldwork, I identified a number of challenges that hinder the production of native transmedia projects. I also provide a number of suggestions.

4.2. TERMINOLOGY

The biggest problem I encountered during these last years was the lack of a common language. "Transmedia storytelling" remains a murky term. New vocabulary keeps popping up on a regular basis, exhibiting just how sparse industry standards are within transmedia. This constitutes an immense problem for producers. In this scenario, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for creators to explain what they are selling, making it a real challenge to attract investment. This surplus of confusion among decision makers, scholars and creators has stalled any real progress in the field.

Despite the rhetoric I heard in many conferences, for most executives, transmedia is nothing more than a promotional tool. The divide between creative content and marketing remains unclear (Rose *The Art of immersion* 242). I experienced this first hand when pitching *The Tower of Fables* to various entities. It was immediately clear that the executives saw the other extensions as mere cross-promotional material, meaning they were less inclined to supply the necessary funds to develop the networked narrative as a whole.

History shows us that the media industry's immediate response to the fragmentation of the homogenous model of the mass audience has always been to flood the market with ancillary material (Meehan, *Transindustrialism and Synergy* 123-26). Film studies scholar Justin Wyatt explains how soundtracks and merchandizing were initially used to create high awareness about a particular text (16). Nowadays, spinoffs are used in the exact same manner. As opposed to being used to deepen the story and engage with an eager audience,

they are nothing more than pure business manoeuvres. This aggressive response of multiplatform licensing strategies is now considered to be an economic imperative for the survival of various industries. Economies of scale have been replaced with economies of scope (S. Murray *Brand Loyalties* 420).

I concluded that most broadcasters, distributors, financiers and funding bodies are still unsure about the actual concept of transmedia storytelling and its potential values. This is aggravated by the fact that the term transmedia is often used just to make a product sound more innovative. Realistically speaking, this apprehension is to be expected, and not completely unwarranted. After all, the media industry is made up of commercial enterprises requiring enormous capital investment. A number of executives from various media institutions repeatedly told me that their number one priority is to minimize risk.

Transmedia storytelling needs to become a recognizable and repeatable product. Since we are still struggling to find an aesthetic language to describe and evaluate these kinds of stories, I argue that we need more case studies. These will help transmedia criticism develop as a field of interest, which will, in turn, provide the analyses crucial for the development the industry as a whole. It is through such work that the best practices and tactics emerge. I argue that education is essential for growth in transmedia. This includes policy makers, broadcasters and funding bodies.

4.3. THE INDUSTRY

Excited claims made about technology-driven revolutions risk obscuring what is really happening on the ground. During these last years, I witnessed a media industry rooted in compliance, policy and procedure. Clarke argues that the most apparent reason for this is the nature of the industry itself. Being a high risk business, with the success of new products depending on highly volatile factors like fashion and personal taste, change can be quite slow

(10). In fact, the silo structures of various media industries like broadcasting and publishing are still very much alive.

A TV executive who wanted to remain anonymous, during a coffee break at the London Cross-Media Forum, also reminded me of the cautionary tale of tulip mania,² when the popularity of the flower in the Holland during the 1600s resulted in a major economic crash. He warned me that I should not waste so much time and energy on transmedia. He dubbed the phenomenon as a passing fad. I encountered this diffidence on numerous occasions. Way back in 2001, Jenkins had predicted that changes would not come by easily. Quoting Dickens, he described this period as “the best of times and the worst of times” (“Convergence? I Diverge.” 93).

Media convergence does not necessarily lead to industry convergence. Currently, experimentation is very improbable. Since the present funding structures for transmedia in Europe are quite weak, producers have to collaborate with various media industries. When it came to *The Tower of Fables*, the struggle for power brought negotiations to a halt as each individual industry refused to relinquish any of its control.

In trying to build a common language, I adopted Frank Daniel’s sequence approach for screenwriting to create value out of the roll out strategy. I also wanted to show executives that there is no real dominant platform in native transmedia projects. But even though the theory was easily understood, executives still refused to comply with my requests for mutual cooperation.

Budgets were always a dominant concern. Executives couldn’t understand why they needed to contribute financially to the development of so many platforms that did not concern their business. Ultimately, producers need to contend that this is a high risk business, and executives must report profits every quarter. At the moment, obtaining cross-industry synergy is very difficult. However, the history of franchising is bursting with examples of

how media industries have already attempted to organise collaboration and co-creation through a system of social relationships. In the 1970s, the film industry started coordinating the releases of their products with those of soundtracks. New strategies, requiring strict collaboration, were quickly adopted, giving rise to new ways of doing business. Realizing the potential of this market convergence, Hollywood started to focus more on commercial tie-ins. Fictional characters were transformed into commodities. McDonalds and Disney have developed a well-oiled work plan. I argue that franchising must be studied further as it can surely offer added insight into the process of creating bridges.

During the conferences I attended, many of my more optimistic peers compared the present situation, in relation to the media industries, to that of the last days of Soviet Union. In August 1991, hardliners opposing Mikhail Gorbachev's liberal policies staged a coup, but change was inevitable. As a result, the new repressive regime was short-lived. Personally, I do hope that they are right.

4.4. FUNDING STRUCTURES

I repeatedly hear that transmedia should nurture co-creations. I agree with this statement, but who will pay all the writers, designers, producers? At the moment, there aren't many scalable revenue models from which to borrow or leverage. Transmedia funds in Europe are not that common. To make matters worse, the recent financial crisis has given governments the opportunity to slash cultural funding. Surprisingly, Malta has actually increased its contribution to cultural activities. However, while augmented funds for film, literature and art abound, transmedia does not feature anywhere. Because of this, I have spent a substantial part of the last three years lobbying for change. Together with the local Media Desk, I even organised the first transmedia conference in Malta.

Many of the practitioners I met over these last years reported that they were in the exact same situation. European producers rarely have the luxury of a budget split into fair parts, each allocated to the different segments of their transmedia narrative. Mostly, it's about coming up with ingenious ways of funding, or about cannibalising budgets. This is creating a situation where narratives suffer greatly because too many corners are cut.

The current system is not sustainable for those involved. Finding development money for *The Tower Fables* was quite impossible. If something is not done soon, producers will move away from transmedia. I was lucky because I am an experienced writer and could develop the project on my own. However, this also meant that I had to work on other projects simultaneously to earn a living. The current circumstances in the European media industry are also generating large volumes of unpaid work from experience-seeking students. Producers have little choice but to turn to students since the demands on them are growing, while funding continues to dwindle. I feel this is quite unfair, creating perilous precedents. I would like European politicians to be more active in safeguarding storytelling by creating the right mechanisms for it to not only survive, but to flourish. This would definitely give the creative economy a good boost.

4.5. BRANDS

Experts keep pointing out how, in this changing world, brands are actively seeking to support and become involved with narratives (Jeff Gomez "Mythology and Transmedia"). But I was always taught that half a truth is worse than a lie. A few very successful experiments, like BMW³ and Red Bull's⁴ innovative ventures, do not constitute a trend. At the very least, this is not the case for new narratives. Most brands are only seeking to cement partnerships with already established stars. This was very clear from all my meetings with various brands. Philip Napoli explains that audiences are becoming increasingly unpredictable (*Audience*

Economics 62). Therefore, it makes perfect economic sense for Pepsi to choose signing a \$50 million partnership deal with a super star like Beyoncé (Elberse 242) over investing in an unknown entity like *The Tower of Fables*. The reality is that it is extremely hard for independent producers to win a brand's trust.

Brands are also suspicious of experimentation. They are solely concerned with winning over new customers. The media industry has always operated in what Napoli describes as “the dual product marketplace” (*Audience Economics* 1). Media institutions sell two different products to two different consumers; content to audiences, then audiences to advertisers. Few, like HBO and Netflix, work on a different model, operating exclusively in the content market.

Brands have trusted these methods for decades, thus moving away is going to be difficult. Every brand I dealt with, and continue to deal with, wanted a distribution deal in place. My research shows that old media is still a power to be reckoned with. The freedom from formats and institutions, much lauded by early pioneers, is deemed rather impractical.

4.6. NEW SKILLS

I always like to compare transmedia's present with the early days of TV. Not knowing what to do with cameras, producers solved their quagmire by filming radio shows. However, it wasn't long before industrious people realised that the tools available held much more potential. As time went by, a new language was created, one more eloquent and sophisticated. At the moment, many transmedia practitioners are still applying a mono-medium mindset to the form. In retrospect, I realise even I was guilty of this. I now consider this a limitation. Although *Star Wars* was a great inspiration, my whole childhood revolved around separate mono-narratives. Therefore, my transition to transmedia was a gradual one. Eventually, a new generation of practitioners will arise, made up of individuals who have

been nurtured in this diversity, and that drawback will no longer be an issue. In the meantime, we non-digital natives need to learn new skills.

I argue that it is extremely hard for creators to have expertise in every medium. Hopefully, each individual medium will continue to strengthen as creatives focus on mastering their medium of choice. The collaborations that come together as a result will then provide better products across the board.

The current market is clearly overcrowded, offering a multitude of distractions. Audiences are dispersed, experiencing a lot more “noise”. There is no guarantee that certain content will be identified and a particular brand will be engaged with. As Bernardo says; “The fact that the show is available on a lot of devices doesn’t mean everyone will watch it” (“How Transmedia Can Empower Producers”). Producers need to put as much creativity into thinking about, learning from, developing and retaining their audience, as they put into their stories. I am not saying that the story should take a back seat. Story is essential. Hollywood’s fixation with market testing has given such tools a bad name. Today, producers need to use these tests to ensure that they are on the right path.

The internet offers producers the possibility to experiment and test waters in a cost effective manner. Listening to what your audience wants has become crucial. Audiences can generate quite a lot of buzz around their favourite content, effectively publicising it for free. Weiler also noted; “Engaging an audience in a meaningful way does not ensure that your work will not be pirated, but building such relationships may help limit the damage” (“When the Audience Take Control”) The reality is that producers are not only fighting for primetime television, but for brand recognition in an over saturated environment. Producers have to learn to stand out.

Like Jenkins, I believe the companies that will survive in this landscape are those with the “ability to understand and speak to the needs of their audiences” (*Spreadable Media* xii).

This particular skill will become essential for success. Whether producers like it or not, they are dependent on networked communities to circulate, curate and appraise the final product. Today, they lose all control over their content the moment it leaves their hands. It has become essential for contemporary producers to acquire more skills. Knowing how to raise funds, develop narratives and distribute stories is just not enough anymore. Producers need to know how to keep audiences satiated and engaged.

4.7. CREATORS

For a long time, transmedia storytelling was celebrated for freeing creatives from formats and industry impositions. However, my fieldwork clearly showed that financiers will always take the devil-you-know approach. Transmedia creators need to stop preaching that they have reinvented the wheel. As historian Robert Damton writes, “The marvels of communication technology in the present have produced a false consciousness about the past – even a sense that communication has no history, or had nothing of importance to consider before the days of television and the internet” (1). Storytelling will never change. It needs a beginning, middle and end (though “Not necessarily in that order”, as filmmaker Jean Luc Godard would add (qtd. in Rose *Art of Immersion*, 114)). A narrative also needs conflict (McKee 215). Experiments with collaborative storytelling are not all that transmedia is about, they are just one niche.

Over the last three years, at many conferences, I often felt that creators projected the wrong impression. Transmedia needs writers and producers who understand the market and its requirements. Financiers need workable formats. The audience needs to know what they will engage with and how. Rather than destroying formats, transmedia should be reworking them. In his book, *The Language of New Media*, Lev Manovich, sums it up beautifully,

To use a metaphor from computer culture, new media transforms all culture and cultural theory into an open source. This opening up of cultural techniques, conventions, forms and concepts is ultimately the most promising cultural effect of computerization – an opportunity to see the world anew in ways that were not available to a man with a movie camera. (333)

4.8. THINKING GLOBALLY

Three-time Pulitzer Prize winner Thomas Friedman compares the birth of the internet to the fall of the Berlin Wall. In his bestseller *The World is Flat*, he argues that the web has:

Enabled more people than ever to be connected and to share their digital content with more other people for less money than any time before... there was suddenly a platform for collaboration that all kinds of people from around the globe could now plug, compete and connect on – to share work, exchange knowledge, start companies and invent and sell goods and services. (92)

Data seems to give credence to such emphatic declarations. 32 million people tuned in to the season finale of 2009's *American Idol*. However, Scottish singer Susan Boyle, who appeared on a similar show in the UK that same year, garnered 77 million hits on YouTube (*Spreadable Media* 9). December 2012 saw media streaming website Machinima.com getting 2.6 billion clicks and 262 million unique views. In the previous twelve months, the network was accessed over 20 billion times (Pollack). These astounding figures seem to support the idea that these producers could expand globally, turning their small companies into mini Hollywood studios. I too believed it was possible. However, my research saw me retract such received wisdom. Today, I argue that it is unwise to have such ambitious goalposts. To establish brand identity, elicit and reward users through engaging forms of interactivity, develop alternative revenue streams from advertising, brand patronage, licensing and

merchandizing; these are all mammoth tasks for any small company. They also require the competencies old media possessed: economies of scale and reach.

Americans can do what they do because they have the marketing power to engage with a worldwide audience. My work with *The Tower of Fables* now leads me to the conclusion that it is much better to start small on a known territory, and prove that the project has worked on that level, before moving on to the next. I would also suggest documenting the process by keeping a production diary about what worked and what did not.

4.9. SUGGESTIONS FOR TRANSMEDIA START UPS

As the traditional one-content, one-medium model becomes less and less profitable, more European producers are venturing into transmedia territory. The following is a list of suggestions to assist European producers to better prepare to tell a longer and more expansive story.

1. **Story and Bible:** Not every idea is transmedia material. A genuine transmedia project requires a rich world with engaging, three dimensional characters and enough plot twists and conflict to support numerous episodes and multiple iterations. The story should never be left as an afterthought. Transmedia storytelling is about figuring out new approaches and new angles. However capitalizing on new technology is not enough. Audiences will seek and access content only when the narrative is truly engaging. Careful development and long term planning becomes crucial at inception. After all, transmedia still requires a lot education from all sides (producers, audiences and financiers). Understanding which platforms offer the best experience is a very important task. Unfortunately there are no real guide posts. Extensive research is the only tool at hand. Budgets will also have an impact. The bible, a complex and costly endeavour in itself, is a very milestone in creating a transmedia project. It allows

producers to map, test and experiment the actual story and the mechanics of the transitions as the narrative moves from one platform to another. Creating a seamless user experience is essential. Interaction, accessibility and functionality are key elements that need to be studied thoroughly. It is important to note that not everybody will watch everything, participate or follow the path created for them. All these different audience behaviors still require a story that needs to make sense. Also characters need to be really engaging to make audiences come back for more content, whatever the media they choose. The bible also allows producers and their teams to ensure that each expansion is effectively managed and that the generated content will be in synch across each platform.

2. The prototype: With transmedia the opportunity for content creation is endless. However most European producers do not have the necessary financial firepower to develop and launch across all media from the start. In such a scenario it becomes important to focus on one component and build a functional prototype that can be easily shown to potential investors. The prototype can also help create hype and garner a sizeable fan base. Ideally a producer should create a product on the platform he/she is most familiar with. If budgets are an issue, books and graphic novels are an inexpensive way to gain a foothold into mainstream media. The launch of a prototype also allows producers to collect raw data about the content released as well as the audience reception. This information can greatly contribute to the polishing of the said content.
3. Research and data mining: Transmedia storytelling offers producers the possibility to reach multiple demographics based on their interests. Understanding the audience is of paramount importance. Start-ups need to take the time to study their chosen

audience. This will help facilitate communication and interaction. It is also highly advisable for producers to closely monitor new technologies. New hardware and software can help create a unique experience for users and generate much needed publicity and recognition.

4. The internet: Obtaining exposure on the web and through social media is vital. Extensive visibility can attract audiences as well as finance. Such skills need to be purchased. Community managers can be extremely helpful in assisting producers to find and build an audience. Through the careful observation of the chosen audience, its behaviours and environment, community managers are able to specifically target the content in those places where they congregate. This procedure can lead to a sustainable business model.
5. Story-making: Audiences are not just numbers. They can become evangelists and content creators. Harnessing that power is very important. Start-ups should encourage such interactions and invite audiences to collaborate. Storytelling is no longer a one way street. Transmedia screenwriting isn't about broadcasting a message to the masses with a digital media megaphone. It's about story making, where audiences help create and share narratives.
6. Partnerships: Transmedia storytelling is a complex puzzle that requires a multitude of skills and expertise. Weaving a cohesive narrative across various platforms is not a one man job. Today, most transmedia project rely heavily on internet, gadgets, phones and other communication technology. Mastering all this knowledge, which is constantly being updated, is close to impossible. Teaming up with such strategic partners can help the project tremendously. Building a strong network of partners from versatile disciplines is highly recommended to keep ideas fresh. Such

partnerships can also ease the financial burdens of a project. It is always advisable to choose partners wisely.

7. **Funds:** Implementing innovation always brings forth many challenges for any industry. As discussed in earlier chapters European funds are quite limited when it comes to transmedia. Creativity is a very valid tool to possess in the current scenario. An entrepreneurial producer who thinks outside the box will have a higher chance of securing any form of finance. Small loans aimed at start-up companies are a good place to start. The EU has also identified new media as a future growth industry. It would be extremely advisable for start ups to market the company as a new media company rather than a TV and film business. It is also important to build creative proposals as business ventures that show how they will create jobs. This change will facilitate dialogue with various government agencies who would otherwise redirect producers to their local film board or broadcaster. Also, the post-recession climate offers a number of interesting funds in the areas of IT, digital content and games. These can become accessible if the company is registered as a new media outfit.
8. **Competition:** The moment something in transmedia works, rest assured that the big studios will emulate it and try to push the small start-ups out of business. It is advisable to have a long term strategy and market the company as experts of a particular field. This will allow the company to survive and consult others on the achievements reached.

4.10. SUGGESTIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The entertainment industry needs informed practitioners. Transmedia requires constant interrogation; however, quality and assessment issues remain problematic since the analysis of content flowing across a number of platforms is still a relatively new area. So far, there are

no real metrics with which to measure the success of a transmedia project. To do so, we would not only need to establish the size of the audience, but more importantly how many of those are actively engaged with the product and how. While some, like Alexander, believe it is too early in the historical process of transmedia to be doing this (223), I feel there is no time to waste. We must really focus on this area for transmedia storytelling to thrive.

Academics and practitioners alike need to continue refining procedures, formats and grammar through continuous exchange of data. This will surely enliven the current essential discourse needed to create a new, sustainable ecosystem. Media academics Richard Berger and Ashley Woodfall rightly point out that:

Current media education, which has served to privilege existing academic silos and curricula, has as a consequence become skewed toward a particular medium – such as television or film. This has only functioned to distort critical perspectives of crossmedia practice. (112)

Futurology is a fool's game, but it cannot be denied that software development seems to be in a constant state of flux. New platforms, like Twitter, are being ushered in, some of which simply do not fit into readily understandable categories. It would also be interesting to see which of those are adopted and which are discarded. Personally, I believe the smartphone will play a crucial role as a device. Internet companies, along with Silicon Valley, will continue becoming more involved in the business of content distribution. These same companies are quickly turning into the banks of the future. Unlike studios and broadcast networks, their history is rather new, allowing them to be more daring and experimental. All these are important developments that need to be followed and studied.

I feel that academics should also focus on these issues: 1. Can we create repeatable formats? 2. How can concepts from information design theory be applied to stories that integrate multiple media? 3. How do the inherent characteristics of a particular platform

shape the narrative and affect the experience of a transmedia project? 4. What properties of a particular medium are advantageous or unfavourable to the creation of a transmedia project? 5. What can one medium do that another cannot when used to create a transmedia narrative?

My part in this conversation does not stop with this dissertation. On the contrary, I am now more engaged than ever in transmedia. Over the last three years, I have been regularly invited to speak, sharing my experiences with fellow practitioners at various conferences. Together with the Malta Media Desk, I introduced transmedia in Malta for the first time by organizing the conference *Transmedia, What?*. A recording of this conference can be found on the accompanying USB memory stick under the heading, “Transmedia, What?”. It is my prerogative not to stop with such initiatives. I find such exchanges to be extremely challenging and inspiring. Recently, I was also appointed Program Artistic Director for Valletta 2018 City of Culture where my job is to create a program using transmedia and film. One project I am working on, together with PhD researcher Alison Norrington, will see us building a think tank that will invite experts from all over the world to debate issues within the industry on a yearly basis. Published papers will also be distributed for free to all those interested. This project will definitely zoom in on the various suggestions I am putting forward.

I am also heavily invested in continuing my own experimentation with various formats. Many practitioners, with whom I have discussed my concept of synchronizing the roll out, and the idea of fashioning it according to Frank Daniel’s sequence method, have responded very positively. Unfortunately, I have been unable to implement it for *The Tower of Fables*. Getting companies across different industries to work together has been extremely difficult. Maybe it is too ambitious for the time being. As a producer, I still need to create content to earn a living, therefore the development of the project will continue. Based on

industry feedback, I have decided to push forward with the TV series first. I am envisioning a German/UK co-production.

4.11. CLOSING STATEMENT

The research conducted over the last years, together with the development process I undertook for *The Tower of Fables*, have been extremely edifying. Studying and exploring the construction of a native transmedia project has been beneficial in many ways:

1. It constantly challenged me as a producer and forced me to find solutions.
2. It sharpened my focus and solidified my academic endeavours towards a better understanding of this phenomenon.
3. It expanded my skills as a researcher, lecturer, writer and producer.
4. It helped me identify the problems in the current market place.
5. It inspired me to experiment with formats and test theories in a safe environment.

At the outset of this work, my main goal was to explore the creative and business viability of native transmedia storytelling in a European framework. This was done through the study of existing literature, personal interviews and extensive fieldwork. However, this thesis was not just restricted to exploring context. I also wanted to find alternative and effective ways to produce *The Tower of Fables*. Creating a set of best standard practices is extremely important for the evolution of this art form. My work has generated a lot of interest from various industries and although the eventual path taken strayed from my original vision, I still feel that my endeavours were successful for my own personal and professional growth.

In this thesis, I have also imagined and speculated on what the future of storytelling will hold for this new producer many industry insiders have dubbed “the superproducer” (O’Flynn). I am sure that the future will correct, supplant and transform all the work done here. However, I am also certain that future conversations regarding native transmedia

storytelling will eventually shift to the reorganization and emergence of repeatable formats. That is key to creating meaningful dialogues with investors. The creation of these formats will help with the formulation of sustainable business plans. Although native transmedia is no longer a bundle of desires and technological possibilities, there is still way too much uncertainty on an entrepreneurial level. Proper relevance will only be obtained with profits.

Murray points out that it took 150 years of experimentation from Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in 1455, to the writing and subsequent publication of *Don Quixote*, the first European novel (28). I am confident that it will take much less to see native transmedia projects being produced on a regular basis. Personally, I cannot wait to see it happen.

Notes

Introduction

1. Nuno Bernardo's *The Producer's Guide to Transmedia*, Robert Pratten's *Getting Started in Transmedia Storytelling*, and Andrea Phillips' *A Creator's Guide to Transmedia Storytelling*.
2. Power to the Pixel and Transmedia Next in London, Storyworld in Los Angeles, Cross Video Days in France, and Torino Film Lab in Italy.

Chapter 1

1. Transmedia Next, London 2009; Power to the Pixel Cross Media Forum, London 2009; MIP TV, Cannes 2009; Changing Media Summit, London 2009; Torino Film Lab, Torino, 2009.
2. See: www.immortaltransmedia.com
3. See News Team. "EIFF 2014: Michael Powell Award Nominees Announced." *The Skinny: Independent Cultural Journalism*.

Chapter 2

1. See Jack Zipes' *Why Fairy Tales Stick: The Evolution and Relevance of a Genre*; *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*; *Happily Ever After: Fairy Tales, Children and the Culture Industry*.
2. See: www.iamsterdam.com/en-GB/experience/what-to-do/whats-on/event-guide/october/cinekid
3. See: www.thechildrensmediaconference.com
4. See: www.storyworldconference.com/ehome/index.php?eventid=33551&tabid=53719&

5. See: www.cartoon-media.eu/cartoon-forum/cartoon-forum-2013.htm
6. See: www.clubpenguin.com
7. Currently, Transmedia Europe & Alliance, a very active lobby group, is trying to address this deficiency in funding systems, amongst other aims (Halpern). Also see: www.transmediaready.com/transmedia-alliance
8. For more details on the Arts Fund see: www.maltaculture.com/content.aspx?id=185243

Chapter 3

1. See: www.fourthwallstudios.com
2. See Creative Europe. *Support for Concept and Project Development of Video Games: Guidelines.*
3. See: www.cmf-fmc.ca/funding-programs/experimental-stream/?setLocale=1
4. See: <http://www.creativemalta.gov.mt/route-to-market/direct-public-investments/2011-budget-measures-for-private-enterprise>
5. The 5 Star Movement is an Italian Political party. Apart from its hard line stance on corruption, this progressive party fiercely advocates participatory democracy and e-democracy.
6. See: www.ziguzajg.org/
7. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dgf1DmJhhQg&feature=youtu.be>
8. Brian J. Rubinton describes crowdfunding as “the process of one party financing a project by requesting and receiving small contributions from many parties in exchange for a form of value to those parties” (3).
9. Iron Sky is a Science Fiction movie that tells the story of a group of Nazi Germans who, after being defeated in 1945, fled to the dark side of the Moon where they built a space fleet to return in 2018 and conquer Earth. The film had its world premiere at the 2012 Berlinale.

Chapter 4

1. See: www.cartoon-media.eu/cartoon-forum/cartoon-forum-2014.htm
2. Tulip mania was a period in the Dutch Golden Age following the introduction of the tulip in Europe. During this time, popularity rocketed and contract prices for the plant's bulbs rocketed to extraordinarily high levels. This, however, was followed by a sudden collapse that saw the country's economy crash as a result.
3. See *The Hire*, a series of eight short films which highlighted the performance aspects of various BMW automobiles.
4. See: <http://www.redbullmediahouse.com/>

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Producing a European Native Transmedia Project

Creative Document

Submitted by Jean Pierre Magro to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Film, September 2014

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Jean Pierre Magro

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SECTION A: THE ORIGIN STORY

THE ORIGIN STORY

Come closer... I want to tell you a story...

The winds whisper of an enchanted city, beyond the highest mountains, far away from any known land. They say it is a place of legend where magic and love always triumph.

They say the city is more than just a collection of houses. They say it is a ray of light, a beacon of hope. The winds tell us that the city is called Storyville... Do you know it? No.

Well you might not have heard of this fabled city but you must surely know the names of its inhabitants. For inside the walls of this enchanted realm dwell Red Riding Hood, Jack Beanstalk, Pinocchio, Snow White, Belle and many more....

You know these people... of course you do...

Their tales are forever forged in our minds... told and retold to inspire hope in our lives... a shining example of the beauty of sacrifice, truth and honesty!

But their existence is in constant danger, for the forces of darkness seek revenge. Having been banished to the Icy Wastelands, they are bent on destroying Storyville and all that is good... If they ever succeed, they will be able to climb out of our nightmares and spread into our own world!

But I'm going too fast... jumping too many bridges... Let me start from the very beginning... let me tell you the real history of Storyville... for few know the real truth...

Once upon a time... a boy and a girl were born to a very poor farming family. There was hardly any food, for the harvests had been meagre... and what was gathered had to be handed over to the tax collectors. But the family was still a happy one. Material things meant very little to them... The twins were welcomed with great joy and love...

But Kertu and Maliora were not like the other children. They were very special. And when I say very... I mean very special... Both were born with a powerful gift... Kertu and Maliora were word weavers...

Whatever they wished for came to be! All they had to do was speak their request out loud... The feeble and old farm animals became strong again. The dying soil was turned into fertile ground. The run-down family home was transformed into a proud abode. The little family prospered...

But all this did not change them. They remained good and humble people who cared for the needy... The loving parents made the children promise time and time again that their gift could only be used for good and never for personal gain... for there was nothing more important than love...

Father and Mother also warned them never to use their powers in front of other people... for they knew jealousy could be dangerous...

But alas, such powers are impossible to keep secret... Rumours spread like wildfire throughout the land. Fear grew. Many saw them as children of evil and wanted them dead. Twice was the family forced to re-locate.

One dreadful day news of the magical twins reached King Gamelyn, a cruel and repressive monarch who was always at war with the neighbouring kingdoms. He ordered his Royal Guards to bring the whole family to court. The soldiers obeyed, and in the dead of night stormed the farm, subdued the children, and dragged everyone to the King's Palace...

The family, bound in chains, was forced to kneel in front of the mighty King Gamelyn. Garbed in silk, diamonds and gold, the pretentious ruler ordered the children to show him their powers. He commanded them to conjure the fieriest of flying reptiles to aid in his war against his arch enemy, King Josephus. Kertu and Maliora, terrified, claimed to have no such powers. "Show me your powers!" he bellowed. The twins cried, "We have none such gift! We are but simple children of poor farmers!"

But King Gamelyn believed otherwise. He brought forward three peasants who spoke of the marvels they witnessed... and the King said, "I command you to show me your powers!"

I want to see a dragon!” But the children held steady to their initial word, “We have no such powers!”

King Gamelyn exploded. Foaming at the mouth, he called for the Executioner and threatened to spill blood. Kertu, the youngest of the twins, terrified at the sight of the glistening blade, started to weep. The boy was just about to give in when his sister stopped him. She reminded him of the promise they made to their parents.

“Show me these powers!” yelled the King. Father and Mother pleaded for mercy. They knew King Gamelyn was capable of any heartless deed, for his history was plagued with countless terrible atrocities. The man had killed his own father and brother to claw his way onto the throne... It even was murmured that he had a heart of stone.

Father, eyes flooded with tears, clasped his hands together and begged him to spare his children, “Please, Oh Mighty One... they are just children!” “Then tell them to show me their powers!” barked the King. “I cannot do that. They have no powers!” answered Father.

Seething with blind rage, King Gamelyn unsheathed his giant sword, “Let’s see if they truly have no powers.” Then with one terrible blow, he slew the parents right in front of their children... AAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

Maliora and Kertu screamed and bawled. The twins cradled their parents in their arms... Choking on their tears, they weaved their magic words, but nothing happened for they were still too young. The children were yet not powerful enough to restore life to their parents.

King Gamelyn laughed nastily. He commanded the Executioner to rid him of the useless wretches. Kertu, driven insane by the pain, spoke once more...

Suddenly, the earth trembled, the walls shuddered... and the roof collapsed! A giant reptile, with evil eyes and scaly skin, smashed through the ceiling! The petrified King ordered

his soldiers to attack the flame throwing beast but the royal guards dropped their weapons and abandoned their King to his cruel fate...

“I am King Gamelyn the second! As ruler of these lands, I command you to stand down!” But the dragon did not understand the King’s words, nor did it recognise such authority. It growled and bellowed. The mighty King soiled himself... fell to his knees and cried.

That was the last of King Gamelyn. The cruel Ruler was never heard from again...

But his vacant throne ignited a brutal civil war. Many died before the crown was placed on someone’s head. But you don’t really care about all this, do you? After all you can consult any history book... You want to know about the twins... right?

Well then, let me continue...

Heart-broken, the twins ran away as fast as their legs could carry them. Accused of dark deeds and hounded by the people, they slept during the day and travelled at night... Kertu was hurt and angry. He wanted to fight back, but Maliora calmed him down. She upheld their parents’ wish, always weaving the magical words responsibly.

After a gruelling journey that lasted years, they accidentally discovered a magical portal that led them to unclaimed territory. Then teenagers, Kertu and Maliora built the first house in a land that had no name... but a very strong purpose – to welcome every magical creature that needed refuge.

Maliora asked the winds for help; “Spread the words for those who care to hear. Tell them of this place... tell them they will always be safe here.” The winds carried Maliora’s message to the four corners of the world.

Many answered the call... Fairies, talking animals, wizards, trolls, frost giants, elves and many more were welcomed by Kertu and Maliora. All told the same tale of how they were mistreated by humans...

Together they worked hard to build a safe and just place... a place to radiate hope throughout the entire world. Love, and not greed, was to govern these lands. But of course, things are never that idyllic...

A few rotten apples broke their promises... and attacked the innocent. Kertu and Maliora intervened, weaving their words to restore justice. The evil ones were immediately banished to the Icy Wastelands in the north...

Maliora, fearing that their cause might one day be forgotten, decided to write down every victory, every triumph. Their quest for love and justice had to be remembered forever!

A beautiful tower was built in the middle of the city and the sacred Book of Fables that held every story was housed inside.

This is how *The Tower of Fables* was born... and the city became known to all as Storyville...

The winds were once again called to action. Maliora wanted them to tell the world of what was happening in these lands... for as Father had said, "There is nothing more important than love..."

All seemed to be going well... but Kertu was becoming more and more restless. Nightmares besieged his sleep. He missed his parents terribly, and was haunted by their savage demise. One night, he slipped away and went back to the Old World to see if anything had changed. But nothing had. He saw the same cold faces and violent hearts, bent on ripping each other apart for a few coins of silver. Storyville had reaped nothing. His heart was flooded with anger.

Upon his return, he reported what he saw... Maliora, who was going mad with worry, hugged him tightly and made him promise not to leave the safety of their city... not until the world changes its wicked ways. "You're crazy... The world will never change! Only an iron

fist will change those people!” he shouted, but Maliora insisted; “Brother, do not talk like that! They need us... they need our stories to guide them.”

Maliora knew in her heart that their task was hard, but she would not give up. Kertu, believing his sister was too naive, retired to his chamber and plotted his next move.

At night, he ventured out of the city and headed towards the Icy Wastelands. Wolves, witches, trolls and imps wanted to devour him alive... but his powers were far greater than theirs' combined. His words subdued them with ease. Kertu told them of his plan to invade the Old World; “Join me, and I'll give you freedom and power!” An awful roar arose that night that shook the strongest of us all... “Then let's march to our destiny!”

But before they could make a step, Maliora appeared before them; “Brother, what is the meaning of this?” she asked.

Kertu's nostrils flared and his eyes turned into slits. He glared intensely at his sister; “I am your brother no more. Love will not save the Old World but my rule will.”

“My dear Kertu, don't do this! We are children of the light!”

“Kertu died the day they slew our parents.... I am Utrek, Lord of Darkness!”

The wind howled with rage... The cold snow swirled dangerously around them. Utrek weaved his magical words and hurled bolts of lightning towards his sister. Maliora was hit square in the chest. Like a wild freight train, she crashed to the ground in a motionless heap.

Was this the end? No.

Maliora struggled to her feet, slightly dazed... a single tear streamed down her face; “Brother, why?” Everyone expected her to retaliate but she did no such thing. Her love for her brother ran too deep. “We can still change the world.” she whispered...

“Your useless dream is over!” he screamed...

Utrek unleashed his fury. He weaved his evil words once more... Maliora was hit again and again... It was brutal and sad. She crumbled, but her brother showed no mercy. He

grabbed his sister by the neck... Poor Maliora struggled desperately against his unbreakable grip as life drained out of her...

Utrek's minions cheered and applauded as their Master lifted Maliora over his head and threw her against the rocks. Her weakened body slammed against them like a rag doll...

Blood trickled from her angelic face...

Utrek moved in for the fatal blow. He stood over his crippled sister. But then, the unthinkable happened. Maliora weaved words of magic. The earth trembled and shook... a gigantic fissure ran through in the ground devouring everything in its path.

Utrek was shocked. Fear grew in his eyes – his sister was more powerful than him.

“No, brother... don't be afraid... I will not lift a finger against you... I could never harm you... but I will stop you from invading the Old World.”

Her outstretched fingers clawed at the thin air. She screamed a mighty scream and released a torrent of blinding energy that engulfed Utrek...

The Lord of Darkness was now trapped and immobile. He struggled and fought, but the chains of energy became tighter and tighter.

Her voice full of pain, Maliora spoke; “You must never return to the Old World. If you ever step back your body shall be turned to stone. I'm sorry brother... I'm sorry I have to this, but you leave me no choice... I have to lock you away, in the icy seas. A hundred years will pass before you will be freed. Think about all this... and come back to me as my brother... a child of the light!”

The ice beneath Utrek's feet started to groan and creak dangerously. His eyes widened like saucers... A gigantic hole opened and swallowed him up. “I will have my revenge!” And with those last words, Utrek disappeared into the dark depths of the ice...

Maliora collapsed, all her energy spent. She dragged herself back to Storyville where she was nursed with great love by the inhabitants. But alas, she was never to recover. Guilt

consumed her from the inside. How could her brother become so evil? She could sense his pain and anger soar.

Maliora grew weaker and weaker. All she could think of was her little brother. Knowing that her end was near, she called for her most trusted of friends. She urged them to defend the Tower of Fables and to keep the fire of hope alive, for if they ever fell into darkness, the Old World would perish forever in a sea of violence.

They all promised to do their utmost.

Maliora vanished from her room a few days later. The inhabitants searched high and low but none could find her. People wept, for she was sorely missed... but her voice could sometimes still be heard whispering in the forests. This brought them much joy.

Immediately, they set out to fulfil their promise to Maliora... A Council of the Wise was elected to oversee the defences of Storyville. A new force of Guardians was created with the sole purpose of protecting the realm and its precious stories. Its members had to be of noble heart, incorruptible and possess no magical powers.

Geppetto was entrusted with the task of equipping these men with the necessary tools and weapons to aid them in their fight against evil.

With this, my story comes to an end...

But before I go... let me tell you one more thing...

If ever you feel saddened by some injustice... by some evil deed that afflicts the world... think of Maliora. Think of the Tower of Fables and its treasures. Think of the Guardians of the Tower. Think of them all. For they are that beacon of hope. They are the proof that happy endings exist.

SECTION B: PRELIMINARY MAP DESIGN AND SETTING

DESCRIPTIONS

PRELIMINARY MAP DESIGN

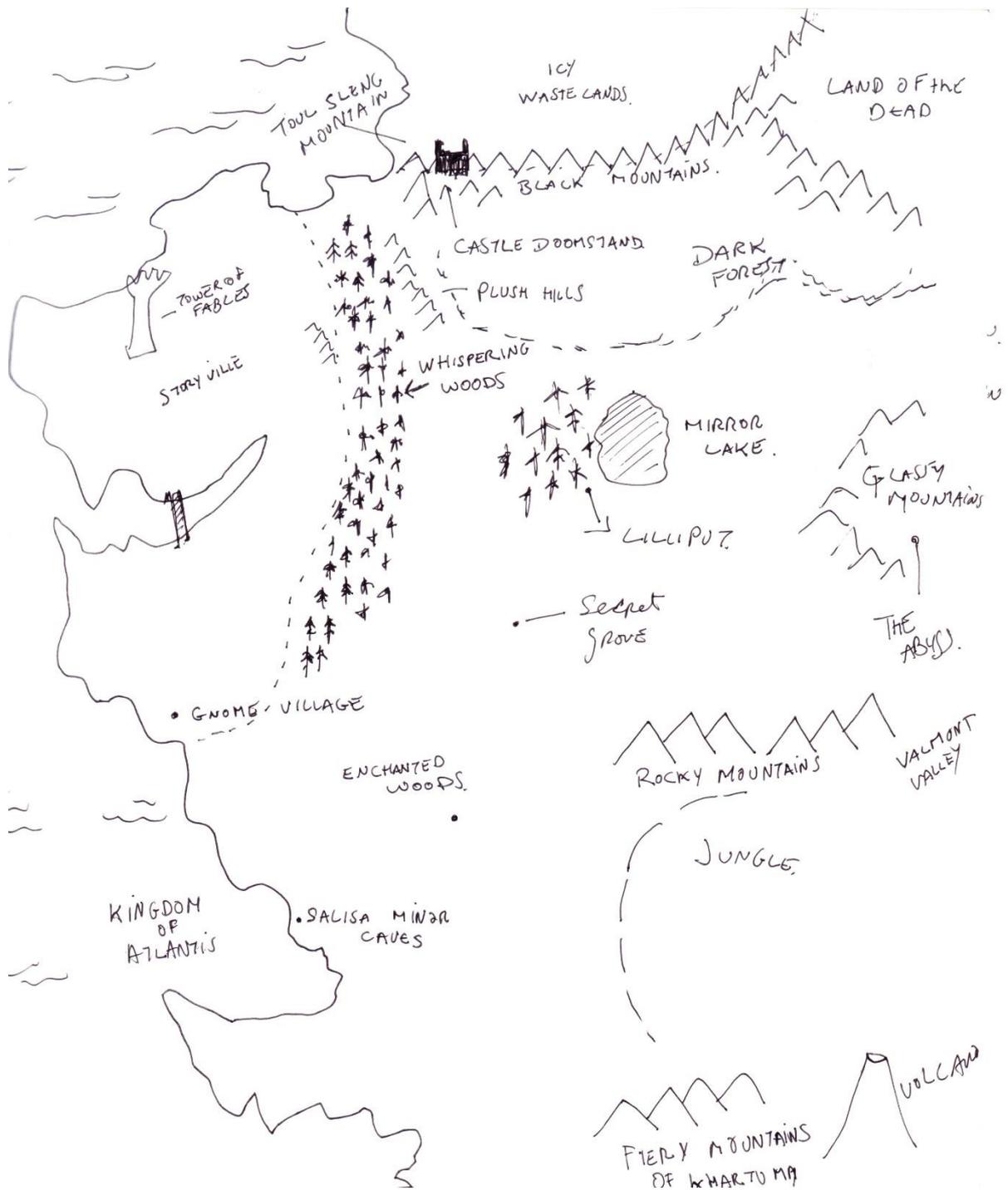


Fig. 9. A preliminary map for The Tower of Fables universe, sketched to show the primary location of the lands of Storyville and beyond.

SETTING DESCRIPTIONS

Storyville: A majestic city of joy and awe. This is a place of wonder, where fairytale creatures from far and wide come to live out their happy endings. Smack in the middle is the legendary Tower of Fables, where all the original copies of the fairytales we have come to know and love are stored and kept safe.

Secret Grove: A land only a privileged few have ever had the honour to behold. This is where enchanted trees grow, ones with magical properties so powerful that its location must always remain hidden...

Dark Forest: Unbearable misery -- a feral landscape of ice, snow and dead trees. None would dare venture there.

Whispering Woods: These picturesque woods are the loudest of them all. Teeming with life, it's one of a kind inhabitants are what bestow it its name... the Wistfuls – trees that can talk!

Icy Wastelands: An inhospitable stretch of ice and snow, home only to an unforgiving wind. Life has no place in this land.

Fiery Mountains of Khartumm: Razor sharp rocks, deadly crags, sizzling sand and an angry volcano. These are the violent parts known as Khartumm, the place where dragons are forged.

Castle Doomstand: Utrek's infamous lair is a grey, imposing structure the likes of which has never been seen before. Carved straight out of the rocks of Mount Toul Sleng, it looms over the Icy Wastelands, guarded by its vicious gargoyles.

Land of the Dead: The name explains it all. This is where the Shadow Master calls home. An intricate maze of dank and dark caves, losing one's way would mean certain death.

Rocky Mountains: Not only are they Mother Earth's most gargantuan natural structures, but they are also the strongest. The Rocky Mountains could survive anything... and that is why the giants chose it for their home. Tunnelled deep within is the Land of Giants.

Valmont Valley: An idyllic oasis of peace and calm that the unicorns call their own... and only their own. No other magical creature is allowed to enter Valmont Valley.

The Kingdom of Atlantis: Deep underwater, far away from prying eyes, lies a magnificent city ruled by the legendary King Neptune. Few know of this Kingdom's existence. With its secretive and not very welcoming inhabitants, this is no surprise.

Black Mountains: An unforgiving terrain, made up of jagged black boulders. In the ancient languages of the elves, these mountains are also known as the Cursed Mountains. They are void of any form of life... but it is told that a vicious monster dwells deep within.

Glassy Mountains: These wild mountains are populated by the hard working dwarves that mine them for their rich minerals. But these lands are also known to harbour fugitives and evil doers. That is why the SPD maintain a constant presence in this maze of sharp rocks.

Enchanted Woods: Imposing and regal trees make up these splendid woods. For centuries, fairies have made these parts their home. Their constant singing is a joy to listen to.

Plush Hills: Beautiful. Rich. Irresistible. These hills are entirely covered with luxurious carpets green, making them a very popular spot for picnics with the inhabitants of Storyville. Every year, the famous Mid-Summer Night Festival is held here.

Lilliput: A sprawling city in miniature that is well hidden below the ground. The wary Lilliputians decided to move to this new underground city as a means of protection.

Mirror Lake: The deepest and largest lake in all of Storyville. This bowl-shaped depression was named after its crystal clear waters that reflect its surroundings just like a mirror. This lake is also teeming with life, full of the strangest and most colourful sea creatures ever seen.

Salisa Minor Caves: A large complex labyrinth of caves, mostly undocumented and unsearched. These caves have become a perfect hiding spot for Utrek's minions. They are also home to some of the deadliest snakes and insects in these lands.

Gnome Village: Cute. Flawless. A small village made up of picture postcard mushroom houses with perfectly trimmed lawns.

SECTION C: MAP OF STORYVILLE



Fig. 10. The map depicting the major settings within *The Tower of Fables* universe.

SECTION D: THE TOWER OF FABLES TIMELINE

TIMELINE

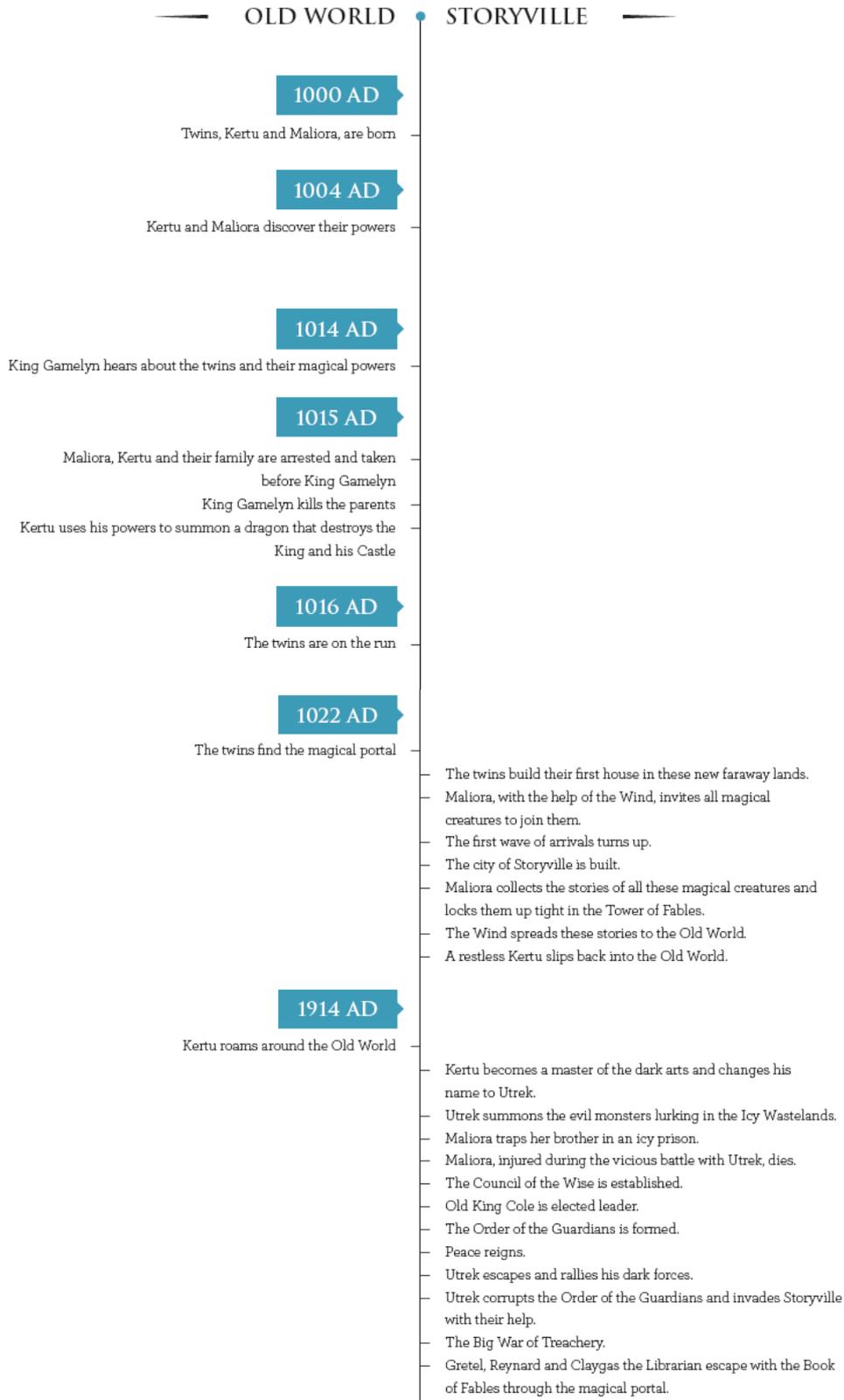




Fig. 11. The Tower of Fables Timeline outlines major events in Storyville and in the Old World.

SECTION E: STORYVILLE REGISTRY AND GENEALOGY

STORYVILLE REGISTRY

The Storyville Police Department

Chief Jimmy Jones: He was once hailed the Witch Slayer, the brave boy who defeated Utrek during the Great War. He went on to found and build the legendary force that is the Storyville Police Department. Jimmy is now in his fifties and Chief of the SPD. A man with the warmest of smiles, he is respected by all. He was a true leader in his youth, and remains so to this day. This is the man who will always defend the little guys.

Jumper Jones: A ten-year-old boy with a massive heart who lost his beloved parents at Utrek's hands when he was just a baby. Ever since he could crawl, he never wanted to do anything more than to become a police officer of the SPD just like his father and grandfather before him. Protecting the people and the city he loves is the only thing Jumper has ever dreamt of doing.

Sergeant Storm: An old timer and a brute, Sergeant Storm is not a man to mess with... ever. His very short fuse makes him explosive and unpredictable, but he is nothing if not genuine. He is Jimmy's closest friend, after Gretel, who came through the wishing well and started the SPD with him way back when. The only person who can cool Storm down is his wife, the beautiful Princess Briar Rose.

Geppetto and the Elves: A mastermind of all things mechanical, Geppetto is the genius behind all the remarkable machines and awesome weapons of the SPD... but he's also a bit nuts. Completely obsessed with all his inventions, he sometimes even forgets about his Pinocchio. Luckily, his Elves are always around to keep him in check.

Lilah Tree: Her father is Huwawa Tree, King and Royal Protector of the Cedar Forest. So, in reality, that makes her Princess Lilah. But this tough cookie wanted nothing to do with stuffy ball gowns and prissy parties. Tired of jumping through hoops, Lilah joined the SPD Police Academy. With Jumper and Tucker, she is one of the top three in the whole school.

Tucker Northbrook: Clumsy, ditsy and a bit of a coward, Tucker is the unlikeliest candidate for the SPD Academy you will ever see, but the Mirror of Magic saw something in him and sent him the Call! That said, even he has serious doubts about that one! For he is not only hapless, but also cursed by the Wicked Witch of the West. Now, he turns in a series of animals when nervous!

Officer Beast: The star of the SPD, everyone looks up to Officer Beast... especially Jumper Jones. Big and gruff, sometimes his nature can make him get a bit carried away. But his instincts are unquestionable and impeccable -- he can track anything down with lightning speed!

Aladdin: The mysterious man from the Far East, Aladdin is the SPD's light footed secret agent. He can infiltrate any building and extract any kind of information that is required. A true spy, the man has eyes and ears everywhere.

Genie and Magic Carpet: Never more than a few feet away from their master, these two are Aladdin's faithful partners on his all missions. Only their bickering sometimes makes them more of a nuisance than a help. But they always come through for him in the end.

The Mirror of Magic: He once belonged to the Evil Queen and was forced to assist her with all her foul kinds of evil schemes. But when she was apprehended, he fell into the hands of the SPD. A seer of tremendous power, he is now an invaluable part of the force, responsible for finding those of most noble of heart to become the SPD's new cadets

Villains

Utrek: The mere mention of the name Utrek strikes chilling fear into the hearts of all. Even darkness cowers in his presence. Borne from pain and anguish, the most powerful word weaver in all the lands was once the founder of Storyville. But as he grew up, something changed in him. His powers became dark and sinister. Now, he has escaped his icy crypt in

the Wastelands where his sister Maliora once imprisoned him, and he has only one purpose -- Revenge. With his fierce Army of Darkness behind him, he will have his vengeance. Storyville and its inhabitants will pay.

The Evil Queen: Ice cold and seemingly emotionless, the self-proclaimed Mistress of Evil is the darkest of all villains, second only to Utrek himself. Her evil is calculated and precise. She is cruel and enjoys watching the pain she causes her victims unfold. She also has a small army of goblins at her disposal, of which she takes full advantage.

The Headless Horseman: He was once known as the Black Knight. Invincible, powerful, evil. He carried out Utrek's every command, leading his Army of Darkness, desecrating life. But during the Great War everything changed. A boy from the Old World, wielding Excalibur lobbed his head clean off. He is now bent of having his revenge. That boy was Jimmy Jones, Chief of the SPD.

Dother and Dain: These belligerent wolf brothers are powerful, angry and fast. No one would want these two on their tail, for they love nothing more than hunting down their prey. But they weren't always this way -- the wolves were once human! The two twins made the dire mistake of laughing at the evil Bolla's horrid looks! A mistake they paid for very dearly.

Count N. Grimm: The sinister Lord of Shadows, Count Nightmare Grimm is fear in a black trench coat and cowboy hat... the lesser known brother of the Sandman, who he betrayed and killed, and the weaver of your most terrifying dreams. He hates everyone and everything, but none more than the Dark Lord Utrek... and he is determined to take his place.

The Snow Queen: Regal, sophisticated and power hungry. The lone wolf of the three witches, she cares for no one but herself and her mission -- to crush Storyville and everything it stands for. With her icy powers and army of polar bears, she is a force of nature like no other.

Bolla: She was once the most beautiful creature ever to walk the Earth. But when she refused to join Utrek's Army of Darkness, the Dark Lord cursed her into the hideous hag she is now. Bitter and resentful, she spent years baking and stuffing her face to console herself. But now her tastes have grown much more heinous. Now, she scours the wishing well portals for humans to trap and eat!

Jack Frost: Son to the malicious Snow Queen, Jack Frost, or JF for short, is a massive ice giant with the ability to control the weather with disastrous results. His power over all things natural wreaks havoc over Storyville and its inhabitants... much to his amusement.

Dr. Frankenstein and Igor: Frankenstein stumbled onto Storyville when he was running away from the Old World. The police were on his tail, hunting him down for his twisted experiments. Igor, lonely and desperate for a friend, offered him a place to stay. But Frankenstein never left! Now, the doctor's experiments have resumed like never before... and poor Igor has been roped in to his evil schemes...

Pied Piper and Skid: Charming, seductive and a divine musician, the Piper and his rat are very much used to living the good life, with as little effort as possible. The Piper uses his magical flute to hypnotize people into handing over the most precious jewels. When needs arise however, the Piper's flute can handle a lot more than just petty trivialities... much more.

Skiltsin: A tiny man with a huge inferiority complex and an overcompensating ego to match. His volatile disposition makes him a priceless weapon to the woman of his obsession - the Evil Queen. He is nasty by nature, reveling in mischief for his own delight. But one word from her, and he can viciously turn the whole town upside down without a bother.

Thundrall the Troll: Dim as a rock, it doesn't take much to fool the troll but it is not in his brain wherein his power lies, but in his brute strength. Thundrall can crush anything between his burly hands like a twig... Hand him anything even remotely shiny and he'll do anything he's told to.

Dalians: An enigma. Dalians emerge from the shadows of the Fiery Mountains of Khartumm, then melt back into them and disappear as though they never were. No one knows who or what they are. All they know is that these creatures eat everything that stands in their path like a devastating swarm of locusts.

The Boogeyman: An anarchist who relishes chaos and confusion, the Boogeyman is always racking his twisted brains for new 'games' to play. With a soft spot for torment, he particularly enjoys the look of sheer terror his victims wear when they fall into one his traps.

The Hunter: A nameless assassin, the Hunter has no moral compass. He is neither here nor there, but always on the side of money. He serves no one but himself, however, this can easily change... for the right price.

Balor, the Goblin king: The most hideous being on the planet... and the smelliest to boot! King Balor lives below the Earth's surface where his goblin colonies expand their massive city and dig for gold. For there in nothing the disgusting creatures love more than riches and gold.

Golem: The Golem was once Bart Knowles, an SPD cadet with jealousy issues. After trying to blackmail Jumper Jones, he got himself blown up in Dr. Frankenstein's lab. Now, he is the Golem. Half man, half sludge, he can mould himself into anything and anyone.

Hook: Captain of the Time Pirates, this infamous swashbuckling buccaneer brought his men all the way from the Old World in search of great treasures. But on their adventures they stumbled across a secret machine that could launch them through time. They now use it to loot and make their getaway before anyone can catch up with them.

Alice: Hook's daughter, this beautiful charming creature can make the toughest of men fall in love with her with just one look. But she is certainly more than just a pretty face. She is by far the best spy and con artist on this side of the wishing wells.

King Set the 14th: After the Great War, the Lilliputians disappeared. Many thought they were killed off in the battles, but they were wrong. King Set the 14th took his men and led them underground where they dug their city into the stone. But the mad King became obsessed -- all he wants is to find more and more slaves to build and expand his city.

The Mummy: A nameless corpse from the desecrated tombs of ancient Egypt, the Mummy was brought back to life by the darkest of magic. He now possesses the strength of a thousand men!

Wyvern the Dragon: A massive lizard with a massive anger management problem. The one eyed monster lives on top of the Fiery Mountains but any small thing can set her off... and she'll come down that mountain roaring.

Storyville's Inhabitants

Maliora: Storyville's guiding light, Maliora may no longer be in the physical world but her protective spirit still resides within the forests and woods around Storyville. Her voice whispers through the trees, a comfort to all who hear her. She is ever present when her help is required, but her powers work in mysterious ways

Claygas: Claygas was once Maliora's best friend. He was the one documenting every new story from every new inhabitant since the beginning of Storyville. Now, he is the cocky, know it all Librarian who resides in the Tower of Fables. Claygas is the keeper of the books.

Gretel: She was a tough soldier -- a Guardian of the Tower. She was also the one who stole the Book of Fables from Utrek and fought by Jimmy's side during the Great War. She became Jimmy's best friend, then she became his wife. Wanting to be with him for the rest of her life, Gretel gave up her powers and started growing old. Now, the tough soldier has become a stubborn old lady who always gets things done.

Old King Cole: Storyville's pudgy Mayor with a fondness for anything sweet and tasty -- especially chocolate. A gentle soul, but also not a very brave one, he's not the man you would want defending you in a fight.

Prince Charming and Cinderella: Old King Cole's son, this handsome Prince is the next in line for the throne. With his wife Cinderella by his side, they are Storyville's golden royal couple. And there is nothing they enjoy more than throwing their charity balls and posing for pictures -- they love the attention!

Grandma: A little old lady with a heart of gold, this woman has nothing but love and affection for every single citizen of Storyville. Everyone in the city cares for Grandma dearly in return... but none more than Old King Cole. The two are even getting married soon! All those lovely cakes and treats she bakes for him have won his heart.

Little Red Riding Hood: A sweet little girl who's taken after her much loved grandmother in many ways. Generous and good natured, Red Riding Hood is always there to lend a helping hand when it's needed.

King Neptune: The Ruler of the Seven Seas, the great King Neptune rules the waves with a firm hand and a mighty trident capable of astounding magic. A bit rough around the edges, his temper can be over the top, but the King will always do what is best for his people.

Estella Mermaid: King Neptune's daughter, she is the exact opposite of her strict father. Bubbly and more a little bit mischievous, she's always out exploring secret underwater coves and grottos, and playing all kinds of fun games.

Pinocchio: This puppet is nothing like his famous father. He is neither a genius nor a prodigy. Calling him even remotely technically-minded would be a stretch. Rather, Pinocchio is a prankster who gets his kicks out of playing silly pranks on random strangers.

Percival: The last of his kind, Percival is a war hero, a wooden toy soldier who fought in the Great War and survived to tell the tale. He is now the happiest toy soldier on the planet, head over heels in love with his beautiful wife, Nina the toy ballerina.

Nina: Beautiful, elegant, sophisticated. Nina the toy ballerina graces Maliora Park with her poise and lovely dancing every day. She has become an icon of this wondrous city.

GENEALOGY

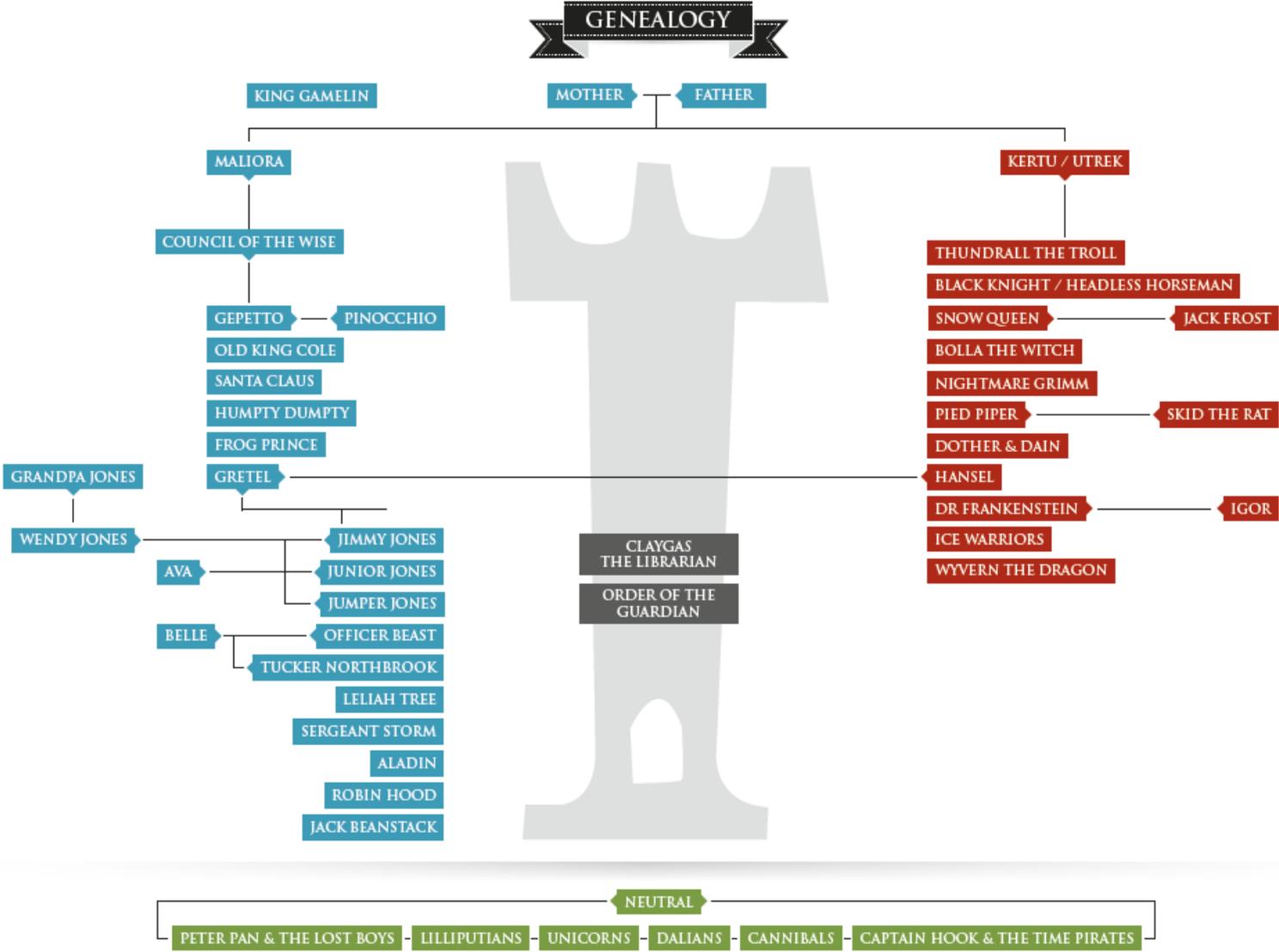


Fig. 12. The Genealogy lists the citizens of Storyville, the villains and the creatures found throughout the lands of *The Tower of Fables*.

PRELIMINARY CHARACTER DESIGNS



Fig. 13. Anthony Catania, *Guardian of the Tower of Fables*. Illus. 12th Nov. 2011.



Fig. 14. Anthony Catania, *Utrek and Rupert*. Illus. 12th Nov. 2011.

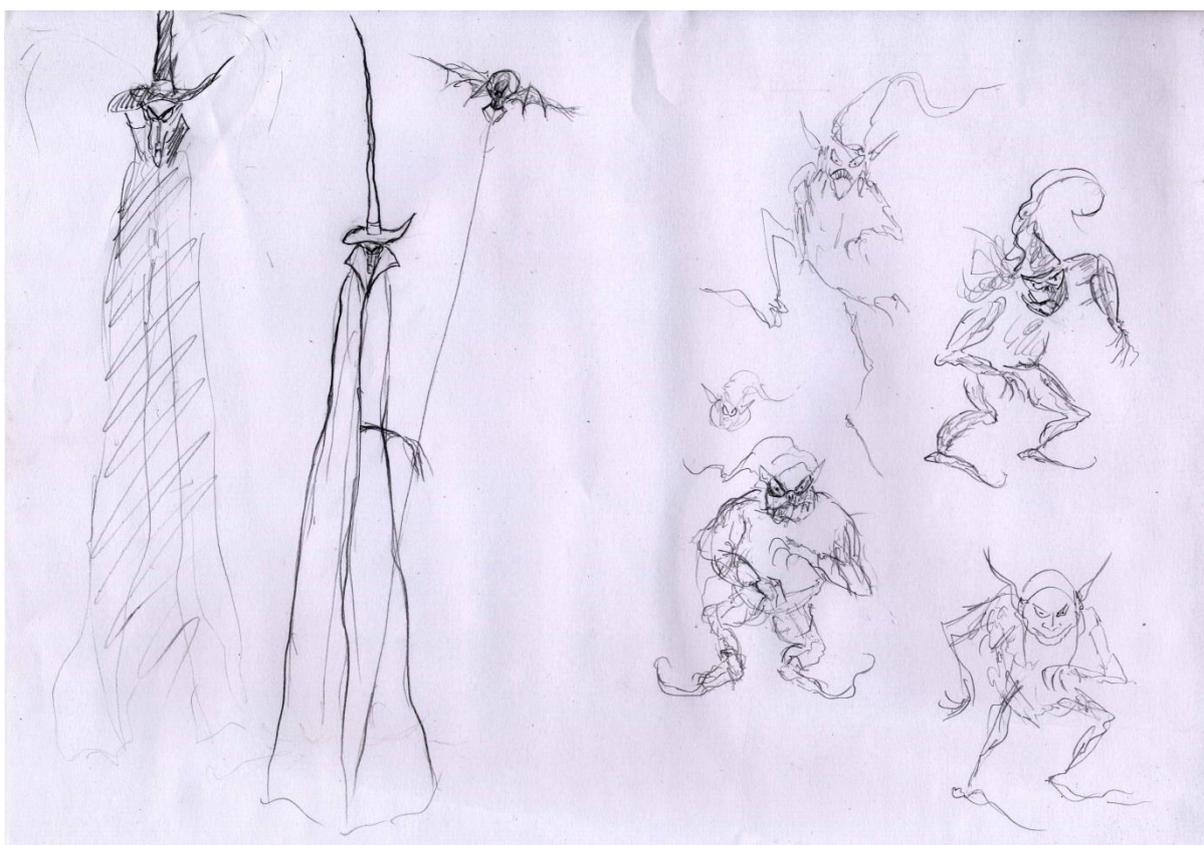


Fig. 15. Anthony Catania, *Utrek and Rupert II*. Illus. 12th Nov. 2011.



Fig. 16. Nikolay Moustakov, *SPD Cadet*. Illus. 5th Dec. 2011.

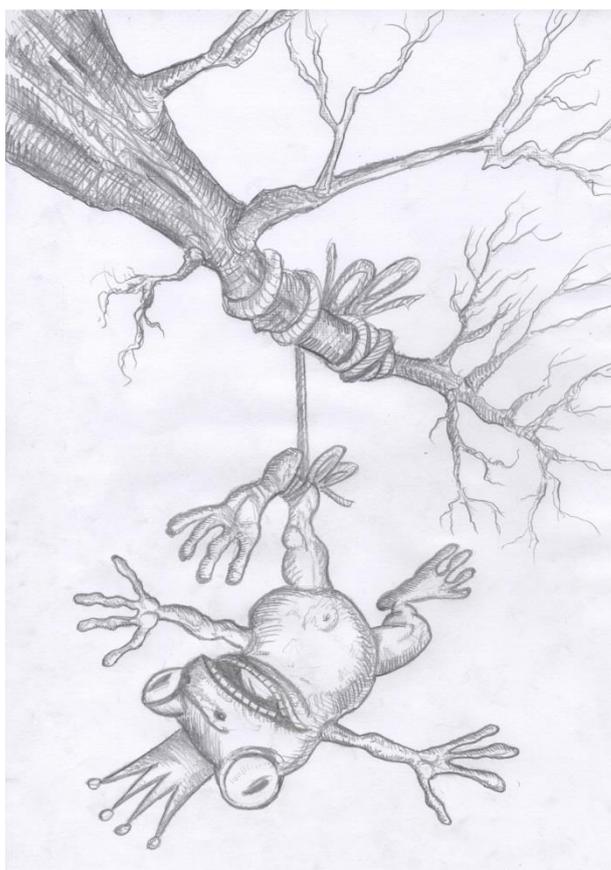


Fig. 17. Nikolay Moustakov, *The Frog Prince*. Illus. 5th Dec. 2011.

SECTION F: THE NARRATIVES

BOOK 1: THE GUARDIANS OF THE TOWER

BOOK 2: THE WITCH SLAYER

BOOK 3: THE KING OF GIANTS

THE STORY CONTINUES...

TIM TOM'S STORY

UTREK'S RETURN

THE GUARDIANS OF THE TOWER

The fairytale city of Storyville was once a joyful place where magic and good flourished.

But that place is no more... the Dark Lord Utrek, the most powerful of word weavers, has taken over.

Now, the sound of laughing children has been replaced by stifled cries and muffled sobs. Where there once were happy merchants in the city centre, there is now an army of nasty-looking imps in military fatigues... and the legendary Tower of Fables, the fortress where all original fairytales were kept safe from all harm, lies in ruin, obscured by a dank gallows.

A sea of familiar faces stand before it -- Red Riding Hood, Jack Beanstalk, Cinderella, Snow White -- sullen and grim. In their midst, hiding behind tattered cloaks, are Gretel and her friend Reynard the fox, eyes firmly fixed on the Tower's worn doors.

Suddenly, the doors burst open, and two massive wolves slink out of the shadows -- Dother and Dain, sinister servants of darkness. Two men in shining silver armour follow, dragging a battered frog behind them.

A shocked gasp rises from the crowd. Gretel and Reynard share a look. Horrified.

For those men were once Guardians of the Tower, protectors of the people... and the frog, he's not just any frog. He was their leader -- the noble Frog Prince.

"*Traitors!*" he cries. But no sooner are the words uttered, than a noose silences him brutally.

Accused of stealing the book of ultimate power, the precious Book of Fables, from the Tower, the Frog Prince has been sentenced to die. But Dother is not ready to go through with the execution just yet... he wants a confession first. The scheming wolf tempts him with an offer... one last chance to save his skin. All he has to do is tell him where the book is hidden.

But the brave frog doesn't even flinch -- he will never give in to evil!

The wolf's fur stands on edge. Thinking of his feet, he changes his approach. Manipulative as ever, Dother turns to the crowd... should anyone step forward with information on the book's location, the Frog Prince will be spared! Astoundingly, no one moves... the whole town stands strong!

Eyes racked with guilt, Gretel lowers her gaze. Her fingers trace something under her cloak -- she has the Book of Fables! Suddenly, a tiny bookworm, Claygas the Librarian, crawls up to her ear and whispers a warning. They must leave for the Old World now. Only there, where magic is gone, will their boon safe.

Gretel ignores him and starts forward through the crowd -- she can't allow her friend to die. But Reynard holds her back. If they are captured, all will be lost and every sacrifice would have been in vain. Gretel's heart aches but she knows the fox is right. Two seconds later, they disappear down an alley.

Enraged by the defiance shown, Dother lets out a vicious snarl. He warns them all to heed the frog's mistake! The Frog Prince knows what's coming... his final words echo into the night -- "*Evil shall fall!*"

BLAM! The gallows doors drop open -- he disappears below. The frog's crown falls and clatters to a stop beneath his limp feet. A dead stillness takes over.

Without a shred of pity, the wolf brothers turn their backs on it all and march back into the Tower of Fables, where Utrek's malicious Army of Darkness has taken up residence...

Despicable villains have infested the sacred structure. The very vilest, the Dark Lord's most trusted, have gathered in the topmost chamber -- the Evil Queen, Rumpelstilskin, the Pied Piper and Skid the rat, a vicious troll by the name of Thundrall, the Snow Queen and even her son, the ice giant JF, or Jack Frost as he's known in our parts.

A somber figure sits among them in religious silence, covered from head to toe in menacing black armour. He is a man of legend, Utrek's right hand and the invincible General of his army -- the Black Knight.

Suddenly, Dother bursts in, snarling -- the Book of Fables is still missing!

The room erupts in a tsunami of jeering and hissing... the Evil Queen mocks them and retrieves her Mirror of Magic -- she will find the book for Utrek! Dain snaps at her violently in reply. A vicious fight breaks out!

Without a word, the Black Knight rises to his feet and drives his mighty sword through a table, bringing the room to a complete standstill. His orders are clear... the Evil Queen will track down the rogue Guardians with her Mirror and Thundrall will go after them -- they must not be allowed to leave Storyville!

Dother, head low in submission, approaches the Black Knight and asks to speak to Utrek. But the Dark Lord is away from the Tower. A long overdue visit was in order...

In Storyville Cemetery, a biting cold has descended. The glowing orbs floating among the graves flicker strangely and a path of dead flowers leads to a beautiful white marble mausoleum. Something evil has been through here.

Inside, a hooded figure looms over a crypt engraved with the words, "*Maliora. A ray of hope in the darkest of nights.*" Skeletal and with glowing slits for eyes, this is the Dark Lord. This is Utrek.

Utrek weaves his black magic. His words boom -- the ground shakes... then a faint wisp of a spirit emerges from the tomb. A beautiful woman takes shape in front of him. Her name is Maliora and she is Utrek's sister. With a dazzling smile, Maliora wraps her arms around Utrek. Her beloved brother is finally back! But the moment she does, a terrible energy runs through her -- she jerks back. *What has he done?* Utrek wastes no time with words. He takes Maliora's face into his hands, and shows her the pain and suffering he has caused!

Maliora is devastated... she cowers into a corner -- *this cannot be!*

Utrek laughs at her tears. Her sacrifice all those years ago, how she laid down her life to lock him away beneath the Icy Wastelands -- it was all in vain. Now he is back in his rightful place as ruler of Storyville, and soon he will be so much more. The Book of Fables is the last piece of the puzzle. With it, nothing will stand in his way!

Suddenly, Maliora's tears stop... a smile appears -- she laughs at him! Rage rises in Utrek, but his sister moves closer; "*There is one in the Old World... one destined for greatness. A boy of noble heart will lead the forces of good and fight back the darkness into oblivion. You shall fail.*" Then, her spirit dissolves and returns to her tomb, leaving only her voice behind. It whispers a name time and time again -- Jimmy Jones.

Utrek screams out his spell, but Maliora is gone. His bellow echoes through the woods -- *Who is Jimmy Jones??*

In the Old World... an alarm blares out in a seemingly empty bedroom. Suddenly, a mound of sheets begins to stir. Then, Wendy Jones, a slightly disheveled but pretty woman, comes running in. She yanks the covers away, revealing a mop of unruly black hair -- her son, Jimmy Jones.

Jimmy protests... but Wendy has no time for it. He has to start his chores before Vietnam vet Grandpa Jones wakes up or they'll never hear the end of it! Jimmy groans and rolls out of bed, eyes barely open. Wendy grabs her son's face, plants a big old kiss on his cheek and runs off. She's already late for her morning shift at the toothpaste factory because she overslept after her exhausting night shift at the local diner.

Things weren't always this way for Jimmy and his mum though. Once upon a time, they lived in New York, and Wendy didn't have to work a million jobs. Jimmy could sleep all the way past seven, and got to watch the coolest police show of all time, the great *Iron Force*, with his friends almost every day.

Back then, all he ever wanted was to be brave and honourable just like his heroes, saving the world every day from deadly alien invasions. But then his dad died... and everything changed.

Now, their money's gone. Their apartment is gone... and they live with Grandpa Jones in the unassuming little town of Narrative High.

Wanting to keep the peace, Jimmy does as he is told... but as the day rolls on, Grandpa Jones starts following his every move, pointing out each little oversight with his walking stick -- the man is insufferable!

By the time Wendy comes back from work, Jimmy's tired, sweaty and wound up like a bomb about to blow.

The house is almost spotless, but Grandpa Jones is still giving him a lecture. He's inefficient, ineffective and too slow. When he was patching up soldiers on the battlefield, precious seconds were the difference between life and death! Laziness will not be tolerated!

Wendy flinches at the sound of that word. *How dare he speak to her son that way?*

Bristling, she steps forward ready to give him a piece of her mind. But just as she's about to lay into him -- the ice cream truck's innocent melody intervenes. Wendy let out a slowing breath and calms herself down. She hands Jimmy some money and tells him to go buy some ice cream...

Infinitely grateful, Jimmy grabs it, and runs out to the already swamped ice cream truck... but as he passes a narrow alley, panicked voices reach his ears. He turns to see two scrawny geeks, Aadi and Melvin, cowering in the shadow of the infamous Storm Buckhold, reigning bully of Narrative High.

Jimmy's dreams of defending the little guys ring clear. Hands on his hips, he orders the bully to desist.

Storm turns slowly, a devilish smile spreading across his face -- *it seems the Jones kid still needs to learn the rules*. Amused, he releases his prey and lumbers towards Jimmy -- BOOM! -- the bully socks him right in the eye. No one stands up to Storm Buckhold! Terrified, Melvin and Aadi disappear faster than a fart in a fan factory.

At home, Wendy struggles to keep her temper in check as she talks to Grandpa Jones... or at least tries to. Suddenly, the door flies open... and Jimmy shuffles in, half his face swollen to the size of a football.

Wendy reacts. She leaps into the kitchen, comes back with a bag of peas and slaps it onto the growing bruise, demanding to know what happened. Jimmy, still hazy, rats out the bully... he even took his ice cream money.

Wendy's anger flares. Like a true lioness, she takes his hand and makes for the door. But Jimmy, regaining his faculties, holds her back -- if she makes a scene, she'll only make things worse!

Visibly distressed, Wendy kneels down to his height and promises to be discreet, but Jimmy still shakes his head no. Truly understanding, Wendy nods her compliance to his wish and hugs him tight.

Minutes later, she and Jimmy are sitting in front of the TV with a huge bowl of ice cream, watching *Iron Force* DVDs. But half an hour barely crawls by before the real world interrupts -- Wendy's boss calls to tell her to come in for an early shift at the diner.

Jimmy finishes off his ice cream, and continues his TV marathon alone. Then, there's a knock on the door. It's Melvin and Aadi.

Melvin, a quintessential motor mouth, apologizes profusely, going off on a long-winded rant about why they ditched him at the alley. The pensive Aadi quietly hands him a bag of oranges -- Vitamin C makes cells in the body heal faster. If he eats them all, his black eye should disappear within three days. He saw it on the Discovery Channel.

Jimmy stands there, overwhelmed. In their silence, the *Iron Force* theme tune blares in the background. Melvin and Aadi's faces light up -- *Iron Force* is their favorite show too! The boys pull out crude walkie-talkies covered in *Iron Force* stickers to prove it. Aadi made them himself -- this kid is a genius. Just like that, they instantly become best friends.

That evening, the boys watch their favorite episodes together. Aadi even makes Jimmy his own walkie-talkie out of an old broken radio. Hours fly by. Jimmy hasn't had this much fun since he left New York!

But Grandpa Jones doesn't appreciate the ruckus. He wants them out. Now. In too much of a good mood to argue, Jimmy says bye to his new friends, and happily goes to bed.

He sleeps like a rock... until a voice seeps into his room. Thinking it's his mother, Jimmy slips out of bed, and shuffles downstairs to say good night. But the voice isn't coming from inside the house...

Curious, he follows it out into the backyard... to the sight that will change his life.

Gretel and Reynard leap out of his well! But they're not the only ones... a terrible roar rises into the night, and a huge monster clambers out after them, hot on their heels. It's Thundrall the troll! A vicious battle unfolds in front of his very eyes...

Gretel's swords glint in the moonlight as she slashes at him time and time again with impressive accuracy. But his thick skin protects him. Arms thick as tree trunks, Thundrall hurls brutal punches until -- BOOM! -- she slams against the well like a rag doll.

Reynard comes to the rescue. He lunges, and sinks his sharp teeth into the monster's neck! The troll flails, but grabs hold of Reynard's tail -- BLAMM! -- he clobbers him against a tree.

But the battle is not over. Like a blur, Gretel pulls herself back to her feet, and charges the troll. Her blade comes down with astounding force -- the creature howls! She kicks him with everything she's got, and sends him tumbling back into the darkness of the well.

Jimmy stands there in shock... then, adrenaline kicks in. He bolts to the shed, grabs some old wood, and seals the well. But Gretel needs his help. Reynard is bleeding badly. Jimmy nearly faints at the sight... this can't be happening.

Before he can recover, Claygas crawls up on his shoulder. Jimmy screams in terror and shoots back into the house like a bullet. But Gretel has no time for silly games. She picks up Reynard and follows.

Seconds later, they're all in Jimmy's room, and she's ripping his sheets to shreds, turning them into bandages. Claygas apologizes on her behalf, but beseeches Jimmy to help. The most dangerous wizard ever to have lived is back... and he wants to rule supreme!

Utrek seeks to turn the world into a place where evil always triumphs. He wants a world riddled with fear, devoid of all love and joy. But there is hope. For only one thing can grant him the power he needs to make his warped vision a reality -- the Book of Fables. And they have stolen it!

Jimmy stares at the worm, confused. *How can some book do all that?*

A panicked Claygas explains. With it, Utrek can rewrite all the fairytales, twisting the endings so the villains always win. With it, he can alter their past and control their lives. Children all over the world will forget right from wrong. Darkness will reign!

Suddenly, Reynard howls in pain! Gretel loses her cool. The only reason they're not battling the Dark Lord himself this very moment is because he is cursed to turn to stone should he ever venture to the Old World. But he will stop at nothing to get his claws on the Book of Fables! As they speak, he is rallying his minions. They will come in his stead and they will spare no life to deliver the precious book to their master.

Jimmy jumps to his feet, telling them to leave. But Gretel does not budge and inch. The sooner he helps them get Reynard on his feet, the sooner they can get out of Narrative High and disappear.

Gretel's dead pan approach works... she finally gets through to him.

But Jimmy is completely in over his head on this one. He grabs the walkie-talkie on his bed and calls in reinforcements -- Aadi will know what to do for sure.

Within minutes, his new friends are at the door. But things don't go quite to plan.

Aadi is just as clueless as he is when it comes to animals, and Melvin is too busy trying to touch Gretel's swords to be the least bit helpful. With nowhere else to turn, the powers of the internet beckon...

Aadi quickly finds a first-aid article. He tries to follow the steps and clean Reynard's wound, but barely two seconds pass before he's throwing up in a corner of the room, face ashen. It seems they're going to have to wait until morning to take the fox to a real doctor.

Then, something clicks in Jimmy's head.

Uncertainty plagues his face, but he has no choice...

Jaws drop all round as he bolts out of the room and returns with an irate Grandpa Jones behind him -- *is he crazy??* Jimmy ignores them, leading the old man straight to Reynard. He's been boasting about the countless lives he's saved in the war since he walked through the door... Jimmy challenges him to prove it!

Jimmy's ruse works! Way too proud to back down from a direct challenge, Grandpa Jones starts barking orders. Jimmy jumps into action, following his directions to the letter, bringing everything he asks for -- bandages, water, salt...

Then, in the middle of it all, the front door slams shut -- Wendy is home from work!

She goes upstairs and pops her head round her son's bedroom door to see Jimmy surrounded by supplies, and Grandpa pretending to teach him first aid. Confused, but too exhausted to ask questions, she just smiles and lets them be.

The moment the door closes behind her -- Reynard collapses, and falls out from behind the curtain. Grandpa Jones turns his attention to him once more. Within minutes,

Reynard is resting comfortably in a cupboard. Having done his duty, he salutes them and hobbles out of the room... but not before he tells them to be gone by morning. Gretel thanks him, and promises their compliance.

Just then, the clock strikes midnight. Despite their excitement, Aadi and Melvin gather their stuff and head off home. They have to sneak back in before their parents realise they're gone...

Little do they know that the forces of evil are already at work...

In a field on the outskirts of town, another wishing well's lid shoots into the sky like a bottle cap... and three of Utrek's faithful minions come through.

Thundrall the troll has returned, but this time he's brought back up -- the ice giant, JF, climbs out after him, followed by their slick leader, the deadly Pied Piper. His hideous rat Skid scurries at his heels.

The Piper's feet barely touch the ground before a familiar soul-crushing voice fills in his head -- Utrek! Speaking to his servant through his thoughts, he warns him to waste no time. He must find those wretched Guardians, and return the Book of Fables to the Tower.

The Piper vows to succeed... and the hunt is on...

They march through town looking for City Hall. Thundrall can't remember which tunnel he followed the Guardians through, so they have to start from scratch. A map of the town's wells is sure to set them in the right direction. They pound the pavement, but they're completely lost. Then, a stroke of luck sends a toothless old man their way. The Piper stops him, and orders him to lead them there.

With a bloodcurdling scream, the old man takes off like an arrow, disappearing into a nearby bar.

The place is packed with burly men, young and old; truckers, loggers, drunkards, louts. The old man jumps on the pool table, trying to warn them of what he saw. But laughter,

shouting, taunts and hisses from the unruly patrons drown out his panicked warnings... until the doors fling open. The monsters join the party.

Everything stops instantly. The old man dives for cover under one of the tables...

The Piper approaches one of the men and arrogantly orders him to take him to City Hall. Silence. Suddenly, the entire bar doubles over in mad hysterics, pointing and laughing -- they think they're in costume!

The Piper's had enough. He reaches into his jacket, pulls out the most gorgeously crafted flute and puts it to his lips. But before he can play a single note, JF and Thundrall intervene -- the two beasts want to stretch their muscles.

The Piper calmly sits himself down... then concedes.

With one swing of his huge club -- BOOM! -- Thundrall knocks five men out cold in an instant. The patrons stare at their friends in shock... then the whole place explodes in one massive surge!

The men charge their attackers fuelled by drunken bravery. JF comes in on cue. Eyes pure white, his huge chest grows three times its normal size as he takes an icy breath and freezes them all on the spot. Mere men are no match for these thugs. They take out the whole bar in a matter of minutes.

The old man weeps in terror as Thundrall lobs the last two guys out the window. Out of nowhere, an icy hand reaches down, dragging him out from under the table. JF's eyes fix on the ceiling, and an enormous stalactite begins to grow... he hangs the poor senior from it.

The Piper approaches once more but this time he doesn't even have to ask -- *"It's in the center. The b-big old building with a square in front. There's a well too -- please don't hurt me!"*

Satisfied, the Piper is about to head out... then thinks twice. Some discretion would go a long way. The last thing they want an angry mob getting in the way. He tells Thundrall

to clear up the mess. The Piper watches on as unconscious men are shoved into closets and cupboards. Looking at Thundrall, he thinks blending in with the humans might not be such a bad idea either. One nod to Skid, and the rat scurries over to the remaining bodies.

Minutes later, the Piper and JF emerge wearing new boots and slick leather jackets... oozing cool. Thundrall, on the other hand, looks like a bad weight loss advert, trying to stuff his huge belly into a pair of ridiculously small jeans. Against all odds, he manages to pull them up... but one breath is all it takes -- the seams explode from every single angle... his stomach flops back out. Thundrall turns back to go find something else... but there is no time. They have to get to City Hall.

As soon as JF has the building in his sights -- BOOM! -- he blows the doors in with a violent gust of wind...

The villainous three drift in. The security guards scramble to their feet holding their useless batons out in front of them. Thundrall guffaws, lifting his club over his head -- but this time the Piper holds him back. He forces the troll to go easy, knocking them out and locking them away in the broom cupboard. Thundrall is not happy.

Skid tears through the labyrinth of offices like lightning, searching drawers, cupboards, lockers... there's no stopping him. He finally pops out of a filing cabinet holding the map of the wells over his head -- triumphant!

Now, the games can really begin...

When morning comes, Jimmy wakes up to the sound of blaring sirens. Still rubbing the sleep out of his eyes, he runs to the window.

Narrative High unfolds before him like a scene from an apocalypse movie.

Police cars swarm the streets. The summer sun has disappeared behind black clouds pouring down gallons of heavy rain. The sweltering heat's given way to blistering cold. Wind howls and ominous thunder rumbles -- a freak storm has the whole town in its grip!

Jimmy runs downstairs looking for his mother, but all he finds is a note. She's at work... again. Jimmy turns on the TV and finds the news. A wide-eyed reporter stares is standing in front of the bar from last night. Half naked and still terrified, the toothless old man holds onto his leg for dear life, rambling incoherently. The reporter announces that the entire Narrative High Police Department is on high alert after monster sightings were reported all through last night.

Jimmy realises what's going on! He bounds back upstairs... but by the time he returns to his room, Claygas and Gretel are already on their feet, ready to go -- even Reynard! Jack Frost is in town and they know it. They need Jimmy to get them out of Narrative High.

Jimmy hesitates -- *what if his mum gets into trouble and calls home? What if she comes back and doesn't find him? What about Grandpa Jones?* Suddenly, a bitter cold throws the door inside -- it's snowing!

Claygas puts two and two together. The villains are trying to stop them from leaving with the Book of Fables! If Jimmy doesn't help them now, Utrek will his hands on it and everyone will be lost -- even his family.

Without another word, Jimmy grabs his coat, and heads out into the snow -- the Train Station is their only exit.

He leads the troop through the harsh blizzard, fighting against the wall of white and gale force winds -- it's unlike anything we've ever seen! Out of nowhere, an avalanche of snowballs pummels Jimmy. Losing his balance, he slips on a patch of ice, and zips out into the street. Tires screech, horns blare -- a police car hurtles towards him, unable to stop! Gretel leaps... she yanks Jimmy out of harm's way in the nick of time.

Storm Buckhold stands there, mouth gaping, caught red-handed with his fingers still wrapped around a snow ball. He stares at the Guardians. A furious Reynard marches right at

him through the snow, ready to teach him a good lesson, but the bully takes off faster than a cat on fire!

Jimmy and Gretel share a look. He smiles. Smitten.

Miraculously, they make it to the station in one piece! But their plan is dashed upon arrival. The place is packed under a heavy blanket of pure white snow. This is bad. Very bad. Gretel and Reynard turn to Claygas for instructions -- they have to get back to the house immediately.

At that very moment, Storm barges into his own, screaming for his mother. He finds her in the kitchen, trapped inside a solid block of ice. But she's got company. Behind her, Thundrall is raiding the fridge, the Piper is sitting on the couch and Skid is scrambling through the house in search of the Guardians. Before Storm can move an inch, JF freezes his feet firmly to the floor. Keen to let off some steam, Thundrall moves in. The bully squeals like a trapped pig, but before the troll can do anything, Skid comes to a halt at the Piper's feet with nothing to report. The Piper's cool veneer starts to crack. Time to move on.

A frustrated Thundrall explodes, smashing the counter to splinters -- he wants to break some bones! The Piper throws him a lethal look. It's his fault this is taking so long. If he could remember the well he followed the Guardians out of in the first place, they'd be back at the Tower by now.

Storm's ears prick like a Rottweiler's -- bookworm, fox, girl -- he knows where they are! To save his own skin, he promises to lead the Piper to them. A wicked smile rips its way across his Piper's face for the first time. Now they're getting somewhere.

They move through the shadows, making their way to the Jones' home through back streets and alley ways. Then, a police car turns the corner! Storm shrieks like a wild banshee to attract their attention -- it works! Within minutes, the Piper, JF and Thundrall have the entire NHPD on their tails!

Suddenly, Utrek's voice fills the Piper's head once more. *How dare they make him wait so long?* His voice dripping with untold fury, he sets an ultimatum. Sundown. With that, the Piper skids to a sudden stop. He faces the NHPD, eyes dangerously narrow. No more running. He unleashes his thugs...

Cyclones of chaos and destruction, Thundrall and JF plough through with gleeful viciousness, smashing everything in their way like demented wrecking balls!

Back at Jimmy's house, the atmosphere is dire. Claygas's mind grinds furiously for a plan of action. Unable to leave town, they have no choice but to stand their ground and protect the Book of Fables. They must prepare for battle.

Suddenly, something breaks in the next room. Everyone turns to see Grandpa Jones standing at the door, bolt upright, eyes flared. *Did he just hear the word battle?* Jimmy's inside churn. He approaches his grandfather, and tries to explain. They need his help to fight the monsters attacking Narrative High or the forces of evil will take over! This is good versus evil, right versus wrong. They have to stop them before they destroy everything.

A fire lights up behind Grandpa Jones's eyes. He cuts Jimmy off before he can finish and starts barking orders -- the old veteran is helping them!

Filled with blazing vigour, Jimmy grabs his walkie-talkie and calls Melvin and Aadi. They have to come help. But this time neither of them is moving an inch. Melvin is grounded after his mum caught him sneaking back in the house last night, and Aadi is helping his dad at their launderette.

Jimmy tries to explain the gravity of the situation, but it's all for nothing... until soft music seeps in from the outside, and Aadi and Melvin's parents start acting strange.

Melvin's mum drops her phone in the middle of a call, and marches out the door. Aadi's dad walks out of the launderette without a word, followed by all his clients. *What is going on??*

The boys scramble after their parents... the entire street is overrun by adults! They pour out of offices, shops, houses. Children try to hold them back, but none react. Melvin and Aadi follow the eerie parade all the way to the town center... a colossal crowd has gathered!

The Pied Piper stands above them all, playing his flute atop the well in front of City Hall. His face registers a problem -- *why aren't the children under his spell too?* The Piper restores his focus. They're only children.

Knowing that the goody-two-shoes Guardians wouldn't dare hurt innocent people, he decrees their mission -- *go to house of the one they call Jimmy Jones and retrieve the precious Book of Fables before sundown!* Then, Thundrall grabs Storm by the armpits and lifts him up high into the air -- he screams out the Jones' address. Aadi and Melvin are already running, bellowing into their walkie-talkies -- the adults are coming!

They arrive to Grandpa Jones digging a trench trap with Jimmy and the others. But Claygas is having a nervous breakdown... they cannot harm the innocents!

Aadi's eyes flare with excitement... he has a solution -- booby traps!

It's all hands on deck as they rig the house up with anything and everything they can find. Melvin scrambles for marbles. Jimmy blasts cold water on the porch. Aadi tactically loosens the landing's floorboards. Bowling balls, pots and pans, Grandpa's old prank fireworks... by the time they're done, the house is a maze of trip wires, buttons and levers. It's perfect!

The only thing left to do is hide the Book of Fables... and where better to hide a book than in a library? Jimmy takes the volume to his room and tucks it away, out of sight, at the very back of his bookshelf.

Just as Aadi finishes up the final touches... the windows start to rattle.

Jimmy, Melvin, Aadi, Grandpa Jones, Gretel, Reynard and Claygas all come together. This is it.

Before they know it -- the adults are stampeding through the front yard!

BLAM! BOOM! CRASH! -- the entire front line hits the bottom of Grandpa's trench like a sack of potatoes. Melvin punches the air, but victory is a long way away... within seconds, the ditch is overflowing with writhing parents. Others leap over them and charge the house. The moment their feet touch the porch, the invisible ice sends them flying in all directions.

Still, their numbers are too great... they come crashing right through the front door. One false step -- THWAK! -- the floorboards fly up, hitting them square in the face. They drop to the ground one after the other. But the onslaught is relentless...

Jimmy pops out from behind the sofa... he flings a baseball towards a bull's eye on the wall -- BAMM! -- the folding iron drops pulling a piece of string with it. A net fixed to the ceiling starts to unravel -- a ton of firewood comes crashing down. This is amazing!

But in reality, the parents are the least of their worries...

Suddenly, a frenzy of fervent aggression storms the house. Thundrall and JF are here!

Gretel leaps into action, leading Thundrall down the corridor. He hits a trip wire -- a lighter ignites Grandpa's old fireworks! They zoom through the air, blowing up in his face -- CHAOS!

JF comes to the troll's aid, unleashing a small twister and blowing everything away... even the boys! They hit the floor at the top of the stairs... hard.

A disoriented Thundrall struggles to find his feet. Melvin releases a volley of painful pots and pans. Aadi reacts, pulls a lever -- a series of buckets drop, a rain of marbles come rushing down the stairs. The troll slips! Gretel sees her golden opportunity -- she climbs onto his back like a cat. The monster roars and swings his club over his own head -- BOOM! He knocks himself out. One down.

Jimmy tackles JF. He hits the thermostats. Heaters appear in every corner of the house -- the place turns into an oven in record time. But JF's eyes have already turned deadly white. Without warning, he brings down a torrent of icy hail inside the house!

Suddenly, JF loses his balance. He looks down -- his leg has gone through the floorboards. JF shrinks himself down to size to pry his leg from the hole... but that's exactly what Reynard and Aadi were hoping for. They turn their Ice Melt pistols on his face!

The ice giant's face disappears, but that won't stop him -- he lunges and thrashes blindly! Grandpa Jones hands Jimmy a hot poker from the fireplace... the boy sinks it into the monster's back! Gretel follows suit, wielding a flaming log as a sword.

A formidable team, they hack away his arms. JF tries to run but his leg cracks ominously. Deep fractures and crevices open up all over his body -- BLAM! He crashes to the ground, breaking into a million pieces.

With that, his magic immediately dissipates and the storm dies down. Jimmy and his friends are jubilant -- they're winning!

But their celebrations are short lived.

Somewhere in the house, Claygas screams for their attention. They turn to see Wendy with the Book of Fables -- she too is under the Piper's spell!

Gretel springs after her, swords aloft, but Jimmy holds her back -- *she can't hurt his mother*. Gretel veers on the spot, and shoves him away -- *the book is more important!*

Enraged, Jimmy pins her to the wall, giving Wendy a chance to escape. A furious Gretel head butts him and leaps after her... but it's too late. She sees the Piper's fingers wrap around the Book of Fables. Without hesitating, he blasts off like a rocket!

Jimmy grabs his skateboard and flies after him. Gretel screams in frustration and bolts in hot pursuit...

They zoom past cars, bikes and mailboxes, skidding through the remaining snow. The Piper keeps going straight through, nimble as can be. Suddenly, he veers left. He's going to the centre -- he's heading for the well!

Jimmy anticipates and takes a shortcut. He whizzes through a series of alleyways -- zigzagging through oversized trashcans, dodging hissing cats. He bursts into the center, but the Piper is nowhere to be seen! Suddenly, the villain bolts right past him. Before he can change direction -- BLAM! -- he slams into Gretel, and they crash to the ground...

Their stomachs turn as they look up -- the Piper's standing on the edge of the well, a cocky smirk plastered on his face. Confident, he decides there's one last thing he has to try. The Piper reaches into his jacket and raises his flute to his lips one more time. With all the evil bile he has inside him, he plays his deadly music!

Jimmy covers his ears as tight as he can -- nothing happens! Then suddenly, a blade swoops down a mere slither from his face...

Eyes brimming with venom, Gretel attacks! The Piper has her under his spell.

Jimmy dodges and ducks, but he can't keep up with her. Pain shoots through his leg. He looks down -- blood drenches his jeans. His face turns pale, and he drops to the ground... Gretel looms over him, ready to deliver the fatal blow. Then, just at the last second, Jimmy musters everything he has left, kicks her legs out from under her and lunges at the Piper! The villain laughs and puts his flute to his lips... but this time his magic doesn't work!

Jimmy grabs the flute from his very hands and snaps it in half!

All over Narrative High, the Piper's spell breaks. Adults' faces flicker back to life... and so does Gretel's. Realising what had happened, she springs at the Piper with her bare hands, tearing into him like a true prize-fighter. The Book of Fables falls to the ground. Skid runs for it, but Jimmy dives for it, crushing the rat beneath him. The Book of Fables is safe!!

Gretel spots the feat from the corner of her eye. She drops the Piper into a heap, and breaks into the most gorgeous of smiles for the first time...

Barely conscious, the Piper grabs the flattened Skid and disappears into the darkness of the well.

Victorious, the two friends return to the house...

The enormity of the disaster hits them from the other side of the street. The place has been destroyed! Gretel takes the Book of Fables from Jimmy and slips away as they move closer, waving to Grandpa Jones who's sitting happily in the grass.

Jimmy watches Wendy stumble through the door. She points to the wreck, unable to speak... but Jimmy has no intention of trying to explain. Not now. Instead, he runs to her and hugs her like he's never hugged her before.

In Storyville, once more in the topmost chamber of the Tower of Fables, the villains of Utrek's Army of Darkness are gathered in a tight circle. In the middle, the Piper is on his knees, trembling with fear...

Utrek stands before him in silence -- a searing anger bubbling behind his deadly eyes.

The Piper throws himself at his master's feet begging for forgiveness -- the Old World weakened his powers!

THE WITCH SLAYER

Terrified whimpering echoes through the Tower of Fables. At the topmost chamber, the Army of Darkness is gathered. In their midst, Utrek hangs menacingly over the Pied Piper and his rat Skid. Sprawled on the ground, they beg for mercy -- they failed to retrieve the Book of Fables!

The Piper crawls closer to his master's feet, trying desperately to explain -- *he did everything he could!*

Utrek eyes narrow into slits, oozing contempt. This groveling is pathetic...

But the Piper does not relent -- *in Storyville, his magical flute had the strength to hold a thousand men under its spell but in Narrative High mere children would not yield... the Old World took his powers!*

Silent shock ripples through Utrek's minions -- *this cannot be true!?*

But Utrek knows it is. The Old World is so devoid of magic, it sucks it out of any fairytale creature that steps within. Still, he cannot appear weak -- failure will never be tolerated! With a wave of his hand, he condemns the Piper and Skid to the dreaded Abyss...

Faces drain of blood all round. The Piper lets out an anguished cry. At once, the Black Knight comes forward and drags him and the rat off, kicking and screaming, to the Icy Wastelands...

In that inhospitable stretch of ice, the cursed hole awaits. Deeper and darker than any other, those who go into the dreaded pit, never come out! But the Black Knight knows no compassion. Without pity, he flings the Piper and Skid inside, where they vanish, swallowed up by the never-ending darkness.

Upon his return, Utrek orders the Black Knight to prepare their next attack on the Guardians. But even the dumbest of cronies knows he doesn't stand a chance without his powers in the Old World -- JF and Thundrall never even came back. The fierce Army of Darkness unravels into a yellow-bellied band of cowards!

One woman, however, is hungry for revenge...

Devastated by the death of her son, JF, at the hands of Jimmy Jones, the Snow Queen's twisted mind runs wild with rage. A wretched scheme is forged -- she will get the vile boy to come to her!

The Snow Queen goes directly to Utrek with her plan...

She will rally her sister Bolla, the cruelest and most hideous of the three witches, to the cause! Her insatiable appetite for the flesh of humans from the Old World has made her an expert in the wishing well tunnels. Finding the boy and luring him to Storyville with the Book of Fables will be child's play for her.

But upon hearing Bolla's name, Utrek's anger flares -- he is the very reason that witch is the monster she is today! Her horrid looks were fitting punishment for refusing a place within his ranks all those years ago.

Still, the Snow Queen's wicked smile does not falter, it grows! For her sister is nothing but a pawn in her awful plot. All she needs is Utrek's false promise to restore Bolla the beauty she once possessed, and the witch will do anything they ask!

A smirk dripping with malice, rips its way across the Dark Lord's face. He consents.

In the Old World, Jimmy, Melvin, Aadi and the Guardians might have defeated three of Utrek's monsters, but their work is far from finished. The Dark Lord will strike again...

To protect the Book of Fables, Reynard and Claygas find a safe home for it at Narrative High Library. There, they spend their every waking moment guarding it with their lives. But it's not just the book that needs protecting... so does Narrative High. Under Claygas' direction, Gretel and the boys scour every inch of Narrative High, blocking all the wishing well portals. No more villains will come crawling back to this town...

But this is no mean task. Wendy is constantly guilt tripping Jimmy to help her fix the house, and Storm is always getting in the way of their work with his stupid pranks. Not only that, but when they finally do get away from Wendy, tackle the bully and find the wishing well, then there's territorial guard dogs, angry farmers... even the NHPD!

No matter how hard they push, they're not nearly fast enough... and one afternoon, they pay the price.

A shrill cackle rips through Narrative High as a shrouded figure bursts through one of the unsealed portals on a mangled broom... it's the evil Bolla!

Desperate to get the dreadful curse upon her lifted, she's accepted Utrek and the Snow Queen's deceitful offer.

Bolla bolts down the road at a dizzying speed. The jarring sound of crunching metal pervades the air. A trail of destruction follows as she makes a beeline for her target -- the Jones' home.

Bolla slips into the house with great ease. Jimmy is nowhere to be found, but it's not him the witch is looking for. It's Wendy.

Utterly exhausted, she's curled up in her sheets, fast asleep. The witch hovers over Wendy, analyzing her pretty face. Consumed by jealousy, she contemplates the nastiest of curses, but before she can make up her mind, something else catches Bolla's attention -- Wendy's make up.

Like a kid in a candy store, she eats it all up, slapping it on thick to hide her awful scars and boils. But her experiment is cut short by the doorbell.

Downstairs, Grandpa Jones hobbles to the door. The strapping local postman Tony waits on the other side with his mail.

Suddenly, Bolla appears at the top of the stairs, face smeared in gunk. Beyond ghastly! Grandpa lets out a shriek, sending Bolla into a mad frenzy. She bounds towards him -- ZAP! Grandpa sprouts massive ears and a tail -- he's turning into a donkey!

Unaware of the horror, Tony rams the door, trying to get inside. Suddenly it gives way... and there is Bolla. In her deluded attempt to look attractive, she flashes her revolting smile. Repulsion floods Tony's face. He veers and makes a run for it! But he barely crosses the threshold -- Bolla shrinks him to the size of a salt shaker.

Eyes brimming with hate, the witch picks him up, licking her lips. But before she can sink her teeth in, a stifled cry rings out -- Wendy stares at her through the banisters.

Remembering her mission, the witch hurls her spell, and Wendy drops to the ground in a deep sleep. With that, Bolla drags her onto her broom, and bestows Tony with a dire message to deliver on her behalf: *If Jimmy Jones ever wants to see Wendy again, he must go into the Black Forest where Bolla will be waiting, ready to partake in an exchange -- his mother for the Book of Fables. He has but one day to decide her fate.*

Back in Storyville, the Snow Queen watches her perfect plan fall into place through her magic crystal ball. Her hard face breaks into a sneer... all they have to do is wait.

That evening, Jimmy and his friends return home to the devastation that Bolla left behind. Donkey Grandpa bucks and kicks, destroying the kitchen, unable to control himself. A stunned Jimmy tries to calm him down, but it's just not working -- Donkey Grandpa takes off outside!

Then -- CRASH! Something smashes to pieces behind him. He turns to see a shattered glass on the floor and tiny Tony on the counter. The little man screams out the witch's threat. Jimmy is shaken to the core -- they have to do something!

Within minutes, Claygas and Reynard come through the door, faces etched with worry. Their feeble attempts at reassuring him are pitiful. Jimmy is not convinced. He turns to Gretel, but her silence says it all.

The realization hits hard -- they're not going to help his mother...

Jimmy's legs turn to stone, unable to move. Gretel pulls him aside, trying to make him understand.

Many brave warriors have laid down their lives to protect the Book of Fables... to defend this world and theirs. Her brother, Hansel, was one of them. When the ancient Order of the Guardians betrayed the Tower, Hansel was the first to take up arms against those he

once called friends. He died that day so that she, Reynard and Claygas could escape Storyville and bring the book here to the Old World.

Hansel knew, as they do now, that should the Book of Fables fall into Utrek's hands, nothing would survive. That is what they must be thinking of now. In times like these, when life as we know it hangs in the balance, difficult choices must be made.

Jimmy can't bear to hear it. He goes off into his room and leaves them all behind.

Melvin and Aadi follow, but all they do is stare at each other, all at a loss. No words could ever make this better. Aadi paces, trying to come up with a plan, but even his genius brain keeps coming up blank. Desperate to block out all the horrible thoughts, Jimmy dives into bed and attempts to sleep...

He tosses and turns under the covers. A cold sweat runs down his brow. He can't just sit here and do nothing! Then -- an idea. Jimmy sends Melvin and Aadi downstairs to distract the Guardians, and sneaks into the bathroom.

Jimmy raids the medicine cabinet and quickly finds what he's looking for. In a flash, he joins his friends in the kitchen.

With Claygas and Reynard already back at the Library, Gretel is the only one there. Melvin sees Jimmy coming, and bombards her with pointless questions about swords. Before she can tear herself away from the boys, Jimmy drops a tall glass of milk in front of her... a peace offering. Gretel accepts it, unaware of the crushed sleeping pills he laced it with. Within minutes, she's unconscious.

Melvin and Aadi look at her for no more than a second. Fear and doubt start creeping in. But Jimmy sets them straight -- *alone they might be weak, but if they stand together, they can make one decent Iron Force officer for sure... and no decent Iron Force officer would ever leave Wendy behind!*

Without further qualms, Jimmy and the boys get ready. They pack their bags and head out, decked in head to toe *Iron Force* gear. But Donkey Grandpa is waiting for them, barring the door. He wants to join their quest. However, Tony the postman has a better idea...

Eager to return to his normal size, he provides them with a plan of action. He and Donkey Grandpa will stay behind, and hold Gretel and the others off, giving the boys a decent head start to find the Black Forest. It's perfect!

Jimmy, Melvin and Aadi bolt. Their target -- Narrative High Library.

Tucked away in the quiet Reference section, Claygas and Reynard sit in silence like a pair of sentinels. Backs straight, eyes peeled, ears pricked, ready for anything. Their shoulders tense at every occasional cough or shuffle. Then -- footsteps ring out.

Reynard rises to his feet as Melvin and Aadi come skidding around the corner -- *Jimmy's gone missing!*

Reynard tries to get a decent explanation, but Melvin just keeps rambling -- *he must have gone after Wendy by himself!* Claygas tries to get Gretel on the walkie-talkie, but Melvin snatches it away. Reynard raises an eyebrow. Something's not right.

Two aisles away, Jimmy's hiding behind a bookshelf, listening to it all.

Melvin tries to get the fox to follow him. Even Aadi tries to pull him away, but Reynard stands his ground, demanding that he returns the walkie-talkie. Melvin struggles to hide his panic. Clearly, this wasn't part of the plan.

Suddenly, an avalanche of books comes raining down. Claygas and Reynard are knocked out! Melvin and Aadi look up... and Jimmy's head pops out through the shelves.

Jimmy scrambles down, then does the unthinkable... he takes the Book of Fables.

Minutes later, humming the *Iron Force* theme tune, the three boys lower themselves into a wishing well... only they're not the only ones. Unbeknownst to them, a dark figure follows close behind.

Precious hours pass before Claygas and Reynard start coming to. Claygas' chest begins to heave -- the book is gone! Reynard needs to get through to Gretel, but the walkie-talkies are gone too. Without a second to spare, they charge the Jones house. But Donkey Grandpa and Tony are on their marks. They've been expecting them.

Donkey Grandpa rears into the air, bucking like a wild stallion. He slams down on the Reynard's chest, sending him and Claygas flying. The old man has really taken his job to heart! Tony hurries over, weaving through their legs with the garden hose. But Reynard is too quick. He takes the pipe away from him and turns it into a lasso. Before Donkey Grandpa knows what's hit him, he's on his back with his legs in the air, tied up like a rodeo bull.

Reynard hurries into the house. Gretel stares at her friends, eyes low and tired. It doesn't take more than a second for them to come to the obvious conclusion. Claygas goes deathly pale -- *they have to stop them!*

But they're already too late. In the tunnels, Jimmy, Melvin and Aadi stumble their way through the darkness. Then, finally -- light! The trio dash towards it like moths, elated by the sight. But the feeling is short-lived.

Their faces fall in unison as they tumble out into the open. Storyville unfolds before them... a vision from hell!

Grim, dark, terrifying. The city has morphed into a true nightmare town. The streets glow orange in the light of the roaring fire consuming what used to be a small, quaint cottage. Its fairytale inhabitants look on ahead, aghast, plagued by gruesome contraptions, trackers, designed to limit their every move.

The vicious Dother and Dain stand before them. A few feet away, Gilbert the gremlin and Stiltskin tie two figures with sacks over their heads to the back of a horse drawn cart.

What is this?

The Frog Prince died to protect the thieves who stole the Book of Fables... now mutinous sympathizers are vying to take his place. Dother pulls off the sacks, revealing his prisoners' bruised faces -- Little Red and Grandma.

Since they were so keen on following in their friend's footsteps, now it is only appropriate for them to meet the same end. On his brother's cue, Dain lunges towards the horse, snapping at its legs. Terrified, the animal rears violently and bolts through the trees, dragging its captives behind it...

Shockingly, Red's voice rings loud and clear, echoing the words of the Frog Prince -- *"Evil shall fall!"*

Out of nowhere, a shrill shriek rises from behind the boys. Jimmy jumps, turning to see a wide eyed Storm behind him -- he was the one following them through the well!

Before Jimmy and his friends can shut him up, Dother lunges towards them with a menacing growl. The bully shoots off, but there's no way he could outrun the wolves... BLAM! -- he slams right into Dain's massive chest. Gilbert scrambles over excitedly to restrain him. Silence falls, and all eyes are on them.

Dother circles the boys, demanding to know who they are. They look at each other for answers. Should they tell the truth? But Storm makes the decision for them. Selfishly trying to save his own skin -- he exposes them all!

Stiltskin pulls out a huge roll of parchment, the Storyville Citizens Register. He starts going through the list, looking for their names. But Dother's brain is still grining furiously.

Finally it clicks. Their nervous faces, their strange clothes, no trackers... all doubts disappear, and a hungry grin flashes across the wolf's face. *Jimmy Jones is the one the master wants.*

Dother makes a move, but Aadi is already ahead of him. He pulls out a jar from his bag and slams it to the ground -- POOF! Thick, instant smoke comes pouring out!

The trio and Storm make a run for it. They dash into the trees, running blindly!

The wolf brothers snap at their heels. Stiltskin and the gremlin crow madly, reveling in the chase! Suddenly, eyes of all shapes and sizes start popping open all round. Frightened yelps follow the boys as they zoom past. Voices start screaming at them, giving directions!

Jimmy looks around him as he goes, trying to spot his guides. That's when he sees them -- they're the trees!

They've stumbled into the Whispering Woods where the trees are alive. And they're helping Jimmy, Aadi and Melvin get away! Close behind, Dain claws at them viciously, snarling at the trees to shut up.

Suddenly, Jimmy and his friends burst into a clearing. Right in the middle, a gorgeous shaft of light from above illuminates a sword embedded in stone -- Excalibur! The boys stare at it in disbelief. *Is this for real?*

They have barely taken a breath when Dother materializes through the trees, teeth bared. Stiltskin follows. A second later, Dain and Gilbert the gremlin come up from behind. They're surrounded.

Jimmy's eyes scan the surroundings, frantically searching for an escape route... but there are none. Running thin on options, he shuffles towards the sword. Dother and his evil cohorts let out a cruel laugh. *No soul has been able to wield that sword since King Arthur.*

Dain, his body crouched low in the grass, is unable to contain himself any longer -- he springs! Storm panics. He grabs Jimmy and pushes him towards the wolf in an attempt to get away. Jimmy slips and tumbles onto the sword. He grabs onto the hilt to break his fall -- the blade slips out of the stone! Time stops.

Jimmy stands in the middle of the clearing, Excalibur in hand. The villains' faces crumble -- *that's impossible!* No one moves a muscle... until the whirring of giant propellers breaks the spell.

Louder and louder, the sound becomes deafening! The trees whoosh violently... then a huge flying contraption bursts through the branches over their heads!

The villains dive for cover and the boys follow suit. Jimmy struggles to shove Excalibur into his bag as the wind whips them hard. But they have nothing to fear...

The machine lowers closer to the ground, hovering over the grass. The door flies open to reveal a skinny old man with a fluffy white beard. He reaches out to the boys, shouting for them to come quickly -- it's Geppetto! Inside, his son Pinocchio, is at the controls. The boys scramble on board!

Within the hour, Jimmy, Melvin, Aadi and Storm are standing in the middle of the most awesome workshop ever. The vast lab is bursting at the seams with strange tools and bizarre devices.

Storm's jaw drops so low it could touch the floor -- he goes ballistic!

The bully careens through the lab, touching everything within reach... wreaking chaos! Aadi dodges just in time, but Melvin tries to stop him. Storm stumbles and loses control. He hits a lever -- BOOM! A rain of painful traps drops over their heads.

The first to climb out from under the mess, Geppetto grabs Storm by the scruff of his neck and throws him out.

The bully slams his fists on the door, bellowing to be let him back in. But it's all for naught. The sound of a twig snapping somewhere in the distance makes Storm stop dead in his tracks. His eyes well up with frightened tears, but he forces himself not to make a sound. Consumed by fear, he runs into the trees in search of a safe hiding place.

Inside, Jimmy and his friends try to remedy Storm's mess. But where do they begin? Geppetto joins them, and shares his own story.

A long time ago, he was the "Da Vinci" of Storyville. He was the prodigy who built the city from the ground up. But that time is long gone. When Utrek took over, he kidnapped

Pinocchio and manipulated Geppetto's genius for his own evil purposes. He was the one who made those dreadful mechanisms the people of Storyville are wearing.

For weeks, he tried to block out his friends' screams as they were forced into his horrid creations by those loyal to Utrek. But it was impossible. One morning, when Dain came down to his cell to take him to the workshop, he refused. He tricked the wolf and managed to get his son away in one piece.

Since then, they've gone underground, working on new inventions to help the rebels in their quest to overthrow Utrek and take back their city!

Melvin is beyond excited. All this talk of rebels, inventions and undercover operations has him all riled up. He jumps to his feet and offers their help!

Geppetto's elated. He knows brave freedom fighters are few and far between! Their leaders, the Frog Prince and Red Riding Hood, are both dead and the people of Storyville are living in fear. Now, it's just him and a ragtag troop of Lilliputians trying to rally them, but with the boys' help he could seek out the boy from the Old World. Rumour has it he killed JF and Thundrall -- he's the kind of leader they need!

Melvin and Aadi turn to Jimmy, eyes wide as saucers. But before they can say anything, Jimmy brings everything to a screeching halt. They have their own mission to complete -- they have to get to the Black Forest.

Geppetto stares at them, stunned. Ever since Utrek crushed the Protectors of the Forest, a terrible illness has taken over that place, killing all the plants and animals... and anything else that lives. No one goes there unless they're forced to. Jimmy has no time to waste on explanations. The sun is going down and he has to find Bolla before the day is out.

Pinocchio stifles a whimper at the sound of Bolla's name. Geppetto's jaw drops -- *why would anyone risk his life to find that horrid monster?* Exasperated, Jimmy finally spits it out -- *Bolla kidnapped his mother.*

Geppetto is touched by the boy's courage. He understands perfectly the importance of family. Without hesitation, he draws Jimmy a map of the Black Forest and shows him where the witch's house is located.

The boy thanks him and the trio gets ready to go, but Geppetto holds them back, not yet finished. The inventor pulls Jimmy towards his flying machine. The friends are incredulous -- *is he serious?*

Geppetto shows Jimmy the ropes. Meanwhile, Melvin and Aadi run to get Storm from outside. But before they get half way to the door, Gretel, Claygas and Reynard come bursting through! Without thinking, the boys turn on them, defending Jimmy.

Gretel screams at Geppetto to stop the machine -- Jimmy has the Book of Fables!

Geppetto is taken aback! He goes for the manual override switch, but it's buried under the mountain of traps Storm dropped earlier -- Jimmy's already rising towards the roof!

Claygas watches Geppetto flounder. With no other choice in sight, he cringes as he sends magic spells hurling at Jimmy -- the little bookworm packs a mighty punch! CRASH! BOOM! His hexes blow craters in Geppetto's wall...

Jimmy dodges the enchantments clumsily, throwing himself out of the pilot seat. The ship swerves dangerously, its propellers biting into the walls, tearing them to shreds! At the last second, Jimmy grabs the wheel, and somehow manages to make the thing go up. He crashes through the closing roof doors!

The Snow Queen lets out a chilling laugh, observing the turmoil with relish. Her mouth twisted into a malevolent grin, she informs Utrek of their progress. Jimmy Jones is making his way right into their trap. The Book of Fables will be his!

Suddenly, the Snow Queen's smile disappears... the crystal ball shows her Gretel sneaking up behind Jimmy! *How did she get there??* Like a cat, she jumps onto Jimmy's back, pulling him away from the controls.

The Snow Queen lets out furious shriek. She won't let some silly girl get in the way of her revenge! Her eyes lift towards the skies and turn pure white just like JF's did. Her loyal servant, the North Wind, whips at her cloak as she imparts her orders -- *Destroy the flying ship. The boy must not return to Narrative High.*

With those words, she unleashes the most cataclysmic blizzard in the history of Storyville!

The North Wind throws Geppetto's ship around like a tin can, and sends it plummeting towards the ground at dizzying speed. Then -- CRASH! It hits the earth. Hard.

The contraption bounces and rolls. Pieces of wood and metal fly off in every direction, until it finally comes to rest in a smoking heap. Nothing stirs.

Suddenly, loud, jarring pounding noises ring out -- BANG. BANG. BANG! The door is kicked wide open and out crawls Jimmy, dragging an unconscious Gretel behind him. Then -- BOOM! The ship blows up in a mushroom cloud of flames...

Gretel's eyes snap open at the sound. She spots Jimmy running into the forest. She tries to follow, but can't -- she's tied to a tree! She shouts after him, but Jimmy doesn't stop - she has to trust him!

With Geppetto's map in hand, Jimmy makes his way through the Black Forest. Looking around, he realises just how right the inventor was. Everything here is rotting, infected by something awful. But there's no time to dwell on that. He trudges through the growing darkness for what feels like hours. Then, finally, a beautiful house made entirely of sweets appears through the trees. This is it.

Inside, Bolla waits impatiently. The knock on her door is music to her ears. She leaps up onto her feet, and opens it to find Jimmy standing outside, a package held tightly under his arm -- the Book of Fables.

Bolla tears an evil smile into her deformed face... then invites the boy in.

Jimmy scans the place, looking for his mother, but she is nowhere to be seen. He demands that Bolla bring her to him, but the witch wants to see her payment first. Wary, he takes a step back, never breaking eye contact, and reaches back into his backpack. He takes out a book, covered in a protective cloth. The Book of Fables.

Bolla's terrifying grin grows! She reaches out to touch the book, but Jimmy pulls it away. He asks for his mother once more. Only too happy to oblige, Bolla rips a cover off of a candy cane birdcage. The little dove inside start chirping madly, trying to get through the bars. Jimmy looks at the animal closely. It's Wendy!

Growing impatient, Bolla tries to take the book from his hands, but Jimmy isn't giving anything up yet. He orders the witch to turn his mother back. Bolla can't be bothered with arguing. With a wave of her hand, the dove starts to change... wings turn into arms, talons to toes, beak to nose. Finally, mother and son are reunited.

But there is no time for pleasantries. This is a business exchange after all. Jimmy finally hands over the Book of Fables. It is done... or so he thinks.

The moment Bolla's long warty fingers wrap around the book, a heavy net of sticky pink taffy drops on top of him and Wendy, pinning them firmly to the ground -- the Snow Queen is on her way...

But she's not the only one. Gretel has escaped her bindings and found her way to the candy house. She charges in, blade aloft, staring her arch enemy in the face!

Livid, Bolla bares her teeth. Her oven door bursts open, and an army of ferocious gingerbread men march out. Gretel chops them down feverishly, but they keep coming like a swarm of angry ants.

Weakened by the crash, Gretel's energy fades fast. Unable to keep up with their assault, the gingerbread men overpower her, and drag her into the taffy net with Jimmy and Wendy. But the worst isn't over yet.

The temperature drops suddenly, and their breaths materialize in cold puffs of white. Outside, a violent wind yanks at the trees. Without warning, the cottage door is blown off its hinges, and the Snow Queen makes her royal entrance. Gliding upon a path of glinting ice, she has come for her pound of flesh.

Finished with her end of the bargain, Bolla takes the book and sets to leave, eager to claim her prize and be beautiful again! But just as she's walking out the door, a gust of wind whips at the pages and reveals Jimmy's deception. The pages are blank -- this is not the real Book of Fables!

The realization dawns on Gretel too. Jimmy never stole the book!

The Snow Queen grabs onto Jimmy and tries to drag him away but Bolla bars her path. Neither she, nor the boy, is leaving this house until she gets the book!

The sisters' eyes spit hate. The Snow Queen has no intention of waiting. All hell breaks loose!

The sisters turn on each other with venomous hatred. The Snow Queen sends Bolla crashing through the wall. The witch retaliates with enchanted liquorish strands that strangle her sister. But one touch of the Snow Queen's finger turns them to ice. She shatters them without breaking a sweat.

Turning her eyes to the skies, she calls upon the North Wind once more. It answers with a dangerous volley of sharp ice shards. But Bolla doesn't flinch. A wave of hot fudge consumes them as they rip through the air.

Blind with rage, the Snow Queen grabs her sister's face and starts freezing her solid! Bolla lets out a deafening screech, writhing in immense agony!

Summoning every shred of energy left in her, Bolla shoves her sister into the roaring furnace. The Snow Queen's wails pierce through the door, but Bolla's face is a mask of mad elation.

Reinvigorated by her victory, she turns to her prey. But they're gone!

She runs out, and spots a set of tracks leading through the trees beyond the cottage.

The witch gives chase.

The trio moves like a blur through the thick forest. But they're no match for Bolla on her broom. Jimmy is the first to suffer her wrath. The witch grabs him by his backpack and throws him high up into the air. He crashes to the ground with a sickening thud. Bolla turns her attention to Gretel next, but the girl is already in action -- BLAM! She knocks the witch right off her broom! Swords held high, Gretel charges, but a curse stops her dead in her tracks -- she changes into a fat old warthog!

Her face a mask of rage, Bolla takes Jimmy by the arm, and starts dragging him away. She has to get the Book of Fables. She must be beautiful again!

Suddenly -- WHAK! Bolla freezes. She staggers, then drops to the ground like a sack of rotten potatoes... revealing Wendy standing behind behind her with a massive tree branch.

Wendy runs to Jimmy side, desperately trying to wake him. His eyes flutter but he's still out of it. Behind her, Bolla rises like a demented soul from hell. She grabs Wendy by the neck, and lifts her up against a tree, choking her...

Jimmy struggles to come to his senses. His gaze finally falls on his mother. She claws at Bolla frantically but she's fading away fast. He tries to get up, but his legs won't hold his weight

He drops back down into the grass... *can this be the end?*

No! Just a few feet away, Jimmy's rucksack lies open in the grass, the hilt of Excalibur poking through.

Jimmy drags himself towards it with everything he's got. This is his last chance...

The moment his fingers touch the metal, the power of the mighty sword ripples through him like a surge of electricity. He charges Bolla with the strength of ten men!

Jimmy rams her into a tree, driving Excalibur through her with blazing fury.

Bolla stares at him in shock and disbelief. She opens her mouth, but no sound comes out. Her limbs droop by her side, and the monster disappears in a heap of ash.

Bolla is gone.

Immediately, her evil magic disappears. The Black Forest begins to heal itself. Gretel returns to her human form. Even in the Old World, Grandpa Jones and Tony the postman are restored to their normal selves!

Jimmy runs to his mother and pulls her into a hug... even Gretel joins in! Then out of nowhere, a whole crowd comes through. Melvin, Aadi, Claygas, Reynard, Geppetto, Pinocchio, the Lilliputians... everyone is here! Claygas lets out a squeal -- *is that Excalibur in Jimmy's hand?* Gretel gives Jimmy no time to answer -- she tells them all about his amazing victory! Everyone is in awe.

Moved by the story, Geppetto and his small army of rebels raise their fists in the air, chanting the words "Hail the Witch Slayer" again and again. It rises into the air -- a powerful battle cry.

But the celebrations cannot go on forever. Wendy and the boys must return to the Old World where it is safe. Gretel, Claygas and Reynard escort their friends back through the tunnels back home to Narrative High.

Together, they go back to the Library. There, Jimmy goes to the children's non-fiction section, and climbs to the topmost shelf where he hid the real Book of Fables.

Thus, the precious book is taken back to its home in the References section.

That night, the boys go to sleep with their minds at rest. All is well again... or so they think. With all the events that transpired, the boys became so wrapped up in their adventure that they forgot about one thing -- Storm Buckhold.

When Pinocchio threw him out of the lab, he went off to find a safe place to hide. But all he did was run into the arms of Dother and the other minions! Now, he sits with his legs to his chest in a tiny cage in Utrek's chamber in the Tower of Fables.

The Dark Lord sits on his throne, eyes closed, trying to locate Bolla and the Snow Queen through the powers of his mind. But Storm won't stop crying!

Tired of his incessant whining, Utrek transforms him into a frog and flings him out the window!

Just then, Dother and Dain come into the chamber heads held low. Stiltskin and Gilbert the gremlin follow. Dother informs his master of the witches' demises. He also tells him that the boy has returned to the Old World with the Book of Fables!

Utrek remains motionless, but his eyes are consumed by untold fury. The entire Tower begins to tremble under his feet, right down to its very foundations.

Jimmy Jones must die.

THE KING OF GIANTS

It's the middle of the night and hushed whispers fill the air in Grandpa Jones' back garden. A soft light seeps out through the rickety old shed's blinds. Something's going on in there...

A buzzing makeshift hospital is hidden away inside. Injured magical creatures of all shapes and sizes are crammed in every nook, crook and cranny. The place is jam-packed! The latest addition, Percival, a one armed toy soldier, is all worked up. A troubled Grandpa Jones patches him up quickly. But tensions are running high...

The great rebellion has started.

In Storyville, months have passed since Jimmy and his friends defeated the vicious witch of the Black Forest. But the valiant victory of good over evil is far from forgotten.

Since that fateful day, the story of Jimmy Jones' victory spread like wildfire, igniting people with a mutinous fever. Courage is contagious!

A brave band of warriors came together, defenders of the people -- the Council of the Wise. Made up of Gretel, Geppetto, Robin Hood, the legendary marksman, Aladdin, a master of the blades, and Jack Beanstalk, the killer of giants, the Council led the inhabitants' offensive.

Daring acts of defiance against Utrek and his Army of Darkness riddled the city.

They started small. First, the villains' food rations were stolen and divided among the people. Then, new lots of torturous tracking devices were found destroyed in city centre. But as time wore on, the feats became bolder, more daring. Even Utrek's minions became targets! One night, under the cover of darkness, Dother and Dain's living quarters were pelted with putrid manure and set ablaze!

One thing, however, always remained constant. Time after time, each audacious move against the Dark Lord and his cronies was accompanied by a now infamous symbol -- the Witch Slayer's emblem.

The message rang loud and clear. The people of Storyville are afraid no more.

Determined to crush their spirits, Utrek's ordered mass arrests throughout the city!

His minions went on a cruel rampage. They raided homes, dragging people away, kicking and screaming, to the terrifying Black Dungeons. Families were destroyed, torn apart without mercy. Those left behind had no other choice. They abandoned the city and retreated underground.

Now, the fight rages on. But the people are devastated and weary. Their numbers are wearing thin. The Council of the Wise comes together. They must find a way to bring them hope. After long hours of deliberation, they come up with the perfect plan -- they will rescue their comrades from the Black Dungeons.

With everything set, only one piece is left to complete the puzzle. The great Witch Slayer must return to Storyville and lead the people. Gretel jumps to her feet, resolute. Without hesitating, she sets off through the wishing well, promising to handle the matter.

But things have changed in Narrative High... and not for the better. Not only is everyone still reeling from Storm Bucklhold's disappearance, but the recession has hit the little town hard. Local businesses are closing down for good every single day, and money is tight all round.

The boys do everything they can to help their parents out. Aadi spends more and more time at his father's laundry and Jimmy even gets a job at the corner store bagging groceries.

But here in the Old World they're nowhere near heroes. Despite all their efforts, awful news still follows -- Melvin's dad gets fired. In desperate need of a new job, his family has no choice but to leave town in search of better opportunities.

In a week's time, Melvin will be gone, and the trio will be no more.

That evening, the boys meet at Jimmy's house with their laptops to play one more quest together as a unit of the great *Iron Force*. Hands on their hearts, they recite the words of their heroes; "*When darkness engulfs all, we will bring light... When all seems lost, we will fight... we will stand up to this evil. Never back down!*"

Suddenly, the back door flies open and Gretel comes barging in, radiant as ever.

Jimmy's eyes light up at the sight of her. He's missed her... and a lot. But the moment she asks him to join the rebel forces in Storyville, dread floods his features. Ever since her abduction, Wendy hasn't let him out of her sight. Crippled by the thought of losing her only son, she has made him promise her one thing -- he must never return to Storyville!

Gretel takes his hand, determined to make him understand. Without him, Storyville and its people don't stand a chance against Utrek's evil. Jimmy hesitates, torn beyond

belief... then shakes his head no and painfully pulls away. He cannot break his word to his mother. The Witch Slayer refuses to fight!

Not willing to give up, Gretel provides a hundred other reasons why he has to join the rebellion, but her words change nothing. Jimmy stands his ground. A stalemate is reached.

Defeated and hurt, Gretel returns to Storyville with only Percival in tow. She immediately relays the news to the Council. Knowing that Jimmy's absence will bring nothing but fear and despair, Geppetto puts forth a cunning proposal. He will carve Pinocchio's face in Jimmy's likeness. The puppet will take the Witch Slayer's place!

Pinocchio is petrified -- Utrek's villains will destroy him! Before he can refuse, Gretel vows to protect him. With her promise, Pinocchio reluctantly allows his father to do the job.

That evening, Pinocchio emerges before the crowd and puts on a worthy performance. The switch works to perfection. Renewed by the noble words of valor and courage from their beloved 'leader', the people of Storyville head out for their most dangerous mission to date.

The silent surge of soldiers marches through the night until the ominous Black Dungeons come into view.

Robin Hood flits through the trees out in front. He hones in on two horrid ogres, keeping watch on top of the outer walls. Two arrows are all he needs to take them out. His accuracy is deadly.

Meanwhile, Gretel prepares a trembling Pinocchio and summons Jack Beanstalk. Light as a feather, he scales the door, fixing square packages all around the edges -- Geppetto's latest dung bombs. Two seconds later -- KABOOM! The door disappears inside.

Bursting with bravery, the people heave forward through the gaping hole. But what they see stops them dead in their tracks -- the place is empty.

Suddenly, vicious gargoyles swoop down like devils from the sky. All the way from the Icy Wastelands, the infamous guardians of Utrek's Castle Doomstand are here!

One by one, they pick men off and send them flying! Terrible screaming rings through the night as people tumble to their doom. But worse is yet to come.

Out of nowhere, Utrek's vicious Imp Army comes marching through!

The Dark Lord knew they were coming.

A troop of toy soldiers fronted by Percival lets out a chilling battle cry, and charges the evil ones with everything they can muster! Aladdin has their back, jumping in after them, his scimitar a blur. Jack Beanstalk swings his mighty axe, knocking imps out by the dozen with a single blow. Holding Pinocchio firmly by her side, Gretel takes on five at a time, her swords slicing through the air like butter. Robin covers everyone from up top, launching his arrows without even looking at his target!

The attack is commendable, but the imps keep coming. The Witch Slayer's army is seriously outnumbered. It starts to look like a losing battle!

Then, a shriek pierces through the chaos. Pinocchio is in the air, trapped in the claws of a gargoyle! The people of Storyville watch in horror as their 'leader' is carried off.

Gretel bolts after them through the forest. She leaps into the trees, zigzagging from one branch to the other, positioning herself behind them as best she can. Then, with one sure kick, she takes off like a bird, landing right on top of the gargoyle's back!

A dangerous struggle ensues in midair as the sky begins to turn purple. The monster jerks and dives violently, fighting to throw Gretel off, but she holds on tight. Then, dawn breaks! The sun's first rays hit the gargoyle as he lets out a terrible roar. His powerful wings turn to stone, and he plummets to the ground. A pile of rubble is all that's left.

Poor Pinocchio picks himself up and tries to run to safety, but before he can put one foot in front of the other Gretel grabs him and drags him in the opposite direction. They have to go back and help the others...

But alas, they're too late. When they finally get back to the Dungeons, the full extent of the horror becomes clear. Utrek's Imp Army has taken over.

Blinded by grief, Gretel unsheathes her swords and bounds towards the enemy. Suddenly, two pairs of hands hold her back -- Robin and Percival!

Overjoyed, Gretel hugs them tight, relieved to see two of her friends alive. And she soon realises, things are not as dire as they seem. The people fought bravely, but watching the 'Witch Slayer' get carried off by the gargoyles killed their spirits. Hundreds of them were taken as prisoners. Gretel's eyes scream with renewed hope! With the gargoyles firmly set in stone, the enemy is at its weakest. They must launch another attack... now.

At the dungeons, Utrek's regimented soldiers patrol the perimeter in pairs like clockwork. A rustle from the forest behind them breaks their stride. Their heads snap back in unison. It's Gretel.

Like robots, the imps fling out their guns and march forward, keeping her in their sights at all times. Then -- BLAMM! Robin and Percival knock them out from behind.

Within minutes, the four of them are in front of the menacing Imp General. Disguised in imps' fatigues, Percival and Pinocchio present Gretel and Robin as their prisoners. But the General is far from impressed. The Witch Slayer is still missing.

Pinocchio hides behind his cap, eyes low, struggling not to pee himself. But Percival is in control. He promises to find out his location when he gets their captives down to the dungeons. The General approves.

The four of them quickly make their way to the cells below. Percival repeats the General's orders and the guards clear out without question.

The moment the door closes behind them, Gretel grabs the keys and rushes to the cells. Indescribable elation ripples through the prisoners. Their beloved leader is alive... and he's returned to save them!

Led by Geppetto, they prepare for one more epic battle. Jack Beanstalk retrieves his axe, and chops the metal bars on their cells to make batons for everyone. Aladdin hands over his scimitar to the Elves who are busy carving as many weapons as they can from every scrap of material they can scavenge. Old Geppetto gets his hands dirty too, customizing the imps' guns with the help of the fairies. Now, they'll shoot potent fairy dust bullets!

In the excitement, time vanishes into thin air. Geppetto isn't ready, but they have to make a move -- the sky is already turning red outside. Gretel's mind races for a plan. She, Robin and Aladdin quickly get their men together. With a nod, Jack goes off by himself. He has a special job to do.

With no time to spare, the troops blare through corridors, wreaking chaos and taking down enemy soldiers with astounding tenacity. Until -- the alarm is raised!

What's left of the Imp Army comes down hard. Storyville's soldiers are flushed out into the courtyard within minutes. Evil grins plaster the imps' faces. The gargoyles will be changing soon! But Gretel remains calm. She got it covered. Jack Beanstalk comes bounding over the south wall, his axe swinging -- CRASH! He takes off the heads of the last stone gargoyles in the dungeons!

That night, the Imp Army suffers a crushing defeat.

That night, the Witch Slayer's flag flies proud over the Black Dungeons.

Utrek's fury shakes the Tower of Fables to the very core. He will never be overshadowed by some mere boy!

Brimming with rage, he orders his Jailer, a bitter deformed hunchback, to bring him his 'special guest'.

The sad creature scuffles through the dank hidden passageways beneath the Tower, returning with a pungent mound of rotting wood, muck and moss. The Dark Lord weaves his

words and the muddy heap begins to squirm. The branches morph into limbs... a face takes shape. A man rises from the mass -- it's Hansel!

But this is not the great warrior from Gretel's stories. Eyes to the floor, the weak Hansel can barely stand up straight. Utrek looms over, then drops the Black Blade at his feet, a weapon so powerful a mere scratch from its blade would kill its victim. He wants the Witch Slayer dead.

For the first time, Hansel's eyes meet Utrek's. With the last shred of fight left in him, he utters a clear no. The word barely escapes his lips. Utrek shoots untold pain through his entire body. Hansel holds back his cries, forces himself to bear it, but the agony is excruciating. He screams for mercy, accepting his mission.

Still, Utrek is unsatisfied. The Witch Slayer's filthy followers must pay for their disgusting insolence. Shrouded beneath his black cloak and a scheme in mind, he sets out towards the harshest terrain of all -- the Rocky Mountains.

Tunnelled deep within the jagged rock is the Land of the Giants, where Mortimer is the undisputed King. Wild and with an insatiable taste for violence, these creatures bow to no one, not even Utrek. But the Dark Lord knows he can provide them with the one thing the giants love more than a bloody battle... and that is gold.

In return for their alliance against the rebels, Utrek fills Mortimer's vast caves with massive, glinting piles of precious gold. The deal is struck!

Oblivious to it all, the people of Storyville celebrate their victory at the Black Dungeons. But the Council of the Wise is already planning its next move. With Pinocchio's identity now established as the Witch Slayer, they can move onto their next target, the villainous barracks led by the Boogeyman -- Fortress Bloodscourge.

Then, a chilling howl brings the proceedings to a screeching halt. Gretel and the others react instantly, taking their positions on the walls in seconds. Robin spots something

moving in the shadows beyond. He lets an arrow loose. A pained yowl rings out, and Hansel staggers out of the trees, pursued by Dother and Dain.

Shocked beyond measure, Gretel leaps to her brother's aid. The wolves bare their fangs, growling menacingly, but the moment Gretel unsheathes her swords, their job is over. Dother turns on his tail and melts back into the darkness, followed by his brother.

With tears in her eyes, Gretel hugs her long lost brother tight. White as a sheet, Hansel's buckles in her arms. Gretel spots Robin's arrow lodged into his side. She has to get him to Grandpa Jones!

Within the hour, Gretel marches into Grandpa Jones' shed with a barely conscious Hansel in her arms. Grandpa gets to work immediately. Suddenly, Jimmy comes through with Melvin and Aadi behind him. Hansel's eyes snap wide open at the name. He finally realises the truth. The Witch Slayer has been here all along.

Gretel is ice cold, refusing to utter a single word. Jimmy attempts to break the silence, asking about Hansel, but all he gets is ignored. As soon as her brother is stable, Gretel tells Grandpa Jones to expect new patients during the night, then bids them farewell for what could clearly be the last time. She's off to prepare the troops.

Upon her arrival, the people's army is gathered, ready to go.

With their 'Witch Slayer' leading them, they set off for Fortress Bloodscourge. But nothing in the world could ever prepare them for what they find.

Perpetual darkness engulfs all as Storyville's soldiers bound through the stronghold's gates. Low, spine chilling laughter fills their ears. Without warning, a torrent of evil ghouls and spirits descends upon them. They shift and morph, feeding off of their wildest fears, shaping themselves into terrors from their worst nightmares. The Boogeyman was waiting!

Paralyzing fear plunges into their hearts like countless daggers. Gretel, Aladdin, Jack, Robin; all of men are rendered powerless! All except one -- BANG! A bright flash of light

shines through the darkness -- it's Geppetto and his awesome fairy dust rifle! The rounds go off one after the other, punching through the shadows, turning terrifying monsters into nothing more than little wisps.

The tables turn, and the forces of good are back on track. They push through the fortress relentlessly. When they reach the southern wall, a herd of unicorns is discovered locked away in cells! Gretel scrambles to set them free, but before she can, the ground starts to tremble violently. Out of nowhere -- BLAM! Jack Beanstalk, the Killer of Giants himself, is crushed by gargantuan foot. Mortimer's giants have arrived.

All hell breaks loose as two massive beasts come crashing through like wild freight trains, ruthless and brutal, destroying everything in their path.

Fear runs rife. People panic and scatter in all directions. Gretel tries to keep Pinocchio close, but he too bolts. She watches in horror as one of the monsters spots him and scoops him up, completely unaware of who he is meant to be. The giant pulls him apart for all to see.

The entire army dies on the inside. Their Witch Slayer is dead.

Back in the Old World, however, the real Witch Slayer is as far from their struggle as he can be. It's their last night as a trio and Jimmy, Melvin and Aadi sit around the kitchen table in silence, not knowing what to do. Jimmy's head hangs low, guilt eating away at him. Hansel, already on his feet thanks to Grandpa Jones, joins the sour fest.

They get off to an uncomfortable, bumpy start, but after no more than an hour the four of them are getting on like a house on fire. They ask Hansel all about his battles, what it was like being Utrek's prisoner, and how he escaped. But as they talk, they don't even realise that he craftily changes the subject every time to their own adventures... and the Book of Fables.

Before they know it, the clock strikes midnight, and it's time for the boys to call it a night. Melvin and his family are leaving town early in the morning. Reluctantly, they bid Hansel goodnight and turn in.

Hours pass and Melvin is still tossing and turning, nervous about his big move. Then, he hears something stirring in the darkness. It's Hansel.

He tiptoes into the room and makes a beeline for Jimmy. He lifts the Black Blade over his head, then hesitates. In that moment, Melvin leaps out of the shadows, protecting his friend. Startled, Hansel reacts, slashing the boy's shoulder with the deadly weapon -- it burns!

Jimmy and Aadi scramble to their senses. The lights come on and the dreadful damage is revealed -- Melvin's shoulder is invisible under a bright stream of red. Jimmy scrambles to get his grandfather, but Grandpa Jones is already at the door. Hansel follows, putting on a disturbingly convincing show of shock and concern.

Just by looking at the wound, Grandpa Jones knows they need to call in reinforcements on this one. Jimmy grabs the walkie-talkie and calls in Claygas and Reynard.

Within minutes, the Guardians are at the door. Their gaunt faces say it all. News from Storyville has clearly reached their ears already. But Jimmy is too concerned with Melvin to even realise. Claygas pushes in to see what happened, and nearly faints at the sight. He recognises the mark of the Black Blade immediately. Only the sacred horn of a unicorn can heal that wound.

With that, Jimmy starts packing his bags. He will return to Storyville one last time, and bring the cure back for his friend. But, Claygas hasn't finished yet. He tells him how Gretel found a herd of unicorns locked away in the cells during the battle of Fortress Bloodscourge. But when the people's army fell, the giants took all the creatures to the Tower of Fables. The Dark Lord is using their powers to replenish his forces!

Finally, the realization hits Jimmy. Neither he, nor his friends will ever be safe until Utrek is gone.

One more time, Jimmy dons his *Iron Force* gear, and straps Excalibur to his back. He's ready to go. Aadi is waiting for him at the door. But he's not the only one -- so is

Melvin. Jimmy and Aadi unite to convince Melvin to stay behind. He needs to stay rest until they get back with his cure. But there's no way that's going to happen. This trio is a team. And teams always stick together.

Hansel spots an opportunity. He offers to join them, and help track down Gretel. Without no time to waste, the four of them set off through the wishing wells. But the Storyville they're approaching is far from the city they once knew.

A roaring inferno greets them upon their arrival. In an insane rage, Utrek is burning everything to the ground!

Jimmy and his friends blast through the Whispering Woods, the trees hurrying them towards the people's camp. When they finally arrive, they understand exactly why. There is nothing left but death and loss.

Gretel tries to regroup her men, but her efforts are worse than futile. The army is no more. Like some vision from a dream, she sees Jimmy walking towards her among fear-filled faces. He unsheathes Excalibur and marches through with his head held high. Every single person there turns to him. The dejected soldiers stagger to their feet, following his every step -- *the Witch Slayer is alive!*? Jimmy stands before the gathered crowd, each one waiting expectantly. Right there, a question pops into his head -- *now what?*

Seconds feel like hours as he struggles like never before. He has to do something. Anything. But his brain gives him nothing.

Jimmy closes his eyes and gets in the moment. Melvin and Aadi's mouths drop as he utters the first words that come to him -- "*When darkness engulfs all, we will bring light... When all seems lost, we will fight... we will stand up to this evil. Never back down!*"

The speech might have been stolen from *Iron Force*, but the people are oblivious -- it works, igniting a roaring fire inside them! That fateful day, the anti-thesis to the Army of Darkness is born. The Army of Light is forged!

But not everyone is impressed. Still furious at him for refusing to help from the start, Gretel comes down on him hard on his plan to attack the Tower and get the unicorn blood for Melvin. *Who does he think he is coming in here barking stupid orders? Moving on the Tower would be suicide -- the entire area is controlled by the giants!*

Jimmy stops to think. He knows they could never go head to head against King Mortimer's horde. Then -- an idea. Geppetto's genius engineering brain is called upon. With the boys' help, the old inventor gets to work in an abandoned cave. The sound of construction rings out through the night.

When the sun rises the next morning, an enormous robot stands tall in Geppetto's improvised workshop. Melvin and Aadi gape at it in awe. Gretel goes nuts -- *one robot can't defeat the entire army of giants!* Jimmy agrees. But he has no intention of taking them *all* on. With a daredevil smile and a soldier's salute, he climbs into the machine and heads off into the distance. He's going to pick a fight.

The monsters stop in their tracks as Jimmy's colossal robot lumbers through the trees towards them. He comes to a halt in front of King Mortimer himself... then does the unthinkable -- he challenges him to battle!

Mortimer stares him down, then lets out a cold, derisive laugh. His shadow drapes over Jimmy as he stands up to his full height. The King of Giants accepts.

The giants gather round... then -- BOOM! Jimmy and Mortimer clash like legendary titans!

Jimmy's robot holds its own. but the mechanics suffer under the weight of the enormous Giant King. The jarring sound of crushing wood and metal sends him into a frenzy -- he grabs the robot by the arms, and rips one out with barely any effort! Like a wrecking ball, his punches bring Jimmy's robot to its knees.

Cocky, Mortimer stops to bask in the glory of his horde's cheers. But he's cut down by a well-aimed punch -- Jimmy knocks the wind right out of him!

Using just his good arm, Jimmy rains blows over Mortimer's head. But then -- BLAMM! Mortimer lands a devastating head butt, crushing the machine's chest!

Jimmy's robot staggers. But so does Mortimer. The force of the blow has his eyes rolling back in their sockets. Jimmy tries to help, but the disoriented giant throws a devastating punch -- he knocks himself out! Mortimer falls.

A victorious Jimmy stands in front of the giants. One by one, they all bow down... he is the new Giant King!

His return to the camp is met with fantastic jubilation, but all Jimmy can think about is Melvin. His condition is deteriorating by the minute. With the Army of Light and the giant horde behind him, Jimmy marches on to the Tower of Fables. He will get the unicorn cure for his friend if it's the last thing he does.

The sight of the oncoming Army of Light strikes fear into the hearts of Utrek's minions. Many drop their weapons and flee, but many others, more vicious, more brutal, take up arms. Utrek's right hand, the indestructible Black Knight prepares them for war!

A true leader, Jimmy charges the enemy with his people behind him. Good and evil collide. The battle is brutal!

Wielding Excalibur, Jimmy meets the Black Knight in the middle.

It's an epic face off.

Sitting atop his monstrous black steed, the Knight unleashes all his fury. With murder in his eyes, he charges Jimmy with manic fury. The boy parries again and again, but cannot attack. Suddenly, Gretel lunges at the Knight, and throws him off his horse.

On a level playing field, Jimmy bares his teeth. Swords clash, sparks fly, but the two seem evenly matched!

Finally, Jimmy manages to get behind the Knight. Summoning all his energy, he lifts Excalibur up high. The blade comes down one last time, and hits home! It lands on the Black Knight's neck!

All around, everything stops.

The severed head rolls down the hill like a bad apple, then comes to rest. The eyes snap open -- the Black Knight cannot be killed! His body fumbles after it, but the damage is done. Seeing their great warrior struck down, the remaining villains break ranks, fleeing -- terrified!

Hansel bolts through the trees. He too is trying to escape! But nobody can run from Utrek. His soul crushing voice screams inside his head -- *the Witch Slayer is not dead!* Hansel runs harder, but his limbs become heavy. He looks down to see them changing back into branches and mud. Hansel panics. Terrified, he blurts out the only piece of information that will save his skin -- he knows where the Book of Fables is!

Immediately, Utrek's spell stops and only his words remain. He orders Hansel to retrieve the Book of Fables, and return it to the Tower. This is his last chance. If he values his life, he will succeed. Failure will not be tolerated.

Unaware of the great danger on its way to Narrative High, Jimmy continues to push his troops forward, keeping as close to Melvin as possible. His skin has turned a sickly shade of yellow, but all of his attempts to get his friend to stand down proved futile. Together, they fight on until only dozens of Utrek's minions remain.

But it's all for naught. Hansel returns from the Old World with the Book of Fables! Desperate to get the book to his master, he makes straight for the Tower. But before he can get safely inside -- BLAM! He slams into his sister.

Gretel stands before him, her gaze fixed on the Book of Fables. Her brain grinds furiously -- *how did he get the Book of Fables? Why is it here? Where is Claygas? Reynard?*

Guilt flashes on Hansel's face for the briefest of moments but it's enough for Gretel to understand. Her eyes well with tears.

Hansel turns on her with the Black Blade. He cannot allow her to stop him.

Gretel's deflects his attacks with her own two swords in utter disbelief. Acting against everything she holds dear, Gretel swings at him, opening a deep gash in his arm. Hansel lets out a yelp, dropping the deadly dagger. Pained, Gretel stops and apologize, but that's exactly what he was counting on. In her moment of weakness, he knocks her out of his way with a vicious jab, and disappears behind enemy lines...

At long last, Utrek's bony fingers wrap around his coveted weapon. The Dark Lord weaves a spell within its pages. Villains once defeated come back to life. JF, Thundrall, the Snow Queen... even the terrible Bolla! But he is by no means finished. Utrek turns his attention to the Army of Light. The troops start disappearing. Gretel, Aladdin, Robin Hood... even the giants -- they all vanish into thin air!

Jimmy is devastated. Without the army, he can't penetrate the Tower. He will never get to the unicorns.

Suddenly, Melvin collapses. The Black Blade's infection has spread. The end is near for Melvin and there is nothing they can do to stop it.

Hope trickles away. All seems lost.

But a small voice tells them not to give up. They turn to see a talking frog at their feet. It's Storm! And he knows a way inside the Tower.

Jimmy is reluctant to trust Storm, but they have no options left. They hide Melvin in the bushes, and follow him back to the Tower of Fables.

Against all odds, Storm comes through on his promise. He shows them a crack in the outer wall, just big enough for a kid to squeeze through. With his help, Jimmy and Aadi slip

inside the Tower and sneak up to the topmost chamber. There, they lay eyes upon their dire enemy for the first time -- Utrek.

Completely immersed in the Book of Fables, he fails to realise his enemies are even there.

Storm steps forward to let them pass. The moment his little frog foot touches the floor... he turns back into a normal boy -- his good deed has broken the Dark Lord's spell!

With every shred of courage they can summon, the boys sneak up behind Utrek and jump him! Storm's brute strength comes to their advantage, but Storm doesn't know when to stop. His last blow sends Utrek out the window, and the Book of Fables into the fireplace -- its pages begin to burn. Jimmy dives for it, searing his arms on the hot flames, but the book is saved.

Suddenly, Hansel bursts into the chamber to defend his master!

Hansel lunges at Jimmy, but Storm is on a rampage. He clobbers Hansel in the back of the head, knocking s him out cold. Still, the fight is not over yet.

Utrek comes flying back in through the window. Rabid!

The Tower begins to shake, and all around the books come to life! They zoom towards them like arrows, but Jimmy has the Book of Fables now -- he makes them disappear in a heartbeat. Jimmy doesn't stop there -- he takes Utrek's powers away, binds him with enchanted ropes and brings all his friends back in one fell swoop!

The Army of Light bursts into Tower of Fables. The Dark Lord is defeated!

Storyville is finally safe, but the danger is not over. Not for Melvin.

Jimmy hurtles down to the dungeons with Aadi. They release all the fairytale prisoners, making their way to the deepest, darkest cells. There, in the shadows, are the last remaining unicorns.

The boys free them all, and take them to their friend. Melvin is barely breathing now.

The unicorn's regal leader thanks the boys for their brave stand in the face of evil. In return, one of the unicorns offers to lay down his life, and give them his horn to save their friend... on one condition. From that day forth, the gorgeous stretch of green known as Valmont Valley will become the unicorns' home. There they must be allowed to live in peace for the rest of time.

Their request is conceded immediately by all the people of Storyville. Jimmy and Aadi finally have the cure!

Melvin takes it, and the grip of death finally recedes... the friends are reunited!

The flag of the Witch Slayer flies over the Tower of Fables that day.

What's left of the villains are thrown into prison... even Hansel. Gretel is immensely sad, but she knows her brother must learn his lesson before he can join them again...

The Order of the Guardians is disbanded, and Jimmy is asked to help create a new force that will protect the citizens of Storyville and the magical Tower. New rules are set based on the code of the *Iron Force*. Thus, the Storyville Police Department is born!

To add to their joy, Claygas finally reappears. But the happy reunion is tainted by loss. Reynard is gone. He sacrificed his life to save him. Together, they celebrate their victory and mourn the losses. But it is soon time for Jimmy and his friends to go home.

They're just about to leave when Claygas comes to say goodbye. He looks at them confused -- *when a Giant King is challenged and beaten, then the next King gets all his treasures. So where is it?* The boys cannot believe their ears -- this changes everything!

Jimmy, Melvin and Aadi return to Narrative High with hearts full of hope.

The next morning, the Mayor finds huge stacks of gold on the steps of City Hall. On it is a small note: "*Only to help the people.*"

Narrative High is saved, and the boys will remain a trio for a long time to come! Everything is going to be alright...

THE STORY CONTINUES...

Jimmy Jones, an eleven-year-old boy known to all as the Witch Slayer, led the Army of Light into battle.

Against all odds, they won.

The Dark Lord Utrek, the most evil of word weavers, was finally defeated. His black banners lay in tatters as his army fled.

Jimmy's courage had achieved the impossible. The Book of Fables was safe from harm. It was time to rejoice. Hope had triumphed over despair.

But Jimmy was not from this place. He came from the Old World -- where magic and wonder were frowned upon. He returned just one last time to bid farewell to his dear family.

From then on, Storyville became Jimmy's home. He felt that his job was not over. Now that the Great War was behind them, it was the time to rebuild the city. Jimmy and his friends were on the forefront, working tirelessly to repair the city's defenses.

Evil may have been vanquished, but it was not destroyed. Lurking in the shadows, the agents of chaos and darkness were still at work...

Too weak to act himself, Utrek sent his minions to do his bidding. He would never stop fighting for the Book of Fables!

One night, the sinister wolf brothers, Dother and Dain, attacked the Tower. Jimmy and his friend Storm, stood side by side and fought them off. They became Storyville's celebrated heroes -- honoured protectors of the legendary Tower of Fables.

With them, the great Storyville Police Department was born!

Utrek sent more of his minions. But all met the same fate. Jimmy and Storm neutralized every attack.

Their bravery was infectious. Valiant souls rallied from every corner of the land, eager to be a part of this most noble stand against evil. Dwarfs, gnomes, fairies, talking

animals, fairytale heroes... everyone was welcomed into the fold. Even Gretel, Jimmy's closest friend and once a Guardian of the Tower, stepped up to the plate.

They trained hard, toiling night and day. Cadets were pushed to their very limits, for no one could ever be too prepared for one of Utrek's violent assaults.

Geppetto, Storyville's very own Da Vinci, also joined the righteous cause. The genius inventor joined forces with the most hardworking technicians in all of Storyville, the Elves. Thus, he became the famous weapons master he is today.

Together, they provided the SPD with the most jaw dropping array of weapons anyone could ever dream of.

But far away in the Icy Wastelands, evil was preparing its revenge.

Utrek reassembled his malefic Army of Darkness.

Once again, he unleashed all his wrath on the Storyville!

Defiant in the face of wickedness, Jimmy, wielding the mighty Excalibur, led his SPD officers against the onslaught. Good and evil clashed in one mighty surge!

A monumental battle ensued, the likes of which was never witnessed before.

Blades came down, arrows flew, potent spells zipped through the air. Many friends were lost that day. But evil did not triumph!

Utrek was defeated once more and locked away once and for all.

The celebrations were jubilant. Happy laughter rose loud and music was played into the night. The joyous cheering went on for days... even love bloomed!

Jimmy and Gretel, secretly in love for so long, finally professed their true feelings! And so, the pair got married on one of the most beautiful summer days ever to grace the fairytale land.

Years of peace and prosperity followed.

Jimmy and Gretel's family grew by one -- a beautiful baby boy they named Junior Jones. Energetic and boisterous just like his father, the boy followed him around like a shadow wherever he went, always getting himself into heaps of trouble.

Junior grew into a strapping young man, a friend to all with a heart of gold. It was to no one's surprise that he followed in his father's footsteps. When Jimmy grew old, Junior stepped into his role perfectly.

Firm but fair, he earned the respect and admiration of all those around him. But one cruel day, the impossible happened. Someone within the SPD betrayed the cause and broke Utrek out of jail. The Dark Lord walked free!

Utrek liberated his dastardly minions, and another cruel war erupted.

This time, it was Junior Jones who led the brave officers into battle. They fought with amazing courage, pushing back enemy lines with every blow they could muster.

Seeing the odds tipping against them, Utrek's followers fled.

A cornered Utrek bared his teeth, casting his deadly spells with vicious intent!

But Junior and his officers raised their protective shields and closed in. Recognizing defeat, Utrek let out a scream dripping with venomous fury, and disappeared right in front of their eyes in a white nova blast of fire.

The Dark Lord was gone... but not for long.

Junior, badly wounded and exhausted, returned to his family. His wife, the beautiful Ava, a powerful white witch, laid a darling little boy with bright red cheeks in his arms -- Jumper Jones.

Then, tragedy struck. The ruthless Utrek came back for horrific revenge!

The Dark Lord tracked Junior and his family down, and knocked on their door. He invaded their home and ripped the place apart -- determined to kill off the Jones lineage once and for all!

Junior stared death right in the face without a drop of fear. He defended his loved ones with every ounce of energy he had left! But alas, it wasn't nearly enough...

Utrek's chilling laugh drifted through the house like a ghost as he calmly went in search of the child. But Ava, a true lioness, would never allow any harm to befall her baby.

Smiling at her son but with eyes full of tears, she weaved a protective spell over the little one's cradle... her heart bursting with love. She sealed the magic with one final kiss.

Utrek burst through the door, his face a terrifying mask of cruelty. With a few incomprehensible words, he took her life in front of the child...

Young Jumper's cries cut through the air like a knife. Utrek turned to him, not a shred of mercy in those cold, glowing eyes.

The Dark Lord weaved his words, a litany of hate, but nothing happened! He screamed the words louder and louder...

The ground began to shudder beneath his feet. The house ripped apart at the seams. But the baby boy remained unharmed!

Utrek's energy started to dissipate -- *how could this be??*

Suddenly, sirens blared outside. The SPD were coming.

The Dark Lord, bursting with rage, had no other choice... he fled the house and disappeared one more time.

Storyville was shaken by grief. Jimmy and Gretel were heartbroken. They took in their infant grandson, and showered him with all the affection in the world. But Jimmy still blamed himself.

The old man donned the uniform once more... and went after Utrek.

They scoured the lands for him. Every cave, every crag, every fissure. No stone was left unturned. They finally hounded him down in the unforgiving mountains of Khartumm!

Every police officer of the SPD was on him that day. There was no escape.

Knowing full well that no jail could ever be safe enough to hold him, Old King Cole, the Mayor of Storyville, decided on a more appropriate punishment -- he banished Utrek to the Abyss, a bottomless crater out of which no one ever escaped.

But Jimmy was not done yet.

He took it upon himself to enforce and strengthen the SPD.

Cadets trained harder than ever, but not only that. The potential officers of the SPD were no longer chosen by mere mortals, but by the Mirror of Magic, the great Seer that once belonged to the Evil Queen. He told them the names of those incorruptible and brave. Only they could ever form part of this noble force.

The Elves would then send out the calls to those chosen few...

Little Jumper Jones grew up in awe of his amazing grandfather, loved profusely by his grandma Gretel. But then the day the old woman dreaded finally arrived...

Jumper Jones received the call.

TIM TOM'S STORY

Tim Tom is Storyville's plump, good natured policeman. Like his righteous forefathers, he loves his uniform and would do anything to uphold the law. But unlike them, he's clumsy, loud and easily distracted. Disasters abound under his watch. Quite frankly, he's a disappointment. In reality, his family name is the only thing that keeps the Chief of Police from sacking Tim Tom.

To keep him out of trouble, he is assigned the simplest of tasks – guarding the sacred Tower of Fables!

Within its wondrous walls is the original version of every enchanting fairytale in existence. But as one dull day after the other pass, Tim Tom realises he can never prove his

worth as protector of Storyville in such an uneventful place. Determined to become a hero, he abandons the Tower in search of true tests of his bravery!

But alas! Upon learning of Tim Tom's foolish actions, the evil wizard, Utrek, and his minions raid the Tower of Fables, twisting every single fairytale. The bad guys emerge victorious!

Children around the world are devastated, plagued by terrible nightmares.

Tim Tom has done the unforgivable! Fired and expelled from Storyville, he is completely crushed. He is preparing to leave when Little Bo Peep's terrible cries for help reach his ears...

They shake him to the core! There, he decides to own up to his mistake and rectify that which he has destroyed!

Disobeying the direct order from the Council of the Wise, Tim Tom ventures back to Storyville to save all the characters who are in danger, and defeat the wicked Utrek.

UTREK'S RETURN

There is a place far from all known lands, beyond vast fields and jagged mountains, a place where all magic dwells. A wondrous city where joy prospers and love conquers all. This is the legendary Storyville. Within, lies the sacred *Tower of Fables* that houses and protects all the precious happy endings of its fairytale inhabitants. The winds whisper their stories to the young and innocent of the world... the tales of the enchanted kingdom of Storyville.

But alas, it was not always so. Dark clouds once loomed over the fabled city. The forces of evil gathered. Led by the evil Utrek, monsters and villains left their icy lairs in the Wastelands and invaded the city, determined to destroy all that was good in Storyville. But one SPD officer would not allow the darkness to take over. The brave Tim Tom faced the

terrible wizard and banished him back to his frozen crypt. Peace was restored to Storyville, and cheers and celebrations resounded once more...

Tim Tom is now Storyville's biggest hero, loved by all its citizens, but by none more than his Little Bo Peep. Head over heels in love, wedding bells are on the horizon for the sweet couple. Tim Tom and his pretty shepherdess are set to marry in mere weeks. The lovely pair couldn't be happier!

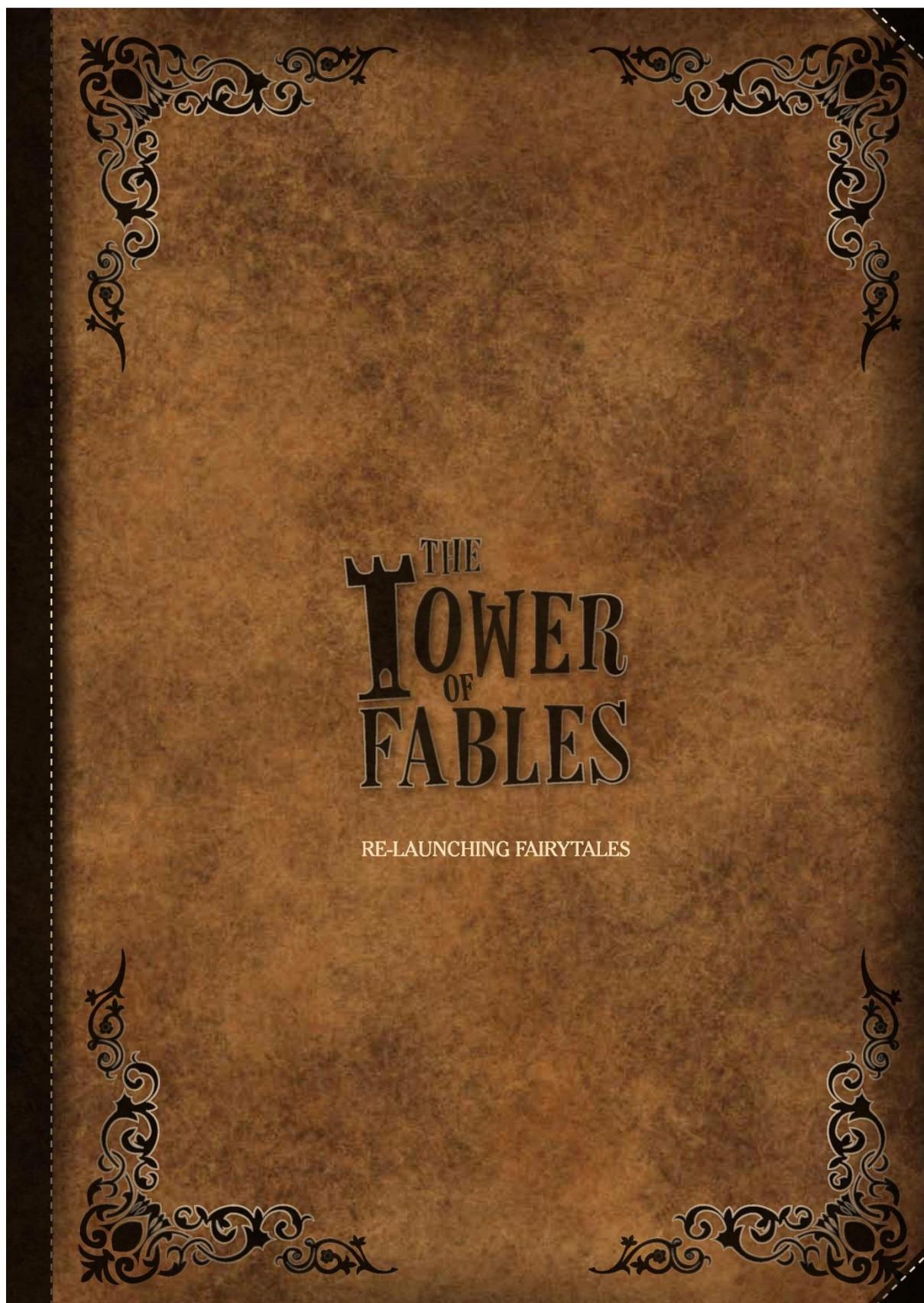
But their blissful days are brought to a screeching halt. One night, during one of their moonlit picnics in the Enchanted Woods, Tim Tom and Little Bo Peep are ambushed by a gang of vicious trolls! The horrible creatures subdue Tim Tom and make way for their Master. Utrek is back...

The dark wizard's blood boils as he sets eyes on the man who crossed him. He vows to make Tim Tom pay. With that, the trolls tie up the screaming shepherdess and drag her off to the Icy Wastelands. Tim Tom fights furiously, but to no avail. Utrek's cold laugh rings in his ears as he leaves him to his minions, knowing full well that he will run right into his trap after Bo Peep.

His powers at their strongest in the icy depths, Utrek prepares for Tim Tom's foolish quest. The evil wizard conjures the fiercest of creatures; a horrible Cyclops, vicious Harpies, fire-breathing dragons... all of them to guard his most despised 'treasure'. For at the end of the maze of caves, dark magic and monsters, locked away in a dank cell, is Tim Tom's dear Little Bo Peep. This mission is to be Tim Tom's last. Utrek's lair is to become his frozen tomb.

But the Evil One once more underestimates Tim Tom's love for all that is good and beautiful, and his love for Bo Peep! Without hesitation, he sets off on his treacherous journey through the Icy Wastelands and into Utrek's lair, determined to defeat the dastardly wizard, rescue his love and live out his own happily ever after.

SECTION G: BIBLE (1ST DRAFT)





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THE
TOWER
OF
FABLES

by Jean Pierre Magro



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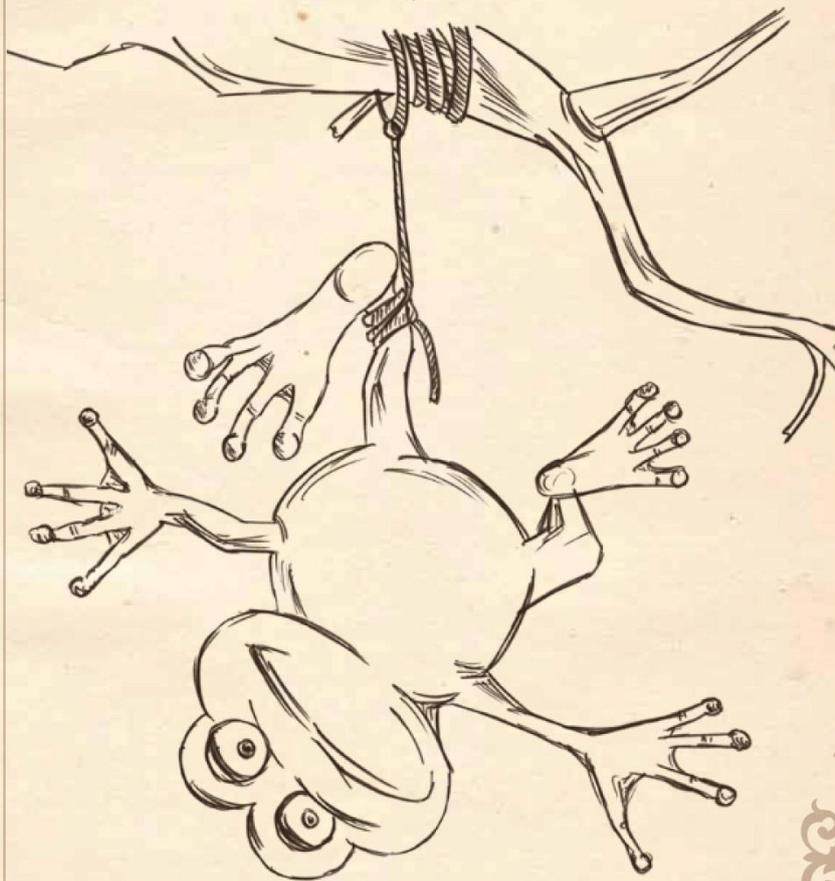
The Project 11

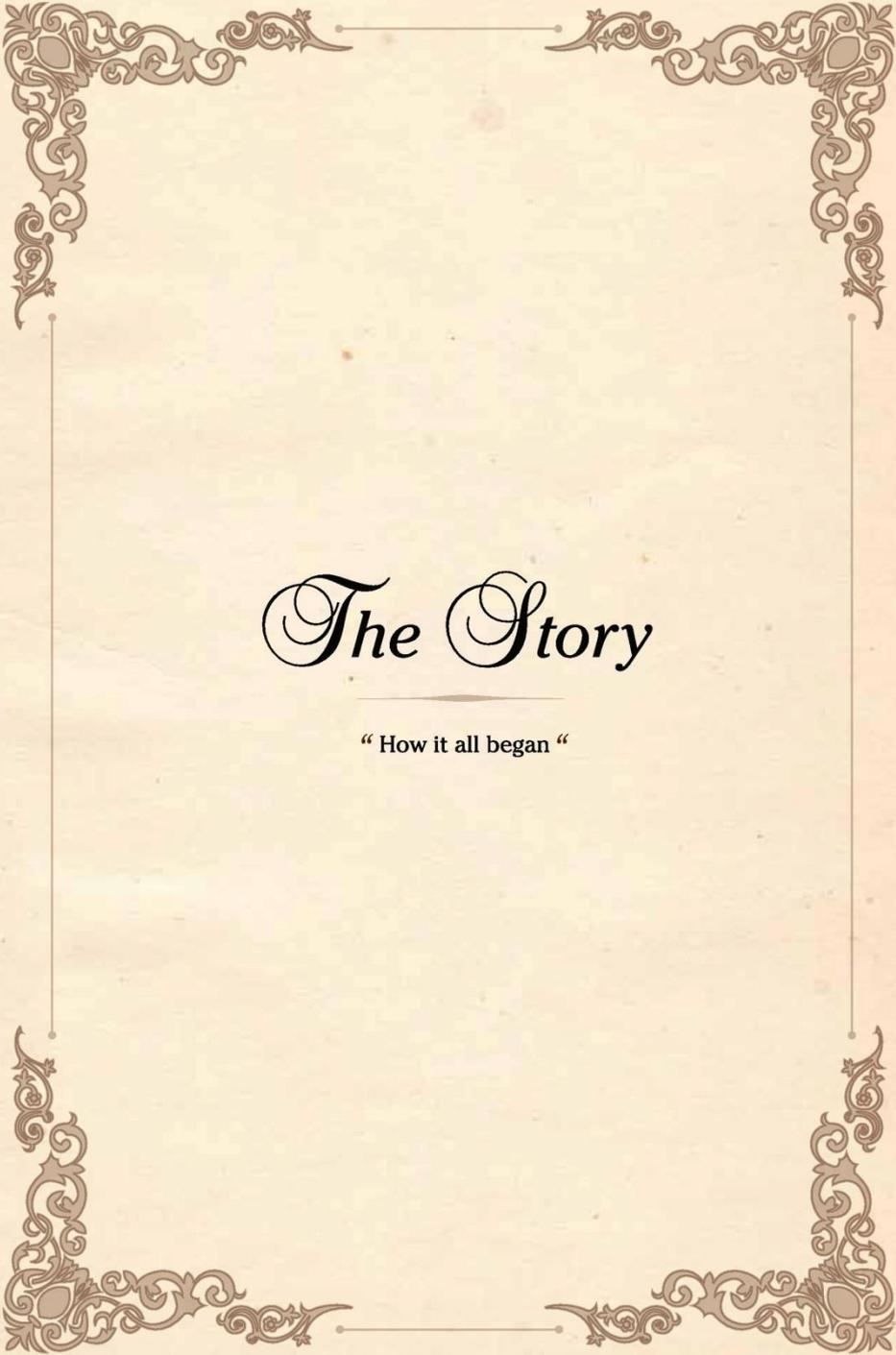
Timeline 17

Partners 21



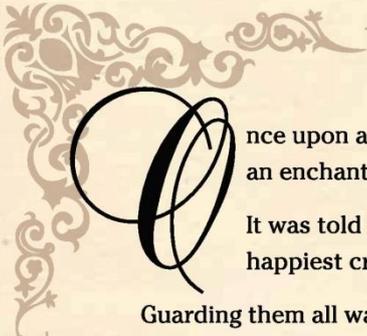
Concept Art





The Story

“ How it all began “



Once upon a time, in a land far far away, there was an enchanted kingdom called Storyville.

It was told that its magical inhabitants were the happiest creatures on the planet.

Guarding them all was the legendary Tower of Fables.

Kept safe within its walls were the greatest fairy tales known to man. Every happy ending secured forever.

Or so it was thought!

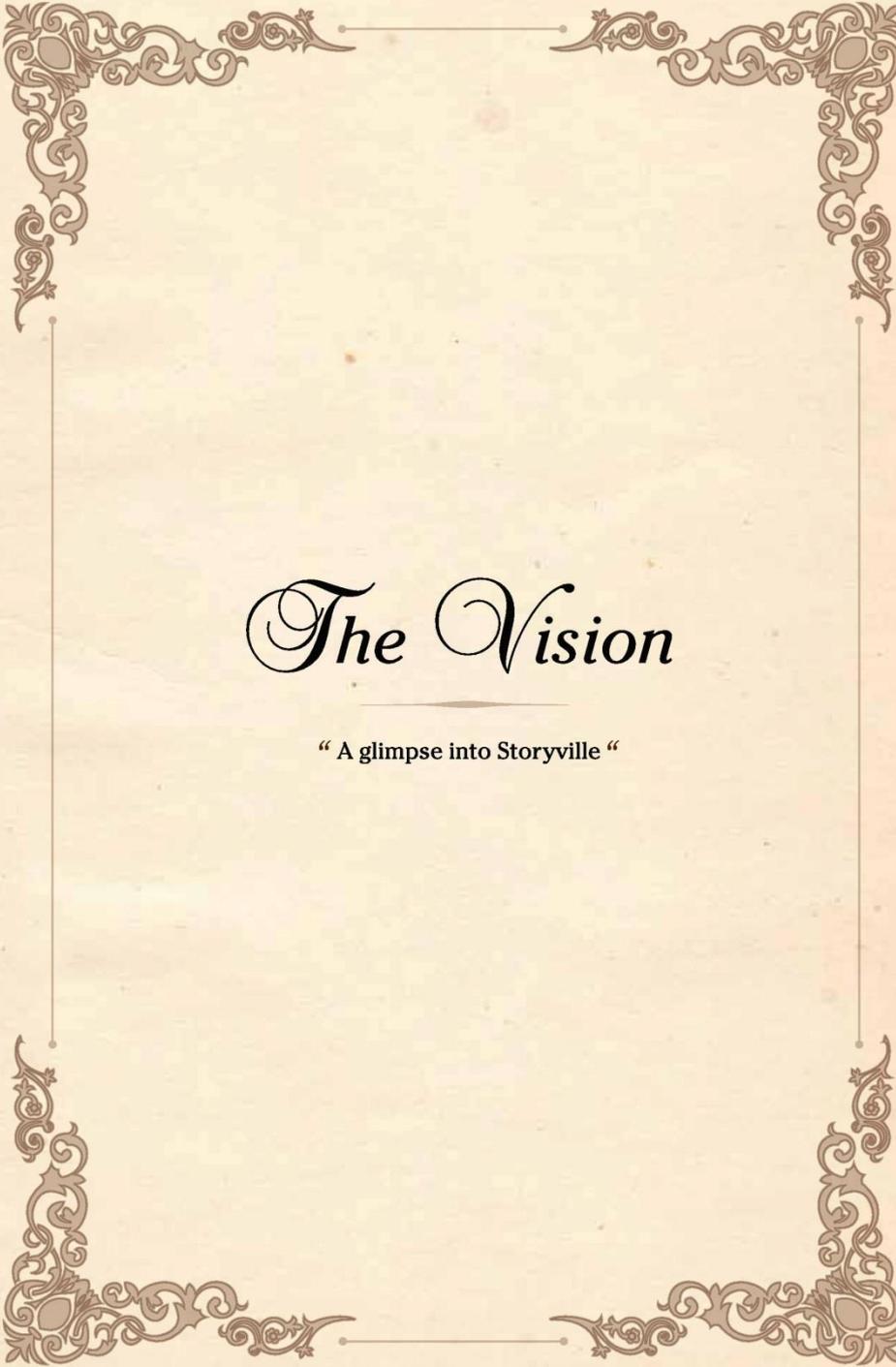
One cruel day, Utrek, the most evil of dark wizards, unleashed his powers and took over the Tower.

Utrek changed the happy ending of every fairy tale, making the bad guys win.

Who will rise to rectify this abomination?
Who will right this wrong?

The future of Storyville lies in your own hands !





The Vision

“ A glimpse into Storyville “

“**L**ittle Red Riding Hood was my first love. I felt that if I could have married Little Red Riding Hood, I should have known perfect bliss.”

This statement by Charles Dickens indicates that he, like millions of children all over the world throughout the ages, was enchanted by fairy tales.

Aristotle, the master of pure reason, said, “the friend of wisdom is also the friend of myth.”

Today, as in the past, children’s minds can be opened to appreciate all the higher things in life through fairy tales. These fantastic fables direct the child to discover his identity and calling.

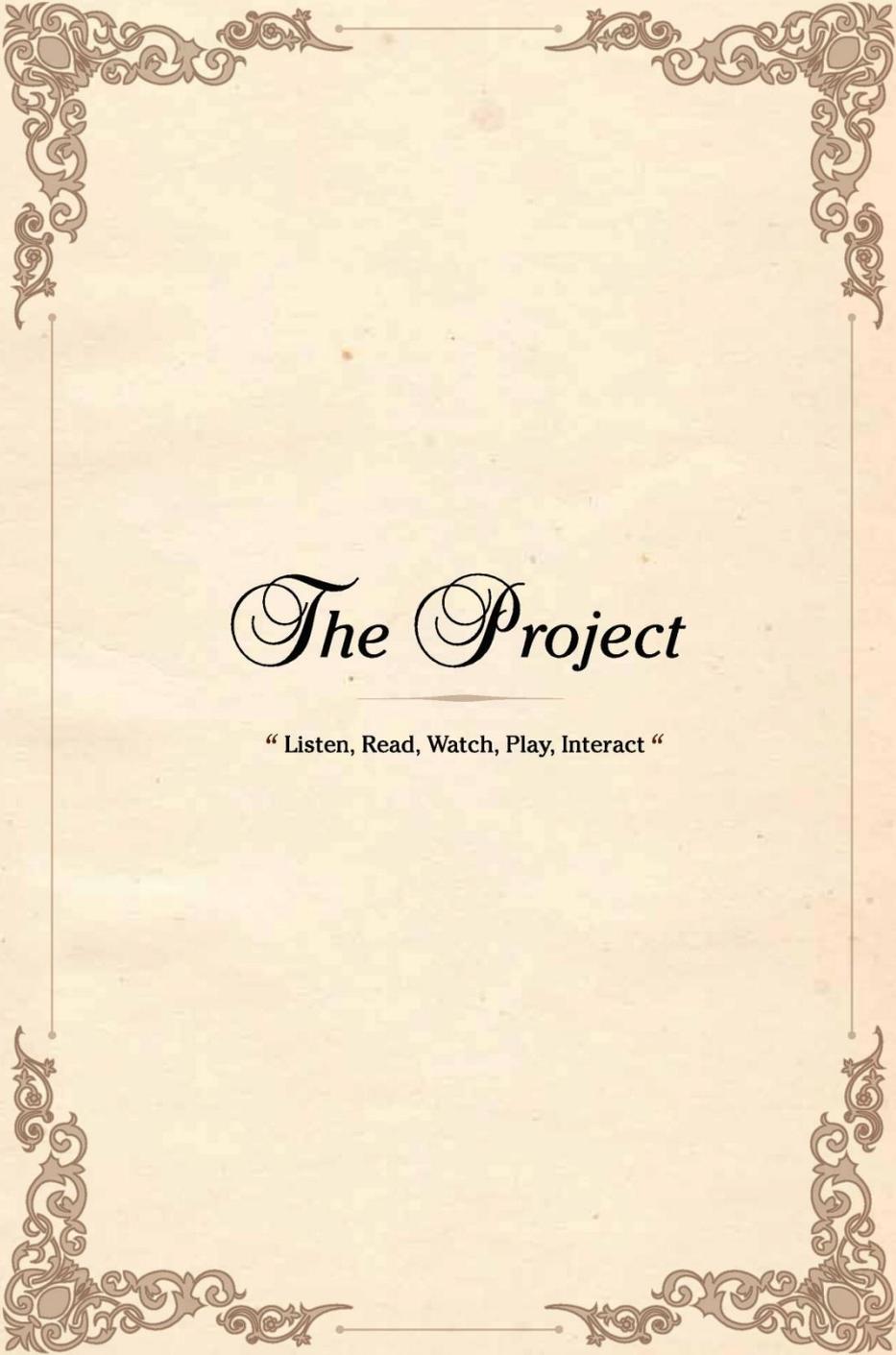
Fairy tales do not only teach us that dragons exist, but they also teach us that dragons can be defeated. They bring order to our chaotic ways.

Even as we grow older, we still want to see and realise our lives as virtual fairy tales. Who hasn’t dreamt of having that “...happily ever after” ending?

This is the project that re-launches fairy tales to this new generation of “hyperlinked kids”.

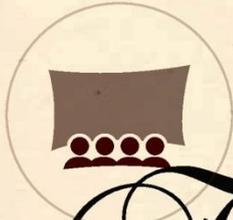
Children will be able to immerse themselves into these magical realms. They will listen to old tales from around the globe, read new ones and invent their own.

They will be able to step inside this enchanting place and play with their favourite characters.



The Project

“ Listen, Read, Watch, Play, Interact “



Animation Feature Film

The core of this project is an animation film that will hit cinemas in 2015.

Tim Tom, a plump, good natured police officer in Storyville, loves his uniform and would do anything to uphold the law. The descendant of a long line of famous police officers, his ancestors were heroes who battled against evil and emerged victorious.

But Tim Tom does not quite match up to his righteous forefathers. He's clumsy, loud, and easily distracted. Quite frankly, he's a bit of a disappointment.

In reality, his family name is the only thing that keeps Tim Tom from being sacked.

To prevent any more inevitable disasters from happening under Tim Tom's watch, he is banished to the sidelines. The Chief of Police assigns him the simplest of tasks, until finally he finds the perfect job for the inept policeman... Guarding the TOWER OF FABLES – the place where the most enchanting stories in existence are locked away. Kept safe within its walls is the original version of every beloved fairy tale that has ever been enjoyed by children all over the world.

Watching over the Tower from one drab, uneventful day to the next, Tim Tom quickly realises that there is no way he can possibly prove his worth as a protector of the people in a place where nothing happens! Tim Tom is determined. He too wants to become a hero! And the only way to do this is to leave the Tower each day, in search of

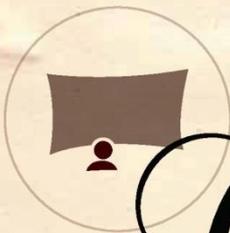
circumstances which may serve as true tests of his bravery.

But the evil wizard, Utrek, upon learning of Tim Tom's foolish actions, devises a dreadful plan. He and his minions raid the Tower of Fables and change the ending of every single fairy tale. Now, the bad guys will prevail in each story!

Children around the world are devastated. As a consequence, they are plagued by terrible nightmares. Tim Tom is to blame for this chaos! He is fired from the police force and expelled from Storyville for doing the unforgivable.

Completely crushed, Tim Tom packs up to leave his home with his head bowed low and his tail between his legs... but when he hears Little Bo Peep's cries, he makes his decision. He will own up to his mistake and rectify that which he has destroyed.

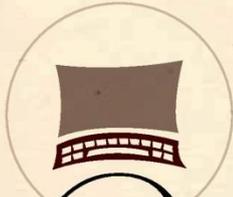
Disobeying the direct order of the Council of the Wise, Tim Tom ventures back to Storyville to save all of its endangered inhabitants and defeat the evil Utrek.



TV Series

Our point of entry is going to be a TV series that follows the most famous police force in the world – The Storyville Police Department (SPD)

Fighting against wolves, monsters, mad wizards, evil queens and spell hurling hags, our heroes in the SPD will do their utmost to protect all that is good in Storyville.



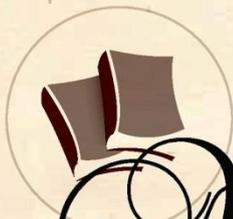
Interactive Website / App

We also want to create a website / app where kids can interact with Storyville's inhabitants. They will be able to roam around the whole city and visit the magical Tower of Fables.

Once they register with the Official Guard, the children will be welcomed as an Apprentice. As they climb through the levels in the Tower, they will earn more points. This will then affect and change their ranking; from Apprentice to Initiate, to Master – the journey is long but exciting!

The kids will have the possibility to explore this mysterious tower, read or listen to many fairy tales as well as play and interact with their favourite characters... and with other children from around the world...

This will be a real immersive experience.



Publishing

A series of books about the history of the Tower of Fables and the inhabitants of Storyville will be released in conjunction with the website.

Young readers will be able to see how the Tower came into existence and how the forces of evil have always tried to take over Storyville.

New takes on popular fairy tales will be launched at the same time.

All books will clearly be part of our brand!



Live Events

This is a project that seeks joint ventures with schools and libraries.

Various events will be organized where a physical Tower will be taken to various schools.

Here children will listen to stories as they are performed by actors.

However they will also be able to leave their favourite books for others to make use of. This exchange will further encourage reading.



Game

A multi-console game will bring the story arc to its conclusion.

Utrek has returned and wants his revenge. He kidnaps Little Bo Peep and drags her to his lair, deep below the earth's surface.

Now it is the children's turn to don the uniform as they go on a quest to defeat the evil wizard.

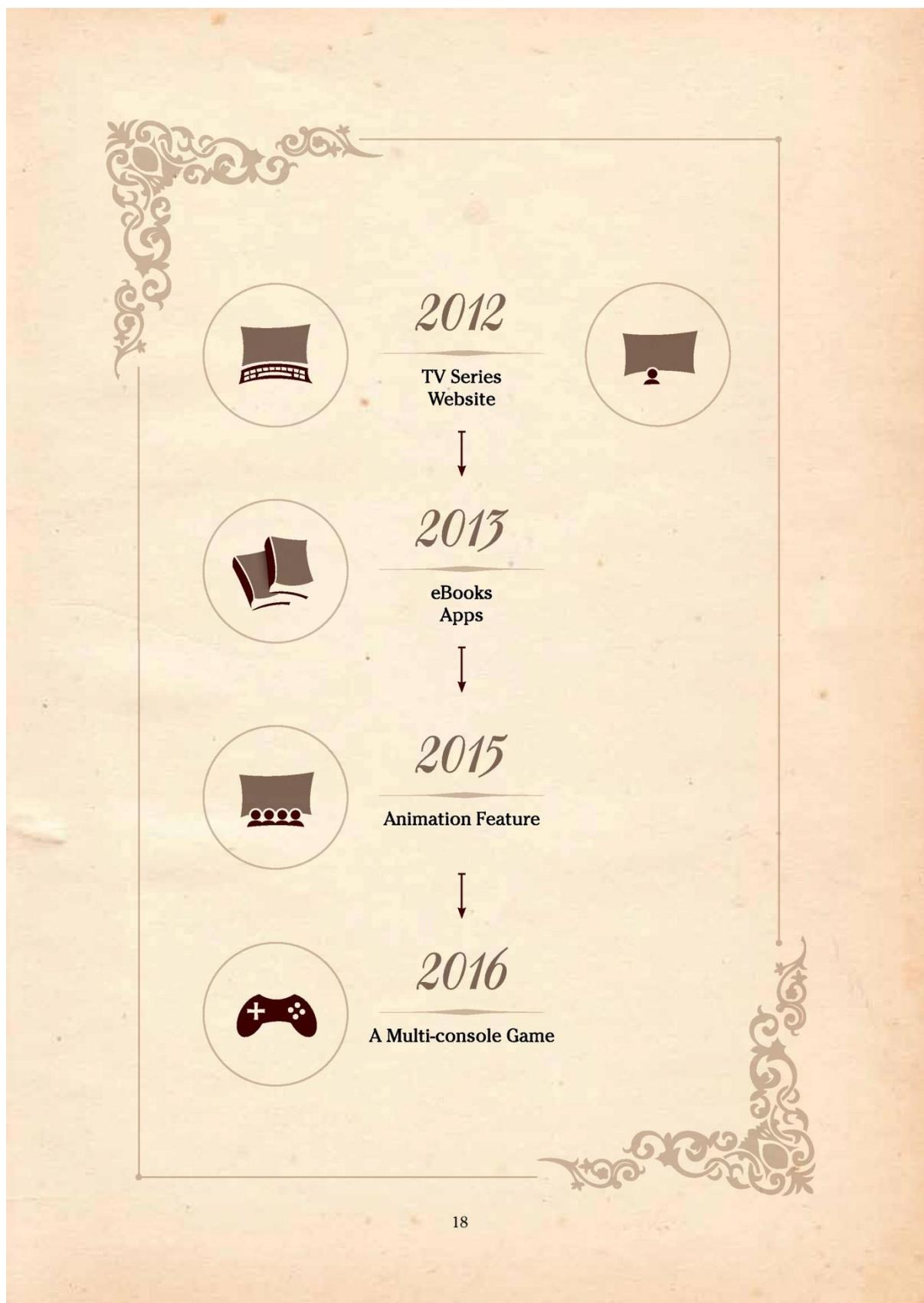
Concept Art





Timeline

“ Tick, Tock, Tick, Tock “



Concept Art



Concept Art



Utrek



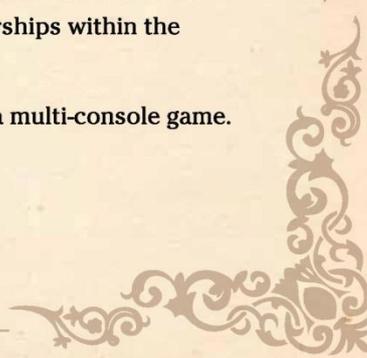
Partnerships

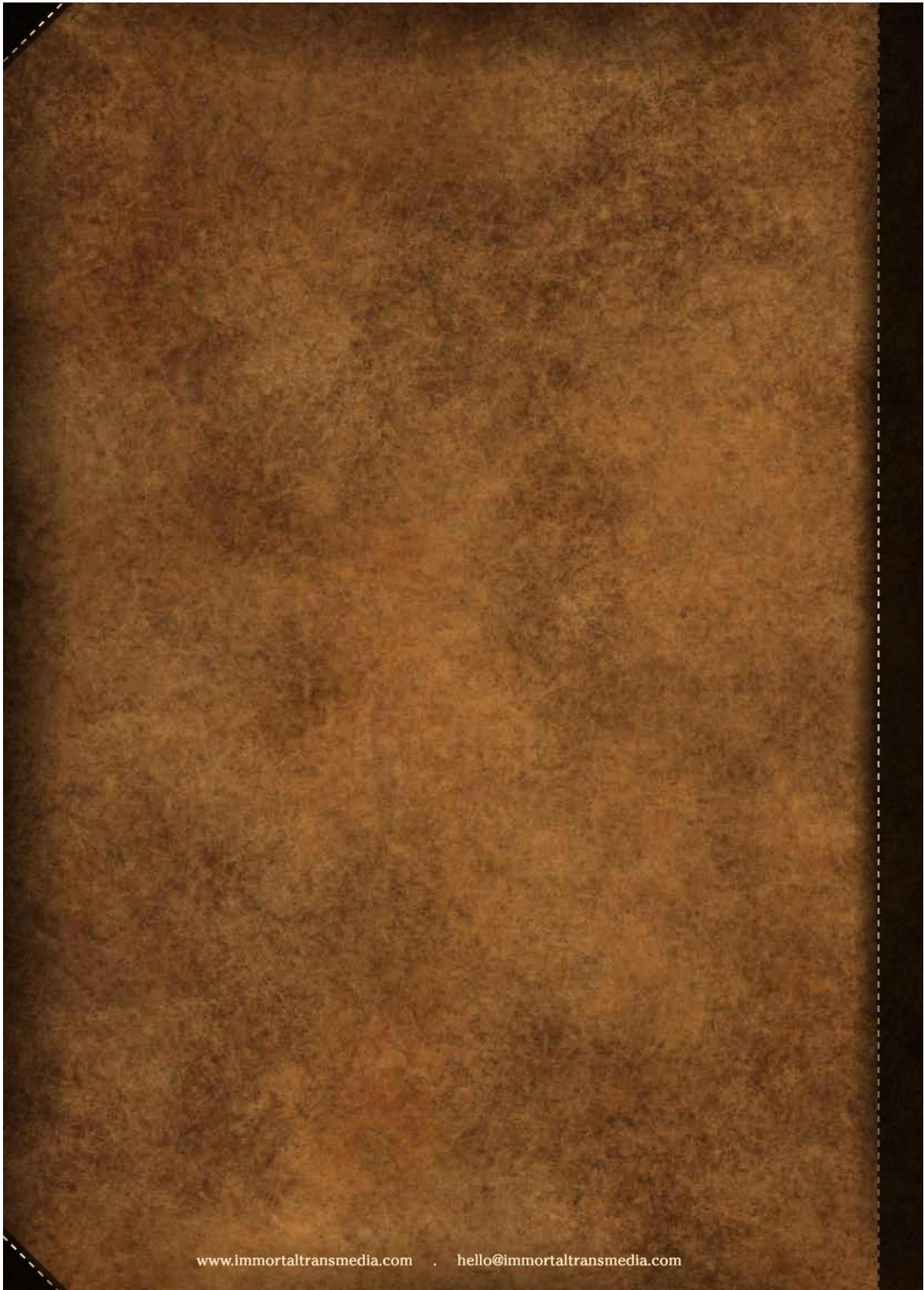
“ Help us write a fairy tale! “



W

e are looking for...

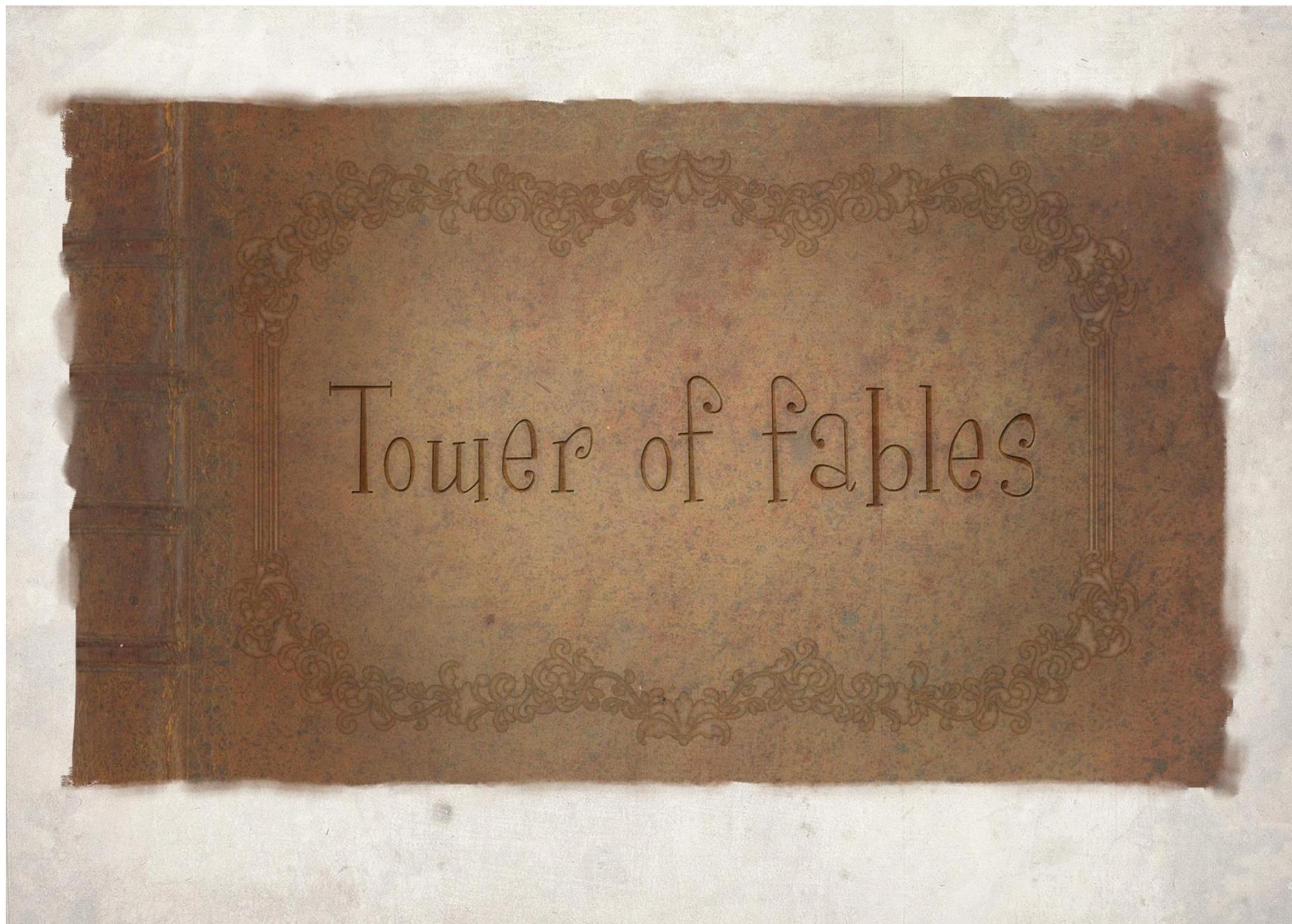
- 1.** ... a television broadcaster to co-produce and develop an animated TV series.
 - 2.** ... a software development partner to help us create the website, tablet and mobile phone apps, and online games.
 - 3.** ... a publisher to partner with us; developing and writing content to build our interactive library, to market and distribute the project in traditional print media, and to work with us to create new marketing distribution models for our young digitally savvy audience.
 - 4.** ... support partners to develop the feature film to be production ready. Upon which we will then seek production and distribution partners to bring the film to market on a wide scale global release.
 - 5.** ... licensing agents to work with us to create and implement a brand strategy that will enable cross platform promotion and partnerships within the literary world.
 - 6.** ... gaming developers to create a multi-console game.
- 



SECTION H: GEZA M. TOTH'S WORK

TOWER OF FABLES
CONCEPT DOCUMENTS, FIRST DRAFT
KEDD ANIMATION STUDIO

KEDD ANIMATION STUDIO
H-1027 BUDAPEST
FRANKEL LEÓ U. 7.
TEL/FAX: 06 1 201 9118
E-MAIL: KEDD@KEDD.NET
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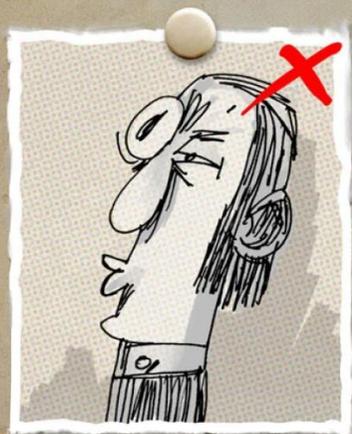
The tower of fables



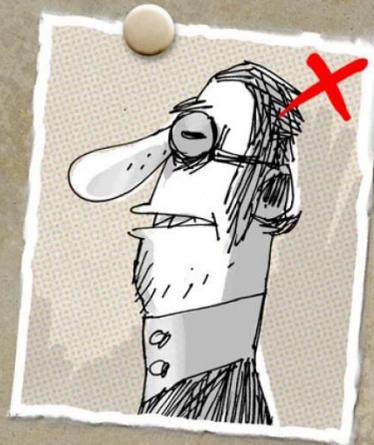
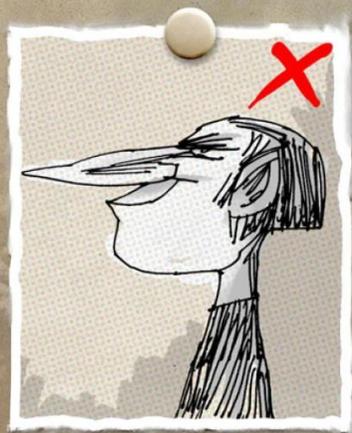
Tim Tom



Little Red Hood



WHO IS
UTREK?



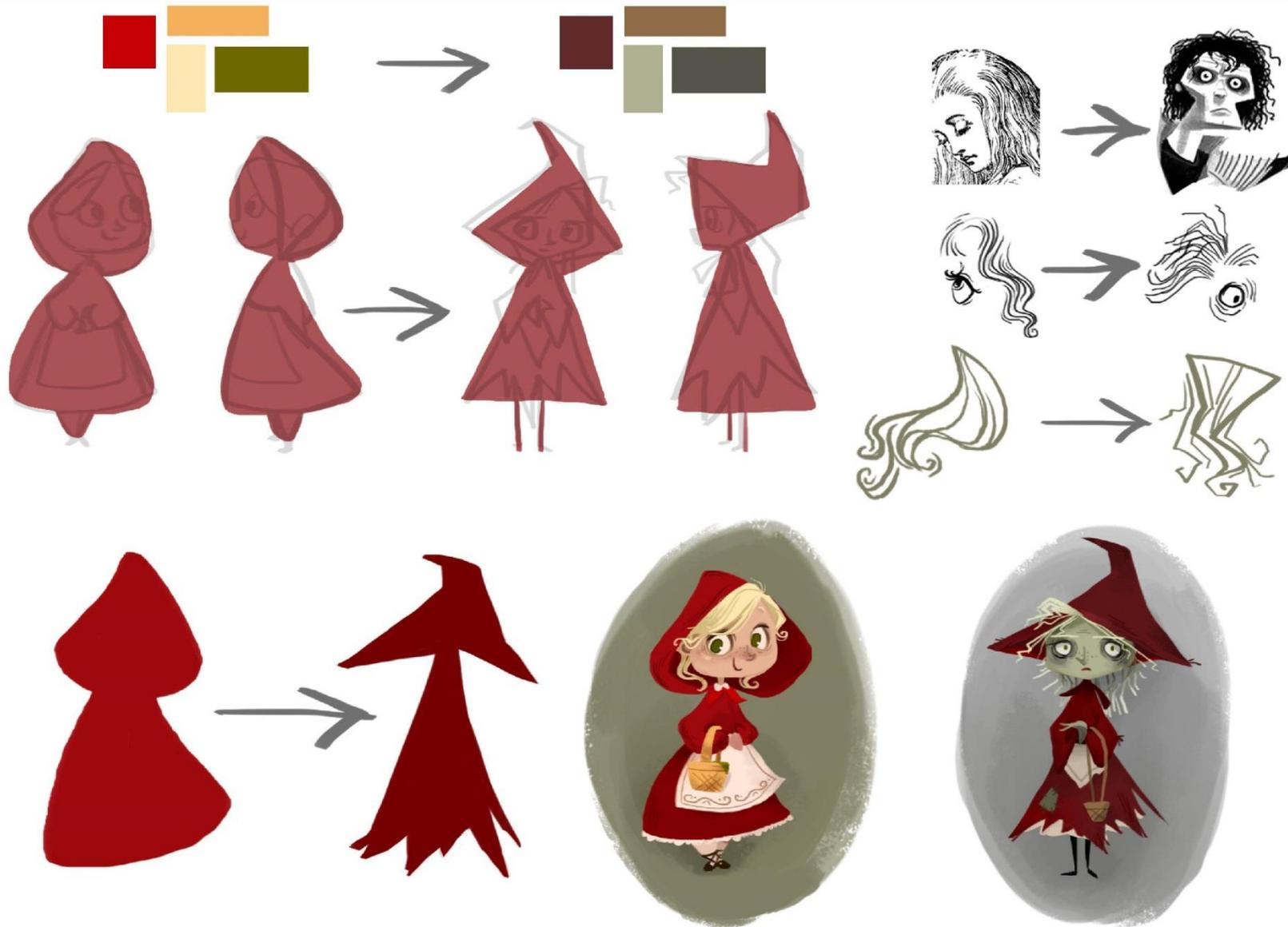


Utrek



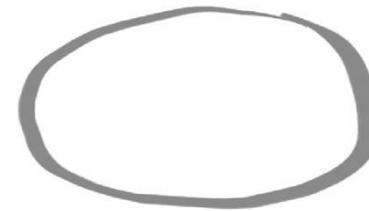
Utrek's hideout



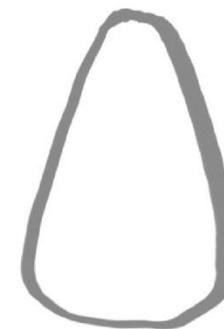




The Frog Prince



The Ugly Duckling





The Big Bad Wolf



Red Riding Hood



Cinderella



SECTION I: CHRISTIANE STELBERG'S WORK



Utrek



Jack Frost the Ice Giant



The Snow Queen



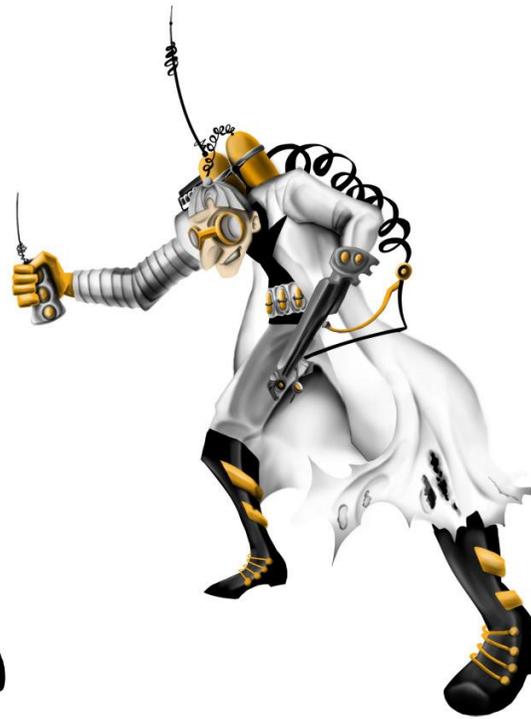
Rumplestiltskin



Count N. Grimm



Igor



Dr. Victor Frankenstein



The Pied Piper and Skid the rat.



Balor the Goblin King



Captain Hook



Dother



Geppetto



Jumper Jones



Sergeant Storm

SECTION J: IT-TORRI MAĠIKU: TRANSLATED SCRIPT

IT-TORRI MAGIKU

Chapter 1: The Guardians

[Samarkana and Lixandru welcome the audience into the Tower and go down the corridor as music plays. In front of the corridor is a small counter. Once the audience is settled, Samarkana and Lixandru come out again. It is night.]

Samarkana *[very prim and proper]* Greetings everyone! A warm welcome to the Tower of Fables. My name is Samarkana and I am a Guardian here. My job is to protect all the precious stories within these walls.

Lixandru *[Samarkana's opposite; bubbly and happy as punch to be here]* And my name is Lixandru. I'm a Guardian too!

Samarkana Not exactly... this is Lixandru's first time here.

Lixandru So? I'm still a Guardian, aren't I? You know I've always wanted to be a Guardian. Ever since I was—

Samarkana *[interrupting]* No you're not. You're still in training... and you won't be a real Guardian until you learn everything you need to know.

Lixandru *[happy]* And it's your job to teach me.

Samarkana *[sighing]* Yes... unfortunately. Now stop wasting time. Let's begin.

Lixandru Yes!

Samarkana As you know, or at least you should know, all Guardians have the ability to perform powerful magic.

Lixandru Of course. I'm great at magic!

Samarkana *[sarcastic]* I'm sure you are. *[Samarkana takes out an apple and a small box. She places them on top of the counter.]* For your first task, I want you to focus on this apple and – without touching it – put it inside this box. So the apple must disappear, then reappear in the box. Understand?

Lixandru Umm... I've never done anything like this before. But I do know another really good spell that puts people to sleep. Want to see?

Samarkana No, I don't. Focus on the task.

Lixandru Sure thing! Here it goes... [**Lixandru** closes his eyes and concentrates hard.]

One, two, three! [*There are magic SFX and he opens his eyes, all excited.*] I did it!

Samarkana No you didn't. The apple is still here.

Lixandru But I'm sure I felt something disappear and reappear in the box...

[**Samarkana** raises an eyebrow, very unimpressed. She opens the box and her face contorts with disgust – she pulls out a pair of underpants.]

Samarkana What is this??

Lixandru [*mortified*] That's... that's... [*He holds out his trousers and looks down.*]

That's my underwear! How did it get in there? Give it back! [*He snatches them from her and stuffs them in his pocket.*]

Samarkana [*putting the box and apple away*] Maybe it might be better if you learn some more about the Tower of Fables. We'll try magic again later.

Lixandru Ah come on! Let me show you how I can put people to sleep!

Samarkana [*losing her patience*] I said no! [*awkward pause*]

Lixandru [*sulking*] Oh alright then...

Samarkana The Tower of Fables was built a long long time ago by Maliora, the kindest white witch to ever walk the Earth.

Lixandru I know... and her brother Utrek.

Samarkana No!

Lixandru What?

Samarkana How dare you utter that name in here!

Lixandru What name? Utrek?

Samarkana Shhh! Never say that name!

Lixandru And why not?

Samarkana Because Utr- that person became pure, undiluted evil. Sometimes it's hard to recall just how close he and his sister truly were. Their powers were beyond anything the world had ever seen. Together, they built this Tower of Fables to protect all the stories found across all the countries. *[She starts taking books out.]* You'll find all of them here. Look, here's 'The Three Little Pigs', and this is 'Pinocchio', and 'Goldilocks' is here too.

Lixandru But everyone has these stories at home. Why all this fuss over some Tower?

Samarkana Because all the volumes here are the original ones in which the stories were first written. These are magical books which must be guarded at all costs.

Lixandru So how did Maliora and Utrek fight?

Samarkana Shhh!

Lixandru I'm sorry! I'm sorry I said Utrek's name again. I promise I won't say Utrek –

Samarkana Stop saying Utrek!

Lixandru Ha! You said it too now! *[Samarkana covers her mouth and calms herself.]*

Samarkana Listen to me... all you need to know is that when... he who should not be named... turned to the darkness, the two of them faced off in a battle of epic proportions. With the power of good on her side, Maliora managed to overcome her brother, and trapped him in an icy prison below the ground.

Lixandru Good! So we have nothing to worry about then...

Samarkana Of course we do! Because just a few short years later, Maliora died of a broken heart. With her gone, the spell that binds her brother is not as strong as it once was. Now, there might be a chance that he might escape...

Lixandru No! Then what do we do?

Samarkana The only thing we can do is be prepared. That is why it is essential that new Guardians like you are perfectly disciplined and ready for anything. [**Utrek** *slowly walks in. Samarkana freezes with fear.*]

Utrek And do you think you are so ‘perfectly disciplined’?

Lixandru And who are you? [*to Samarkana*] Who is this guy?

Utrek Don’t you recognise me? You’ve been talking about me for long enough...

Samarkana [*terrified*] Utrek?!

Lixandru Shhh! You’re not supposed to say his name Samarkana!

Utrek [*smiling*] Utrek.

Lixandru You too? [*He grabs Utrek by the shoulder in a chummy fashion.*] Listen here buddy, you had better stop saying that name in here [*whispering*] or we’ll both end up in big trouble.

Utrek [*flinging Lixandru away*] You insignificant little insect! I’ve waited for this moment for centuries. Now I’ve escaped that freezing tomb, I will have my revenge!

Lixandru Samarkana, don’t panic, but I think that guy is Utrek!

Samarkana We’re not scared of you Utrek!

Lixandru Well, I might be a little bit scared...

Utrek Let’s see what the great Guardians of the Tower of Fables are truly capable of.

[*There is a loud sound as Utrek fires a spell at Samarkana. She falls to the floor and*

Utrek turns his attention towards Lixandru.]

Lixandru [*scared*] Don’t you dare come one step closer. Not one! I know a super powerful sleeping spell that will knock you out! [**Utrek ignores his warnings.**]

I’m warning you! This is your last chance... OK then – Sleep! [**Lixandru accompanies this with a complicated hand gesture but Utrek keeps moving closer.**]

Sleep! [**Utrek doesn’t stop and Lixandru starts singing desperately.**]

Go to sleep, go to sleep, la-la-la-la, la-la... [**Utrek** lets out a chilling laugh and is about to attack **Lixandru** when **Samarkana** gets up from behind him.]

Samarkana Stop right there! [**Utrek** whips around as **Samarkana** fires a spell at him. She and **Utrek** struggle with the spell's energy. He then fires back at **Samarkana** and she falls to her knees. **Utrek** has the upper hand! **Lixandru** still won't give up.]

Lixandru Go to sleep I say! Sleep! Why isn't it working?!

Samarkana Help!

Lixandru Aha! Now I remember how it's done! [**Lixandru** closes his eyes and concentrates. Then he does a different hand gesture and bellows --

Sleep! [There are magic SFX as the spell works. However by then, **Samarkana** is between him and **Utrek**. The spell hits her in the chest... her eyes start rolling.]

Yes! It worked! [**Lixandru** opens his eyes and sees **Samarkana** collapse in a deep sleep.] Oops...

Utrek Yes... oops... and now it's your turn! [**Utrek** throws his spell at **Lixandru** and there are magic SFX as he freezes into a statue. **Utrek** laughs and walks into the corridor as the lights fade and music plays.]

[The lights return and we see that it is daytime. **Claygas** crawls over the counter.

Samarkana is still asleep and **Lixandru** is still frozen.]

Claygas [gently to **Samarkana**] Psst... Samarkana wake up. Samarkana... Samarkana!

Samarkana [waking up suddenly] Wha-? What happened? [She snaps out of it.]

Claygas! How long have I been out?

Claygas All night...

Samarkana And Utrek?

Claygas I don't know where he's gone, but while he was here, he did something terrible. He tampered with one of the stories. I'm sure he did... I can feel it.

Samarkana No! Claygas you must tell me which one it was. Hurry!

Claygas That I do not know...

Samarkana We have to find out as soon as possible!

Claygas Yes. But fix your friend first. The poor guy must be feeling rather stiff...

Samarkana He's not my friend... *[She points at Lixandru.]* Wake!

Lixandru *[suddenly moving and panicking]* Help! Utrek is coming for us! Mummy!

Samarkana Calm down Lixandru! He's gone.

Lixandru We won?!

Samarkana No, we didn't. Not by a long shot... *[Lixandru sees Claygas for the first time and panics.]*

Lixandru What the-? What is that is that thing? Eww, is that a giant worm? Don't be scared Samarkana – I'll protect you! *[Lixandru takes off his shoe and is about to hit*

Claygas with it when Samarkana stops him.]

Samarkana Don't you dare lay a finger on him! That's Claygas the Librarian.

Lixandru *[confused]* This is the famous Claygas? A worm?

Samarkana He's not a worm, stupid – he's a bookworm!

Lixandru Still a worm...

Claygas Look, we don't have time to waste. Utrek meddled with one of the stories.

Lixandru What did he do? Did he destroy the book?

Claygas Worse. He altered it...

Lixandru So? These are all popular stories – everyone knows them anyway...

Claygas This is the new guy, right?

Samarkana Yes.

Claygas *[shaking his head disappointedly]* He doesn't understand at all.

Samarkana Lixandru, I told you already! The stories inside the Tower of Fables aren't just plain old books. They're magical books that teach children right from wrong. If someone takes a story from the Tower and changes it – it changes all over the world! The books in libraries change. The ones in children's homes change too. Then all that's left is a bad story that teaches them to do bad things. Do you understand now?

Lixandru Why did Utrek change the story?

Claygas To make children forget the difference between good and bad. The stories teach them to become evil – just like him!

Lixandru We have to stop him! How are we going to find the right story?

Claygas That's the problem. Utrek must have entered the story some time ago. We're already forgetting it as we speak!

Lixandru Entered the story?? Whoa! How did Utrek manage that?

Claygas I don't know. But we have no time to lose. We have to find out which story has been altered before we forget it completely. Let's go see if we can find any clues.

Lixandru Yeah! *[Lixandru tries to follow but Samarkana stops him.]*

Samarkana You've caused enough trouble for one day. Claygas and I are going – you stay here. *[Samarkana and Claygas exit.]*

Lixandru That's so not fair! Now what am I going to do here all by myself? I don't think my first day as a Guardian is going very well. No wonder Samarkana doesn't want me with her. If only I could find something, some kind of clue, she would be so pleased with me. I can't see anything here though...

[Suddenly, Daqnu and Mustacèun appear on the counter behind him. Lixandru realises that the audience is looking at something else.]

What?? Is Utrek back? Mummy! *[The audience points out that there's something behind him and Lixandru turns around.]* Ahh! Who are you?

Daqnu Don't hurt us! Please don't hurt us!

Mustačcun We'll do anything you say – please don't hurt us!

Lixandru Of course I'm not going to hurt you! I'm a Guardian of the Tower – my job is to protect.

Daqnu Then protect us please!

Mustačcun Something bad... something really bad happened.

Lixandru Calm down. Let's start from the beginning. What are your names?

Daqnu My name is Daqnu.

Mustačcun And I am Mustačcun.

Daqnu/Mustačcun And we're two of the seven dwarves!

Lixandru Snow White's seven dwarves?

Mustačcun Exactly! Poor Snow White, there's no one to save her now...

Daqnu Because the Dark Wizard took him away!

Lixandru Aha! You're talking about Utrek! *[the dwarves scream bloody murder.]*

Daqnu Shh! Don't say his name! He'll hear you and come back!

Mustačcun Please don't – even the name alone terrifies us!

Lixandru Alright alright, I won't say it again.

Daqnu Promise?

Lixandru Yes, I promise. Now can you tell me who Utrek kidnapped?

Daqnu/Mustačcun *[the dwarves freak out... big time]* He said it again! He said it again! He's coming for us! Help! *[They duck back behind the counter.]*

Lixandru Wait – don't go! Who did he kidnap? How did you guys get here? Come back! I have to talk to you! I'm sorry I said Utrek – I swear I won't say Utrek ever again!

[Lixandru stops and thinks about what he just said and claps his hand over his mouth.]

Samarkana *appears along with Claygas.]*

Samarkana Can you stop shouting please?

Lixandru Samarkana I know which story was changed! I just met two dwarves who ran out of Snow White's story. So it must have been that one. See? Told you I was good.

Samarkana Well done... only we already knew that. We just found this. *[She raises up a big and ornate frame from behind the counter. She places it on a stand.]*

Lixandru What is it?

Claygas This is the Mirror of Magic from Snow White's tale. We think Utrek used it to get into the fairytale and change it.

Lixandru The dwarves told me he took someone from there.

Claygas One of you needs to go in and return whoever that is back to the story before it's too late.

Samarkana I will go. You, Lixandru, wait here.

Lixandru I want to come too!

Samarkana You can't. This is a very important mission. I can't have a beginner on it.

Lixandru That's not fair.

Claygas Samarkana, we don't know where Utrek is. He'll probably come back to the Tower of Fables the second you leave. You have to be here to face him if he does.

Samarkana What? And send him out there to fix the story? You can't be serious! He's not ready – look at him! *[Lixandru picks his nose, unaware...]*

Claygas Lixandru is our only hope. *[Hearing his name, Lixandru snaps out of it.]*

Lixandru Huh? You're actually letting me go?

Samarkana *[fuming]* Isn't that what you wanted?

Lixandru Well, yes, but... do I have to go alone?

Claygas Yes, Lixandru. Every second counts. Get through the mirror...

Lixandru All alone?

Claygas It's the only way. Go...

Lixandru But why can't you come with me? At least –

Samarkana Through the mirror! NOW!

Lixandru OK, OK... [**Lixandru** walks through the mirror and is transported as music plays while **Samarkana** and **Claygas** disappear.]

Chapter 2: Snow White

[**Lixandru** is looking around with a frightened expression as he talks to himself.]

Lixandru Don't be scared Lixandru... be brave... don't forget... you're a Guardian of the Tower. [*He turns towards the audience and gets a fright.*]

Ahh! What are you guys doing here?! [*He calms down*] I didn't know you could come with me. Well... at least I'm not all alone.

OK we have to find the character Utrek kidnapped and save him. So let's start from the beginning. Hmm... right now I can't seem to remember Snow White's story very well.

Utrek's magic is working already! Do you remember it?

That's great! So let me know if I make a mistake, OK?

Super! So Snow White was a beautiful princess with jet black hair and porcelain skin.

She was so beautiful the Evil Queen became dead jealous of her. Is that right?

The Queen was so jealous that she tried to kill Snow White! But when she failed, Snow ran into the forest and found the seven dwarves. Yeah?

But the Queen wouldn't let her go. She disguised herself as an old hag and went after her.

When she found Snow White, she fed her a poisoned apple and the poor girl dropped to

the ground, never to wake up again. The end. That's the story. Snow White stayed asleep in the forest forever. *[The children will answer that this is not true.]*

Then how? *[The children tell **Lixandru** about the Prince.]*

Huh... I don't remember this Prince. You see what Utrek's magic does? I tell you what we're going to do. Since you guys know the story so well, one of you should come with me. I need someone brave. Someone who's not scared of anything! *[**Lixandru** picks the first Volunteer (**V1**), takes them onstage and speaks to them for a bit. Soon after, someone can be heard crying in a comical way.]*

What's that noise? Is that crying? Are you scared? Great, then you go first.

*[**Lixandru** and **V1** walk around as **Daqnu** appears crying on the counter. A compartment at the bottom opens up to reveal a sleeping **Snow White**.]*

He's Daqnu – one of the seven dwarves. Hey Daqnu! Remember me? Are you OK?

Daqnu *[crying]* No, I'm not OK! Look what they did to Snow White! She was so so pretty... why? Why? Why???

Lixandru Hey, hey! Calm down.

Daqnu I won't calm down! Why did they do this to her? Why?? Why?? W– *[**Lixandru** grabs him by the neck... but he presses too hard. Daqnu starts to choke.]*

Lixandru Listen to me! Did you see the Prince? *[**Daqnu** tries to speak but he cannot.*

Lixandru *realises that he's still choking him and lets go.]* Sorry...

Daqnu What Prince?

Lixandru **[V1]** said there's supposed to be a Prince around here somewhere... but Utrek took him away.

Daqnu I've never seen a Prince around here. But I remember when that wizard came here last, he spent a lot of time in that part of the forest. *[He points down the corridor.]*

Lixandru Then probably the Prince is being held somewhere there. Coming Daqnu?

Daqnu Me? Ha! No way! *[He ducks back behind the counter.]*

Lixandru Well then it's just you and me [V1]. Let's go!

[Lixandru and V1 walk deeper into the woods as music plays. There is a change in scenery and Snow White is concealed once again. The Prince appears tied up and gagged on the floor, looking scared. Lixandru and V1 walk up and see him.]

Lixandru Hey, I think that's him! Are you the Prince?

Prince *[mumbles]*

Lixandru What? I can't understand you.

Prince *[mumbles]*

Lixandru That's a strange language he's speaking. *[to V1]* Can you understand it? Why? *[V1 tells him about the gag.]*

Of course! *[Lixandru removes the Prince's gag and unties him.]*

Prince Thank goodness! Thank you.

Lixandru Were you the guy who was supposed to save Snow White?

Prince Oh well, that was the plan. But when I was on my way, an evil wizard took me as his prisoner! He was terrifying, evil and cruel... still handsome though. *[He smiles at the audience and points at his own face.]*

Lixandru But he's gone now and Snow White is still lying in the middle of the forest. You have to go save her! You have to... um... *[to V1]* What does he have to do? Yeah! Kiss her!

Prince Nope. No way. Forget it guys. That wizard was terrifying! I'm staying right here.

Lixandru But if you don't kiss Snow White, the story won't be complete.

Prince I don't care! Go kiss her yourself if you want. *[He stands there, sulking.]*

Lixandru Now what do we do? The Prince is too scared of Utrek... but I think I might have an idea. Because I know someone he's even more scared of – his father! And you know who the Prince's father is? The King! *[This will be changed to 'queen' if V1 is a girl.]*

OK, so I'll tell you what. You need to pretend you're the King and get super mad until he agrees to go do his job. You think you can do it? Show me how angry you can get.

More... more... ahh! That's too much now.

Wear these here... they'll make you more convincing. *[Lixandru gets a crown and a cloak from behind the counter and puts them on V1.]*

What do you think? He looks exactly like the King! *[The children don't react much.]*

Well maybe some magic will do the trick. So... One, two, three! *[magic SFX]* Perfect!

Look! Prince, hey Prince... come here a second please. Someone wants to talk to you.

Prince *[walking over]* What do you want now? *[he sees V1 and freezes]* Daddy! What are you doing here?

Lixandru He came to speak to you. Go on... tell him.

[Helped by Lixandru, V1 argues with the Prince and finally persuades him to go kiss Snow White.]

Prince OK OK, I'll go! But if that wizard comes back for me I'll blame you... and you...

[Lixandru and the Prince walk along with V1 to Snow White.] Is that her?

Lixandru Yes.

Prince She's the prettiest girl I've ever seen! I get to kiss her?

Lixandru Exactly. A nice big kiss... right on the lips!

Prince *[giggling]* But I've never done this before.

Lixandru That's OK. There's a first time for everything. *[The Prince walks over to Snow White and bends down next to her. However, he hesitates.]*

Come on... what are you waiting for?

Prince I'm shy...

Lixandru *[exasperated]* Shy of what?

Prince There's all these people looking at me. Hey guys, do you mind if everyone just closes his eyes real quick for me? This is a private moment after all.

Lixandru *[sighing]* Come on people: Everyone just close your eyes and let the Prince do what he has to do... *[Lixandru covers his eyes.]* Is this OK Prince?

Prince Well... yes, I guess... but –

Lixandru No buts! Kiss – kiss – kiss... *[The Prince kisses Snow White and she wakes up screaming.]*

Prince Please stop screaming! *[he straightens himself out clumsily]* I'm the Prince.

SW Why are you kissing me? I don't know you!

Prince *[pointing at Lixandru]* He told me to!

Lixandru Well, if he didn't kiss you, you would never have woken up! *[to the audience]* Tell her guys!

See? And then the story would have finished badly...

SW So what happens now?

Lixandru *[to V1]* What happens next for Snow White and the Prince? *[V1 answers that they should get married.]*

SW We get married? But I don't even know who he is...

Lixandru But that's what happens in the story... and you'll live happily ever after.

Prince I like this idea... what do you say?

SW *[shrugging]* If you say so... Well then I'd better go find a wedding dress!

Prince Wonderful. And while you're at it maybe you should wash your teeth too. I don't know how long you've been asleep but that smell... Whoa! *[He fans his nose.]*

SW *[unimpressed]* Be quiet. *[She gets up and runs off.]* Yippee! I'm getting married!
I'm getting married!

Lixandru Awesome! With the Prince and Snow White getting married, everything is finally as it should be. But it feels like I forgot something. Something... or someone... I don't know... *[Some audience members might try to tell him.]*

What? I don't understand. What? *[Suddenly the **Evil Queen** enters, cackling madly.]*

Queen How dare you forget about me, you fools?! I'm the Evil Queen and I will not rest until I'm the most beautiful in all the land. I will crush anyone who stands in my way! Now which one of you woke up Snow White?

Lixandru *[scared]* It was him!

Prince That's not true – he did it!

Lixandru He's lying!

Prince No, he is!

Queen Shut up. I don't care who it was. Utrek swore that this time it would be my *happily ever* after. And I'm not going to let anyone ruin my perfect day. You're all going to be my prisoners now. *[She grabs the **Prince**.]* I'll start with you. Then come back for you *[she points at **Lixandru**]* and you! *[she points at **V1**]* Aha-ha-ha-ha! *[She walks out, dragging the **Prince** with her.]*

Prince No! No! Let me go. Let me go – not a great start with the mother-in-law... Help!
*[The **Queen** and the **Prince** go off.]*

Lixandru Oh no [**V1**], what are we going to do? When she's done with the Prince, she's coming back for us! We need a plan. Think, Lixandru, think. Yes! I got it. But I need everyone's help. The Evil Queen is always looking at her Mirror of Magic, right? She's the vainest person ever! And what does the Mirror do?

Yeah, it tells her how pretty she is. So what we're going to do is this. When the Queen comes back, I'll get her to look into the Mirror and when she asks who the fairest in all the land is, you guys pretend you're the mirror and tell her how ugly she is! You think you can do that?

Great! Shh! Everybody get ready, she's coming! *[The Evil Queen returns.]*

Queen And who's turn is it now? You? Or you?

Lixandru Your majesty! Why the rush? There's no need to get so stressed out. Stress is bad for you, you know. It gives you wrinkles...

Queen What? Wrinkles? I don't have any wrinkles at all. My skin is flawless.

Lixandru Well, I don't know. From here it looks like you have a few lines. I think you're getting old Queeny...

Queen How dare you! Let me show you how wrong you are, you foul creature. Let's ask my Mirror of Magic! It never lies.

[She looks in the Mirror.]

Mirror Mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all? *[The children in the audience shout that she isn't and the Queen gets really upset at this. She tries to argue with the Mirror so as to get the audience shouting even more.]*

No! No, it can't be. I am beautiful. I'm gorgeous! What about my daily beauty treatments? No! *[She runs off in tears, dropping a small pouch in the process. Lixandru rejoices.]*

Lixandru Well done guys! That was awesome. With your help, Snow White is going to live happily ever after. Thanks to my new friend [V1] too! I'll have to go back to the Tower of Fables now. Samarkana is going to be so proud of me! *[He removes V1's costume and sends them back to their seat. Then he notices the pouch on the floor.]*

Wait a second... what's this? *[He picks it up.]* The Evil Queen must have dropped this when she ran away. Maybe I better take it with me. It could be something important.

Let's go! **Lixandru** *steps through the Mirror. Music plays as he's transported back to the Tower and Samarkana and Claygas reappear.]*

Samarkana Lixandru, there you are! How did it go? No, don't tell me. You messed everything up didn't you? I knew I shouldn't have let you go!

Lixandru Samarkana relax. Not only did I not mess anything up... but I fixed everything,

Samarkana Is it true Claygas?

Lixandru Yeah... tell her Claygas...

Claygas No.

Lixandru See? I told – wait. What do you mean no?

Claygas Something still isn't right... I can feel it. Utrek is still working his evil.

Samarkana So much for "I fixed everything"...

Lixandru That can't be right! I saved the Prince, woke up Snow White and drove the Evil Queen away. What else could I do?

Claygas Maybe Utrek tampered with more than one story.

Samarkana How do we know which one?

Claygas I fear it might be too late... Utrek's dark magic is strong.

Lixandru Wait. Before the Evil Queen disappeared, she dropped this thing. *[He shows them the pouch. Samarkana takes it and pulls out some coloured beans,]*

Samarkana Are these beans? Which story has beans in it Claygas?

Claygas I'm sorry. But too much time has passed since Utrek altered the stories. I don't remember a thing.

Lixandru Wait! We might have forgotten, but they haven't! [*He points at the audience.*]

Samarkana Really? You remember still? So which story has beans? [*The children shout out that it's 'Jack and the Beanstalk' but Samarkana has never heard of this story.*]

Claygas I do recall a character called Jack, but the beans... I have no idea. I remember that Jack lived with his mother and they were very poor. For them to eat, they had to sell their prized cow. When Jack returned from the market, he gave his mother the money they got but they soon spent it all and ended up hungry again...

Samarkana Is this the same one you guys know? [*The children shout some more.*]
Claygas, I think we've just found the next story.

Lixandru Great! I'm on it!

Samarkana No. You had your chance and we're still not done. This time it's my turn.

Lixandru But that's not fair! How could I have known Utrek messed with more stories?

Samarkana Enough Lixandru. You stay here with Claygas this time. I'll take care of everything. [**Samarkana** takes the beans, steps through the Mirror and is transported.
Music plays while Lixandru and Claygas disappear.]

Chapter 3: Jack

[**Samarkana** looks around and sees that the audience is still there.]

Samarkana You guys are here too? Oh you really shouldn't have come. It's dangerous here. Well, I guess you could help me some more. How are the beans involved in Jack's story? [*The audience tells her all at once.*]

Hey! Shh! I can't understand you all talking at once. I think maybe one of you should come with me.

[Samarkana picks the second volunteer (V2) and welcomes them onstage. She speaks to them for a bit.]

OK [V2], can you tell me about the beans? *[V2 tells her.]*

So what you're saying is Jack sold his cow for these beans. Are you sure? A whole cow for some beans doesn't seem like a very good deal to me.

I see now... I think Utrek must have stolen the beans from Jack's story and hid them in Snow White's.

Well, Jack will probably be around soon I think. He'll be taking his cow to market, so you have to pretend you want to buy his cow and convince him to take the beans. Think you can do it?

Yeah! Let's get you a costume first... you need to look like you work at the market

[Samarkana puts an apron and a hat on V2.] ... and here are the beans. Perfect! You hear that? He's coming. Good luck. Make sure you give him those beans. *[Jack walks in looking jolly with his cow – a sock puppet.]*

Jack Hello! I'm Jack and this is my cow, Daisy. *[in Samarkana's face]* Moo!

Samarkana Good morning Jack, we hear you want to sell your cow.

Jack Moo! Shh! *[He covers the cow's ears and whispers.]* I haven't told Daisy yet – she's very sensitive. *[in Samarkana's face]* Moo!

Samarkana Yes, well, this is my friend [V2] and she has a very good offer for your cow.

Jack Really? That's great! What do you have for me then? Money? Gems? Gold?

What? *[V2 answers him.]* Beans? You think I found Daisy out on the street do you?

[aside to the audience] Actually, I think I did. Why should I give you my precious Daisy for some beans? Moo! Even Daisy wants to know, see?

[V2 tries to persuade Jack about the magic quality of the beans. However, Jack is not convinced and seems to be interested in other things.]

Hey miss... do you have a boyfriend?

Samarkana What does that have to do with anything?

Jack Because I like you... a lot. Tell you what, if you promise to be my girlfriend, I'll let you buy my cow for those beans. How's that?

Samarkana Forget it.

Jack OK then, bye! *[He makes to leave.]*

Samarkana Wait! *[sighing]* I'll go out with you... but just once.

Jack Yes! At last – I've got a girlfriend... I've got a girlfriend!

Samarkana I'm not your girlfriend.

Jack Here's Daisy. Make sure you take good care of her. She goes for walks twice a day and her favourite food is hay, grass and Coco Pops. Moo! *[He takes off the cow and puts it on Samarkana.]* See you later... honeybun. *[He does a little roar at her, takes the beans, and skips away.]*

Samarkana Ugh. OK *[V2]*, is the story finished now? Or do we have something else to do? *[V2 tells Samarkana that the story isn't over yet.]* Alright, then let's go see what happens when Jack takes the beans home. *[Samarkana and V2 move to the side and look at Jack who skips around the counter and is met by his Mother.]*

Jack Mummy! I'm home!

Mother There's my handsome boy. Tell me my dear, did you sell our Daisy?

Jack Yes, mummy and they gave me a really good price!

Mother Thank goodness! We won't be going hungry tonight. How much did you get? Huh? How much? No, don't tell me. No, tell me, tell me. I'm so excited!

Jack Look mummy... *[He takes the pouch and opens it.]* You're going to be so happy.

Mother What is it?

Jack I met two people on the way to market... and they gave me...

Mother What did they give you?!

Jack *[pouring out the beans]* Magic beans. *[There is a pause as Jack's Mother freezes.]*

Mother *[eventually]* Beans...

Jack Magic beans.

Mother You gave away our cow for some beans...

Jack Magic beans. Isn't this great?

Mother *[finally exploding]* How could you do this to me boy? How could you?

Jack Calm down mummy... It's –

Mother I will not calm down! Look what you've done! *[Jack's Mother freaks out at length. She grabs the beans and throws them out. She runs around in a circle, screaming and pulling at her hair. After awhile, she stops to catch her breath.]*

Jack Finished?

Mother No. *[She freaks out some more.]* Come here you!

Jack No! *[Jack runs down the corridor as his Mother chases after him.]*

Samarkana *[stepping back to centre stage]* That didn't go as well as we hoped. Are you sure that's what was supposed to happen? All that work to give him the beans, then his mother throws them out the window.

[The audience tries to explain that it's a good thing, but Samarkana thinks they are making fun of her. At the same time, the beanstalk starts to grow behind her. The audience points it out. Finally, Samarkana turns around and sees it.]

My goodness! What is that thing? *[Jack walks in and sees the beanstalk.]*

Jack My goodness! What is that thing? *[Jack's Mother walks in and sees it too.]*

Mother *[shouting]* My goodness! What is that thing? *[She notices Samarkana and V2.]* And who are these people?

Jack Mummy, this is my girlfriend. We're getting married and having lots of babies!

Samarkana What?

Jack Come on honeybun, give me a kiss!

Samarkana I will do no such thing! *[to V2]* Now what is Jack supposed to do with the beanstalk? *[V2 answers that he has to climb it.]*

Jack Climb it? Can't you see how high that thing is?

Mother Climb it?! You want my son to fall and break his neck? He will not be climbing anything you bunch of crazies!

Samarkana *[to V2]* It seems we might have a problem here. Tell you what, I'm going to try and get rid of the mother. You convince Jack to climb the beanstalk OK?

[to Jack's Mother] Excuse me, Mrs. Jack's mum could I use your bathroom please?

Mother Ha! We don't have money for a bathroom dearie. I'll show you to the field nearby. *[to Jack]* You don't move an inch. *[to Samarkana as she leads her off]* It's right over here. You won't miss it – it smells like cow dung. Oh, and if you see a farmer coming at you with a dog, you better run... even if you're not done. *[Jack's Mother and Samarkana exit.]*

Jack *[to V2]* This beanstalk is massive, isn't it? You think there's something up there? *[V2 sees the opportunity and suggests he should go see for himself.]*

I wish I could climb it... but I'm scared. You think Samarkana would like me more if I do though? *[V2 says she would.]* Look, I'll climb the beanstalk... one on condition – you have to come with me! What do you think? *[V2 agrees]*

Let's go then!

[Jack and V2 start climbing the beanstalk as music plays. While they mime climbing, there is some change in scenery until they find themselves looking at a castle.]

Jack Where are we? This place is weird. Who do you think lives here? *[The Giant's Wife suddenly appears.]*

Wife I do!

Jack *[startled]* Ah! Who are you?

Wife I'm the Giant's Wife, and you two aren't supposed to be here. God forbid my husband finds you here – he'll eat you both!

Jack Eat us? Why??

Wife I know it's bad and he shouldn't do it. I try to stop it, you know. I feed him all the time, but he's always so hungry...

Jack *[to V2]* Let's go before the Giant gets here! *[SFX: large footsteps]*

Wife *Too late!*

Jack Eek! What are we going to do?

Wife Hurry up and hide before he sees you. Don't make a sound! *[The Giant's Wife opens the counter and puts Jack and V2 under it.]* Come on – he's here! *[The Giant enters.]*

Giant Fee-fi-fo-fum! I smell the blood of an Englishman!

Wife Oh, what are you talking about? There's no one here!

Giant You're lying! I can smell an intruder in my house... Two intruders! If I get my hands on them, I'll eat them with my toast!

Wife They can't be in here my love, I would have seen them! Go check the bedroom. They might be hiding in there.

Giant Sneaky intruders... Fee-fi-fo-fum! *[He walks off and his Wife immediately goes to where Jack and V2 are.]*

Wife Are you happy now? He knows you're here. Which one of you is the smelly one?

Jack *[pointing at V2]* Him/her! It's him/her... *[V2 might opt to defend themselves.]*

Wife Quiet! I'm going to have to clean you up. *[She takes out a spray-bottle filled with water and sprays them both. Then she sniffs them.]*

There, that's better. *[She hides them again just as the Giant returns.]*

Giant I can't find them! *{Pause as he sniffs the air}* I can't smell them anymore either.

Wife Maybe it was all in your imagination. Could be you need some rest. Why don't you go get some sleep?

Giant No! I want to see my treasures first. Bring me my chest!

Wife Stubborn... which one do you want? *[The Giant's Wife brings up a chest from behind the counter.]*

Giant I want... the gold coins!

Wife *[taking out a bag that makes a clinking sound]* Here.

Giant Bring me the hen that lays golden eggs.

Wife *[taking out a stuffed chicken]* That too... **[Chicken [SFX]]**

Giant And the magic harp too!

Wife *[taking out a small harp]* Take them all... here. **[Harp [SFX]** La-la-la-la-la!]

Are you done?

Giant Can you get me a cup of tea?

Wife *[walking off]* Sure.

Giant And a biscuit.

Wife *[getting annoyed]* Anything else?

Giant And a piece of roly-poly?

Wife We don't have any roly-poly!

Giant Hmph... *[The Giant's Wife exits and the Giant plays with the harp.]* Sing to me enchanted harp! *[The Harp starts playing a relaxing song and the Giant soon drops off to sleep. Jack and V2 slowly look up.]*

Jack I think he's asleep. We'd better go before he wakes up. *[Jack and V2 stand up. They're about to walk off when Jack notices the Giant's treasure.]*

Wait a second. If my mummy and I had just one of those treasures, we would never go hungry again. You think I should take something? What would you guys pick? The money, the hen or the harp? *[The audience replies and the Giant stirs.]*

Shh! Don't shout – you'll wake up the giant! I couldn't understand you so... I'm just taking everything! *[Jack puts the bag, chicken and harp back in the chest.]*

Let's get out of here [V2]! *[Suddenly, the harp starts singing by itself.]*

What's that? Is that the harp? Hey – be quiet! *[Behind Jack, the Giant wakes up.]*

If you wake the giant, you'll be in big trouble, you hear me? *[By now, the audience should be shouting to Jack that the Giant is awake. However he ignores him until the Giant himself lets out a mighty roar.]*

Giant Jack! How can it be? Utrek promised you will never be bothering me ever again!

Jack Run!!

Giant Just wait 'till I catch you! *[Jack and V2 run down the corridor and the Giant chases after them as music plays. Jack and V2 run back in.]*

Jack Come on [V2], we have to climb down, fast! *[Jack and V2 start climbing down the beanstalk – with Jack carrying the chest.]*

[Jack and V2 get to the bottom of the beanstalk where Samarkana is waiting.]

Jack Samarkana, you're here! It's great to see you. Can I kiss you?

Samarkana *[fending him off]* What are you doing? What did you find up there?

Jack Oh nothing... *[starts to panic]* Well, actually, there's a huge giant coming after us.

Samarkana We have to get rid of him!! *[to V2]* Do you know what Jack did to get rid of the giant? *[V2 tells her that he must chop down the beanstalk.]* That's a great idea! But we need something to cut it down with... something sharp! *[to Jack]* Hurry! Do you have a saw or something?

Jack I have a hammer...

Samarkana No! Not a hammer! *[to the audience]* Does anyone here have anything sharp for us? It's kind of an emergency *[A Teacher gives Samarkana an axe.]* Thank you! *[She gives the axe to Jack.]* Come on Jack!

Jack I'll do it! *[He starts chopping in careful, slow strokes.]* One... two... three...

Samarkana *[impatiently snatching the axe from him]* Give me that! *[She chops the beanstalk very quickly and it falls down. The giant falls with an almighty crash.]* Yes!

Jack Thank you Samarkana! Thanks to you and *[V2]*, my mummy and I won't be poor anymore – we're going to be rich! *[He starts emptying the chest and placing its contents on the counter.]*

Samarkana We've done it. We've finally fixed the story of Jack and the Beanstalk. Thank you so much *[V2]*! Now you have to go back in your place and I have to go back to the Tower of Fables. I must tell Claygas! *[She removes the costume and sends V2 back to his/her seat.]*

Jack Hey, wait a second! After all this, I think I deserve a kiss... *[Samarkana pauses.]*

Samarkana Fine... but first you have to close your eyes!

Jack Yes! *[He closes his eyes and puckers his lips.]* I close my eyes and do the fish lips.

Samarkana *grabs the chicken and kisses him with it. Jack takes the chicken into his own hands and keeps kissing it passionately as Samarkana takes the chest, goes through the*

Mirror and disappears. Jack goes on kissing the chicken for awhile until he finally opens his eyes, gets a fright, and throws the chicken away.]

Utrek Those two have meddled with my plans for long enough. They will pay dearly for this. And when I'm done with them, I'm coming back for you all! Hahahaha!

[Utrek dives behind the counter and Samarkana steps through the Mirror into the Tower, completely exhausted.]

Samarkana Finally! I'm back. I'm tired too. Jumping from one story to the next is exhausting.

[Utrek casts his spell and Samarkana freezes like a statue. Lixandru comes running in, all in a flurry.]

Lixandru Samarkana, there you are! How did it go? Samarkana! Talk to me... what happened? *[Utrek walks in.]*

Utrek Something very terrible happened. Two very naughty Guardians messed up all my hard work!

Lixandru Utrek...

Utrek Not another word from you. *[Utrek does a magic spell at Lixandru and he freezes like Samarkana.]* This is the end for you two Guardians. You might have fixed these two stories, but I'm still the most powerful wizard in all the land. And I will win! *[He takes out a length of rope and starts tying them up.]*

I'm going to go back into one more story and I'm going to corrupt it to the core. I'm going to make it unrecognizable, full of nothing but pain and darkness. Then I'm throwing you both deep inside and I'm going to close the Mirror of Magic behind me. You will never escape! *[Utrek exits with an evil laugh. After a small while Lixandru talks to Samarkana.]*

Lixandru Samarkana, are you alright?

Samarkana No, I'm not alright. Didn't you hear what Utrek said? He's going to destroy us! [**Claygas** appears on the counter although he looks very weak.]

Claygas Samarkana? Lixandru?

Samarkana Claygas! There you are! Are you OK?

Claygas Not really. That last fight with Utrek has left me weak.

Lixandru When he comes back, he's going to lock us away into a terrible story forever.

Claygas, you have to help us. What are we going to do?

Claygas To get out of this one, you two must do something you have never done yet.

Something deeply important.

Samarkana/Lixandru What?

Claygas You have to learn to work together... [*He disappears behind the counter.*]

Samarkana Claygas come back here! Don't leave me here with him... Utrek will be back any second!

Lixandru Stop whining Samarkana and help me. I have the perfect plan thwart Utrek's!

Samarkana What?

Lixandru We're going to turn the tables on him and give him a taste of his own medicine. We're going to close the Mirror and trap him in one of the stories! I just need to get free first...

Samarkana Utrek might be strong and scheming but he's forgotten one thing...

Lixandru What? What did he forget?

Samarkana That we have a whole lot of friends here who will help us!

Lixandru One of them can come through and untie us! [*to the audience*] Hey, you guys will one of you please untie us before Utrek gets back? Hurry! [**Samarkana** and

Lixandru *get one (or more) of the children to come through the Mirror and untie them.*

Afterwards, they thank them and send them back to their seats.]

Samarkana Thank you so much! Now we're going to prepare a little surprise for Utrek!

Lixandru Haha! Let's go...

[They walk off down the corridor and Utrek walks in.]

Utrek I will show those two what happens to anyone who stands in Utrek's path, *[To the side, Samarkana and Lixandru enter holding a large hammer and swing it at the Mirror. A large crash is heard as they exit again.]*

Aah! What was that? Was that the Mirror? The portal's closed. I can feel it. But how can that be? The Guardians were tied up, they couldn't have – wait, there are others here.

[The Giant appears on the counter.]

Giant Utrek! You said you would rid me of Jack and instead he came back and steals all my precious treasure! You will pay for this!

Utrek No... no... *[The Evil Queen enters.]*

Queen Utrek! You promised I would be the fairest in all the land but Snow White is awake! You lied to me! Now you're going to pay for all my beauty treatments!

Utrek No!... *[Utrek runs behind the counter and ducks down as the other characters descend upon him. There is much shouting until eventually Claygas rises up.]*

Claygas Thanks to our Guardians, Samarkana and Lixandru, the Tower of Fables was finally safe. The two of them learnt many lessons that day. Samarkana realised she needed to be more patient with people, while Lixandru knew he had a lot to learn from others. However, the biggest lesson of all was that when people work together, they can achieve anything. But... even though Utrek is a prisoner once more, he will not be there forever. What we can be sure of is that Samarkana and Lixandru will be ready for him.

[Blackout]

SECTION K: TV SERIES

SERIES SYNOPSIS

SERIES CONCEPT

EPISODE SYNOPSES

EPISODE 1: THE RUN

EPISODE 2: A NIGHTMARE ON ELF STREET

EPISODE 3: THE PERFECT STORM

*Fighting off mad wizards, evil queens, hungry wolves and spell hurling witches,
the valiant officers of the Storyville Police Department take a stand against evil...*

They are the only ones who can protect all that is good in Storyville.

*This is the story of three young cadets and their perilous journey to become
Storyville Police Officers.*

SERIES SYNOPSIS

They were defeated and expelled to the Icy Wastelands. Their leader, the vilest of word weavers, was thrown into the Abyss, consigned to oblivion.

Their downfall was celebrated by everyone.

After years of brutal war, peace was finally secured. It was time for the citizens to bury the fallen, rebuild the city and restore its splendor.

Storyville, the magical city of wonder and legend, returned to being a beacon of hope.

But now they are back... creeping out of the shadows... hungry for revenge.

Villains of ancient lore are defying the law, wanting to rewrite their history.

Something sinister is urging them to reignite the battle.

Storyville is once again in peril.

In this dark time, a young boy, Jumper Jones follows in his father's and grandfather's footsteps by joining the legendary Storyville Police Department – an outfit of gallant officers devoted to defending every happy ending.

This is his story and that of his fellow cadets as learn the meaning of the word hero!

No matter what, evil **MUST** not conquer!

SERIES CONCEPT

Fairytales are known to us all. Red Riding Hood, Jack Beanstalk, Cinderella, Puss in Boots... all are household names. Their adventures have been recounted time and time again, their happy endings celebrated every time. But what if the villains they fought refuse to give up?

In Storyville, evil has been reawakened and the villains are back....

Once Upon a Crime is an animated TV series about the legendary Storyville Police Department and the efforts to save the wondrous city of Storyville from the relentless attacks of the Dark Lord's hordes.

We join three brave souls; Jumper Jones, Tucker Northbrook and Lilah Tree as they stand at the precipice of great adventure, determined to join the fight against their ancient foes.

These three cadets struggle to prove themselves worthy of the badge, getting themselves into all kinds of trouble and sticky situations! But together, they will grow and learn their lessons. Sifting through the mishmash of jumbled up fairytales, Jumper and his friends pick up the pieces and restore all the happy endings to the inhabitants of Storyville

This series will take fairytales to the next level. Presenting a cacophony of the stories we all know and love, interlaced together in a new, entertaining and modern way.

With its exciting mixture of technology and magic, it will appeal to the young, hyperlinked audience of today. However, appropriately colourful and enchanting, it will also be familiar to anyone who has ever read an illustrated book of fairytales. The designs will combine old and new, giving a definite nod to the Noir detective films of the 1950s, to create a fresh take on the classic fairytale representations.

Once Upon A Crime is set to captivate the imaginations of all viewers...

EPISODE SYNOPSES

Season 1

Episode 1: The Run

Jumper Jones was borne of a family of valiant heroes. His grandfather, Jimmy Jones, is the great Witch Slayer. He is the man who defeated the Dark Lord Utrek, the most powerful of all word weavers, and founded the most noble force ever to take a stand against all evil -- the Storyville Police Department. Jumper's father, Junior Jones, even died in the line of duty, to protect his family from Utrek's return.

Ever since he could crawl, all Jumper ever wanted was to become a brave officer of the SPD. And now, destiny has dealt its cards. The long awaited day has finally arrived. The Mirror of Magic has sent its call -- it's Jumper's turn to don the uniform!

Bursting with excitement, and against his Grandma Gretel's wishes, Jumper attends his first meeting and becomes fast friends with Tucker Northbrook, a jittery fellow cursed to change into various animals when nervous.

But Sergeant Storm, tough as nails, brings the pleasantries to an abrupt halt and makes the rules very clear -- receiving the call doesn't make them cadets. First, they must prove themselves worthy of the honour. First, they must complete "The Run".

A grueling race through Khartumm, the most dangerous and unforgiving place in all of Storyville, the Run is Jimmy's ticket into the SPD Academy.

But the forces of evil are never too far away. Lurking in the shadows, the malefic wolf brothers, Dother and Dain, are waiting for the Jones boy impatiently, hungry for revenge.

The hunt is on.

Episode 2: Nightmare on Elf Street

Jumper Jones and Tucker Northbrook have become cadets! And today is a very special day. Today is the day they receive the coveted valometer -- a watch that measures their valor... the watch that will make them real SPD police officers.

Sergeant Storm escorts them to a jaw-dropping underground hangar -- the SPD hyperlab.

Run by Geppetto, Storyville's very own Da Vinci, this is the place where all the weapons of the force are designed, made and tested, thanks to the help of the most hardworking technicians in all the land, the Elves.

Everything is running like clockwork... until the bully, Bart Knowles, decides it's time for some fun. The wretched boy shoves a fire cracker down poor Tucker's pants.

All hell breaks loose! But it's not Bart who gets the blame -- it's Tucker and Jumper.

That night, after a rigorous training session, Sergeant Storm drags the boys back to the labs and bestows his punishment -- he wants the whole place spotless before morning!

The two stand in the middle of a gargantuan mess -- this is going to be impossible!

But they soon realise they're not the only ones in that lab...

Rupert Frills, Head Elf Technician, exits Geppetto's Top Secret Vault with the map to the Secret Grove -- the place where they get the magic wood required to make their weapons. Count N. Grimm, the sinister Lord of Shadows, has paid the elf a most terrifying visit... and is holding his wife and child hostage until he returns with his bounty.

Rupert will stop at nothing to save his family.

Episode 3: The Perfect Storm

Jumper Jones and Tucker Northbrook are busy scrubbing the latrines at the SPD Academy... Sergeant Storm still hasn't forgotten the trouble they caused at the SPD hyperlab! And now that new footage has emerged, showing them destroying the lab before the whole Rupert debacle, the matter has gone from bad to worse!

The other cadets gather round, laughing their hearts out. But even when everyone is gone, the boys keep complaining and calling the Sergeant names -- this is so unfair!

That's until Claygas overhears them and tells them a story from a time long past. A time when the Dark Lord was locked away but his minions were still on the loose!

SPD officers were scattered to the four winds, rounding up the remaining dregs of the Army of Darkness. Jimmy Jones, the great Witch Slayer, was hunting down the Headless Horseman, his arch enemy, through the Icy Wastelands.

Little did he know of Utrek's underhanded plan.

Through telepathy, the Dark Lord guided the Headless Horseman, and lured Jimmy into the crags of the Mount Toul Sleng. The Witch Slayer was caught!

Utrek tried to blackmail Old King Cole, the Mayor of Storyville, into making an exchange -- to let him walk free, in return for Jimmy Jones. But the Old King refused.

Gretel, with child at the time, was distraught! She packed her bags immediately, ready to set off after her husband. But just as she was about to leave, Sergeant Storm intervenes. She couldn't possibly go out in the dreadful Icy Wastelands in her condition.

The brave Sergeant took her place, and went out to bring back his lost friend.

Storm tracked him down, and fought the Headless Horseman himself, for Jimmy was injured and unable to handle a sword. With one brutal swing of his sword, he defeated Utrek's right hand!

Sergeant Storm then carried the injured Jimmy safe and sound back to Storyville. Claygas' tale hits Jumper at his core. He has a new found respect for the Sergeant... and when he returns to inspect the latrines, he can do nothing but ask for more work.

Episode 4: The Last House on the Left

New grounds, new equipment, new gadgets. Jumper Jones and the other cadets are in seventh heaven! Training has never been so fun. But not everyone feels the same way.

Tucker Northbrook is having a terribly tough time getting the hang of the new tank Geppetto and the elves have painstakingly engineered... and Sergeant Storm is giving him hell! Jumper intervenes, but it's only when Lilah Tree, a tomboy Princess turned SPD cadet, offers her help that they finally convince the Sergeant to let them coach poor Tucker!

Hours later, the claustrophobic Tucker still can't relax. He slips and falls -- jamming the throttle by mistake! ZOOM! The tank shoots off like a speeding bullet into the woods...

Jumper struggles to resume control but it's no use -- BLAM! They slam right in the middle of a huge oak tree. Smoke billows from the front. This tank is going nowhere.

Jumper and Lilah have no choice. They leave Tucker with the tank and go off in search for help. When they're finally about to reach the city, a little boy bolts through the trees towards them -- he needs their help!

Without hesitation, Jumper and Lilah follow...

The boy takes them to a creepy looking house. Tears streaming down his face and unable to utter a word, he points towards the house -- a shrill, blood curdling scream bursts through the shattered windows!

Jumper and Lilah come barging in... but there's no one inside. Or so they think...

Suddenly, the door slams behind them and a cold cackle chills them to the bone.

The Boogeyman wants to play.

Episode 5: The Curse of Frankenstein

The cadets are fighting through yet another day of tough training. It seems Sergeant Storm woke up on the wrong side of the bed. He's really milking them for all they're worth!

But the session comes to an unexpected end when an emergency calls the cadets to the front lines. A strange monster has gone off on a murderous rampage through Storyville. He's ripped through the SPD prison, and now the entire city crawling with villains!

Jumper, Lilah and Tucker stick together. A formidable team, they manage to round up a good number of inmates. Then, a massive shadow drapes over... the monster is after them!

Officer Beast, the bravest of the SPD, hurtles to their defence but none of his weapons work against this new villain. Even the precious Book of Fables proves powerless!

With no solution in sight, Jumper goes to the Mirror of Magic for help. He must know how to defeat this creature.

But the Mirror's has no quick fix, for this villain is not a villain at all... but a soul manipulated by the evil Dr. Frankenstein, a demented scientist obsessed with his crazy experiments, into thinking his family has abandoned him because of the SPD.

Under all that flesh and brawn is a broken Rupert Frills... and he's out for revenge!

Episode 6: Underworld

The sun is shining just a little bit brighter today, for Jumper and his friends have their first day off in weeks! In celebration, the cadets organise a vacation to the beautiful Mirror Lake!

It's laughter and smiling faces all round as our heroes soak up the sun.

That evening, Tucker wants to go for a walk into the forest before bed but Jumper and Lilah are tired. They insist they'll go tomorrow but Tucker won't wait. He goes by himself.

However the next morning, fate takes a dire turn -- Tucker has disappeared!

The SPD are called in immediately and investigations are in full swing within the hour. But despite their stern warnings to not get involved, Jumper refuses to stand idle.

Racked with guilt, he and Lilah, venture into the woods to look for their friend.

Suddenly, the ground gives way under their feet -- they drop head over heels down a dark steep tunnel... until a bright light appears and they crash right through!

The pair's mouths hang wide open. In front of them is a vast underground city, cut out of solid rock -- an astounding sight! This is the long lost land of Lilliput!

Out of nowhere, the Lilliputians appear, swarming around like ants... but these little people are much stronger than they look!

Jumper and Lilah dragged into the prisons -- and there's Tucker! But the celebrations are cut short. The mad King Set the 14th comes in, rubbing his miniature hands greedily -- he's found the new slaves he needs to build his underground empire!

How will they escape the mad King's clutches?

Episode 7: The Replicants

Jumper and the other cadets are gathered... ready and waiting for another hard day of training to start. But something is very wrong this morning -- Sergeant Storm is late!

They wait and wait. A full half hour passes and Jumper cannot let it go any longer. Just as he's about to go inform someone, the Sergeant waltzes in -- smiling!

The cadets exchange shocked looks. What is going on here? Is the Sergeant sick?

Beaming like a ray of sunshine, he announces that today they will be going for a stroll instead of training. Maybe even a swim after if the weather holds up. Happy dances break out all over the training ground. Everyone is beyond excited! Everyone except Jumper...

Wanting to train, he tries to talk some sense into Sergeant Storm, but Lilah and Tucker shut him up before he can utter a single word -- they don't want him to spoil this once in a blue moon good mood!

No matter how much his two friends try to convince him to join them, Jumper stays behind. He doesn't want anything to do with this silly business.

When his friends finally return to the Academy, there is something deeply disturbing about them all. They're different... strange. And that's because they're not really his friends.

Count N. Grimm has busted Dr. Frankenstein from prison and the two have joined forces! With the information from the map still in his head, Grimm took the maniac doctor to the Secret Grove where they forged an army of replicants with the intention of replacing the entire force with their minions. Together, they will take over Storyville!

Will Jumper unravel the deception and save his friends?

Episode 8: My Friend Tucker

Tucker Northbrook is the nicest guy anyone could ever meet. But he is still having a terribly tough time settling down at the SPD Academy.

The bully, Bart Knowles, keeps making his life hell, picking on him and teasing him at every opportunity. And now, even the other cadets seem to be following suit. They make fun of anything and everything; his looks, his clumsiness, his curse. Nothing is off limits!

But everyone has his limit, and poor old Tucker has finally reached his.

Deeply hurt and angry, Tucker needs some room to breathe. He breaks the SPD Academy rules, and sneaks out of the living quarters at night.

But it's not long before he regrets his rebellious decision.

Throughout the night, a string of robberies are reported and witnesses claim to have seen Tucker hanging around in the vicinities. Morning barely breaks before Sergeant Storm tracks Tucker down and bombards him with questions; what was he doing outside of the Academy at night? Why was he at those locations?

In the blink of an eye, Tucker finds himself the prime suspect in a mass robbery case!

Certain that Tucker is no criminal, Jumper takes it upon himself to find the truth.

Episode 9: Dragon Age

A new day dawns in Storyville to a blistering rain of deadly dragon fire.

Wyvern is attacking the city!

With a deadly fury in her eyes, the gigantic monster rips everything apart. But she's not on her own -- the ice giant, JF, or Jack Frost as he's known in our parts, makes sure no one stands in her way. He freezes the SPD's Dragon Division solid.

The police are powerless against the beast's relentless anger. But Jumper has an idea! He leaps into action and gets Tucker to use his curse for a good cause -- he changes into a mighty dragon! Together, the boys lure Wyvern away from the city...

But JF is not far behind. He lets loose a dangerous volley of ice shards... determined to drop them the pair right out of the sky!

In the midst of the chaos, an enraged Thundrall, a dim but immensely strong troll, shows up and charges JF with astounding force. A monumental battle leaves JF smashed in a million little pieces.

Betrayed, Thundrall spills the beans...

The Snow Queen and her son JF convinced him to steal Wyvern's egg, but left him there to roast when the dragon awoke from her slumber. They hid the egg somewhere in the city so the dragon would descend upon it, distracting the SPD while they make their move to take the great Tower of Fables!

Now, it's up to Jumper and his friends to find the egg and return it to the distressed Wyvern... before their beloved Storyville is burnt to the ground!

Episode 10: The Mirror of Magic

Grandma Gretel is the best grandma anyone could ever hope for... kind, sweet and caring... but she worries too much!

She's always fretting and fussing about her precious Jumper putting himself in harm's way. Time and time again, she tries to convince the boy to take another, more prudent job. But the stubborn boy never listens!

Now, the little old lady has had enough. Her family has already sacrificed more than they should to the defence of the city. And if her grandson won't listen, she'll take care of things herself.

Within days, Jumper finds himself sifting through mountains of paperwork for no apparent reason! He pleads with Sergeant Storm day in and day out. After his string of successful missions he should be going on to the next stage of training, not filing away documents in some crumby office!

But Jumper's appeals fall on deaf ears.

Despite being sad and disheartened, Jumper still comes in to the SPD Academy everyday without fail. Then, one day, a faint whisper reaches his ears -- the Evil Queen has stolen back the Mirror of Magic!

Jumper finds Lilah and Tucker and rallies them to his cause. He will retrieve the Mirror of Magic and earn back the Sergeant's good graces.

Episode 11: A Broken Heart

Jumper Jones' valometer has finally lit up! He's now onto the next stage of becoming an officer -- a trainee.

And it's not a day too soon. Bad news comes in first thing in the morning. The Snow Queen and her army of ferocious polar bears are storming the SPD prison. She wants to free her son JF and earn supremacy among the evil ones!

Jumper, Lilah and Tucker spring to action. They take one of Geppetto's war tanks and rush to the scene! But in their haste, something goes wrong. Jumper loses control. The vehicle skids and goes into a freakish spin!

Before anyone knows what's going on -- BLAM! The tank smashes into a tree, rolls and finally comes to a stop in the middle of Maliora Park.

But it's not just trees that the tank hit before it stopped. Nina the toy ballerina, lies in the grass... broken beyond all repair. Suddenly, her husband Percival, a wooden toy soldier, comes stumbling through the trees.

They rush the ballerina to the hospital, but alas there is nothing they can do for her.

Poor Percival is shattered. Distraught beyond his wits, he kidnaps the person he thinks responsible for the death of his beloved -- officer Lilah Tree!

Jumper must track down the devastated soldier and save Lilah before it's too late...

Episode 12 & 13: The Unicorn

Ever since Nina's accident, Jumper has been ravaged by guilt. He was the one behind the wheel that day not Lilah. Unable to live with himself, Jumper quits the SPD.

But that's the least of the Jones' problems...

The shadows are encroaching, deeper and darker than ever before.

Out in the Icy Wastelands, a shrouded old man with intense glowing eyes, hands over a bag of gold to the Hunter, a nameless assassin who will do any job... for the right price. A sinister deal is struck.

This evening however colours, laughter, music and joy light up the night sky -- it's the Fables Festival! Everyone is present to celebrate the precious Book of Fables -- Red Riding Hood, Snow White, the Three Little Pigs. But there is one uninvited guest tonight.

Under the cover of darkness, the Hunter lies in wait like a viper ready to strike. Suddenly, familiar voices ring out. The Hunter takes an arrow and dips it into his potent poison... then lets it fly!

In front of him are none other than Jimmy and Gretel!

Jimmy is too slow but Gretel, surprisingly nimble, lunges, shielding him from the deadly arrow -- BLAM! It hits her square in the chest! Gretel crumbles into a heap.

Shocked gasps rise into the night as people gather round. Attached to the arrow in Gretel's chest is a tattered flag of Utrek's Army of Darkness -- has the Dark Lord returned??

But Jimmy is focussed on Gretel. He recognised the Hunter. A deadly venom is coursing through his wife's veins, and he knows that the only thing that can save her now is a horn from one of the elusive unicorns.

Jumper scrambles to retrieve the antidote, but it's not as simple as he thinks...

Grandpa Jimmy had made a pact with the mysterious creatures back in the times of the Great War. For their help in bringing down the Dark Lord Utrek, they were granted

Valmont Valley as their sacred ground where no creature other than their own kind can venture. But Jumper won't back down.

With Lilah and Tucker, he sets off on the journey of a lifetime. Will the trio find the sacred unicorns and return with the cure in time? And who is that old man?

Season 2

Episode 1: The Cold War

After the Hunter's attack, Grandma Gretel gives Jimmy her blessing, and he rejoins the SPD... eager to get his valometer to light up and regain lost ground.

But something has been distracting Jumper and his friends for weeks. Churning out one massive hit after another, Peter Pan and the Lost Boys have become Storyville's greatest rock stars. Humungous crowds flock from every corner of the lands to attend their concerts... and tonight it's Jumper, Tucker and Lilah's turn.

The latest tour has finally come to an end and the grand finale's massive stage is set for the Magical City Arena. Everyone is going!

Unable to focus properly on the obstacle course, the trio gets abysmal fitness results for the third time this week. And Sergeant Storm has had enough. He orders them to stay behind and work out their puny muscles at the gym.

Jumper tries to bargain with the Sergeant... with no success.

But that night, while Jumper and his friends are tucked away at the SPD Academy, the wicked Snow Queen is getting ready to make her move.

With rumours of Utrek's return running rife, she wants to present her beloved Dark Lord with a fitting gift. So, the Snow Queen ventures into the ice territories and rallies the wild ice giants! Scared of the SPD, the monsters are reluctant at first, but the promise of an easy target gets them out of their caves in droves.

With an army of ice giants behind her, the Snow Queen unleashes a mighty blizzard upon Storyville, covering the entire city in a deadly blanket of white. Everyone at the concert is frozen solid!

Our heroes, spared from this tragic fate, must act fast.

They have to bring the Snow Queen and her ice giants down before they wipe out their precious Storyville and steal the Book of Fables!

Episode 2: The Relic

A furious anger is eating away at the Pied Piper's evil heart. Those goody-two-shoes SPD officers have turned him and Skid the rat into lowly bottom feeders, scavenging for scraps in Storyville's underground drainage system. This is insulting!

But then, a mysterious voice rings out in the Piper's head. It drives him to fight back!

Hungry for revenge, the Piper ventures once more through the wishing wells and back into the Old World with the perfect plan.

He and Skid break into the Museum of Natural History.

But the moment they walk into the Egyptian exhibit, all notions of their plan fly out the window. The gold, the jewels, the treasure... Skid cannot contain himself! He bolts, gathering as many riches as he can carry.

But the Piper isn't having it. He grabs the rat by the tail -- bringing his rampage to an abrupt halt. The gold is not what they're there for.

In the middle of the room, sitting over a sacred sarcophagus, waiting for him just like the voice said, is a beautiful box, engraved with the most intricate carvings.

The Piper lifts the box from its glass casing and opens it to reveal a glinting gold amulet inside. A violent wind whips at his coat as he utters the fatal words inscribed upon it... breathing life back into a desiccated body of ancient Egypt.

Suddenly, the lid of gilded sarcophagus is pushed open from the inside -- the Mummy rises from his reviled prison!

Together, they make their way back to Storyville.

Under the Piper's command, the creature tears through the city like a bulldozer, destroying everything in his path with astounding force. Nothing can stand in his way!

Jumper, Lilah and Tucker scramble into action. They have to stop this terrifying monster before he demolishes Storyville! But how can they control a creature risen from the dead? Only the Pied Piper holds the answer...

Episode 3: Arachne

Today, the citizens of Storyville can breathe a little more easily -- the most powerful witch in existence, the Wicked Witch of the West, has finally been apprehended!

With another one of Storyville's most wanted behind bars, all is well as far as the people are concerned. But the SPD's job isn't done yet. Stowed away in her lair in the Dark Forest are her most potent magical potions, and they need to be disposed of.

A convoy of armoured trucks is dispatched. But as the vehicles make their way across Storyville, the road begins to shake violently. Suddenly, an army of vicious goblins attack the trucks like a swarm of angry ants, tearing at them with their razor sharp teeth.

A whisper came to Balor the Goblin King and told him of the convoy's passing to the minute. It spoke of a great power hidden within those armoured trucks... a power that could make him ruler of Storyville!

The SPD's officers fight back with great tenacity, but the monsters keep coming -- it's a vicious battle! The contents of those trucks must not fall into enemy hands.

Suddenly, the goblins' assault wanes and fizzles out -- *is it over?*

The officers don't hang around to find out. They have to get these potions to safety. Everyone climbs back into their trucks, pin the pedal and shoot out of there in the blink of an eye. But alas, as the last vehicle speeds off -- one barrel falls out!

It rolls down the hill, breaking apart as it goes... then -- SPLASHHHH! The barrel falls into a brook, emptying its toxic contents into the water.

Later that day, an innocent little spider goes down to the water's edge for a drink, oblivious to the invisible evil within. Minutes later, she starts to change.

The tiny spider burgeons into the most terrifying creature ever to walk the Earth... massive, colossal and brutal. Consumed by untold rage, the spider makes for Storyville.

The SPD's Sorcerers Division is dispatched... but their spells are powerless against the monster!

Jumper and his friends have no choice. They must seek the Wicked Witch's help.

But can she be trusted?

Episode 4: A Blast from the Past

The rumours of Utrek's return have spread like wildfire.

Emboldened by this news, villains of all kinds descend onto Storyville, attacking the city relentlessly from every imaginable direction.

The SPD reacts in kind. Chief Jimmy Jones dispatches all the men at his disposal.

The officers fight with great bravery and honour, but the evil ones show no signs of weakening and the offensives just keep coming. Jimmy's hand is forced -- he has to send out the Academy's cadets. Jumper, Lilah and Tucker lunge into the fray with zeal!

But even with everyone out on the field, the force is stretched to its limits... and things start looking awfully grim. Then, just when hope wears dangerously thin, a new hero presents himself... a masked vigilante -- Mr. Justice!

He promises to bring down the evil ones, to protect the people in their time of need.

Little do they know what his true intentions are,

For this mysterious savior is none other than Ferdinando Guiliermo III, the last leader of the fallen Order of the Guardians of the Tower. And he is here for one thing... to bring down the SPD and avenge all the Guardians they replaced!

Episode 5: The Invisible Cloak

Jealousy consumes the best of people, but when it takes over the worst... very bad things are set to happen.

Bart Knowles, the SPD's resident bully, is bursting with it.

Ever since Jumper and his annoying little friends apprehended Ferdinando Guiliermo III, everyone keeps harping on and on about how great they are... how their valometers will light up in no time... what great officers they will make... It's enough to make you sick!

Not even a home visit manages to put a smile on Bart's face. Green with envy, he spends his time complaining about life's unfairness. On and on he whines until his father, Adam Knowles, a pluri-decorated SPD officer, provides an easy solution -- get rid of Jumper once and for all!

Bart cannot believe his ears. His father always taught him to 'thrash' the competition but never to actually hurt anyone.

Adam reveals that he has always hated the Jones family, and this is the perfect time for the Knowles family to take over! Adam unravels his plan.

In the SPD's supply rooms, there is a hidden gem. One item that most people overlook -- an invisible cloak. Bart's eyes shine bright. He puts the pieces together before his father even finishes his sentence.

The next morning, a wave of crime grips the town. Through the night, Grandma's bakery was set on fire. The Elves' shoe shop was ransacked. Even some of the houses on Fairy Lane were destroyed!

The SPD's finest are quickly on the case, looking into every lead. Soon they are knocking at Jumper's door. The boy is arrested.

Evidence from the crime scenes all point to him as the culprit.

It's now up to Lilah and Tucker to unravel the web of lies and prove their friend innocent before it's too late.

Episode 6: Frankenstein's Secret Laboratory

Disgraced and shamed, Bart Knowles has turned into an outlaw. The SPD are hot on his tail, but he's managed to keep his head low and stay under their radar for the last few days. A voice has been looking out for him, guiding him to the best hiding places. But his luck has run out.

With police sirens blaring behind him, Bart rips through the Dark Forest, zigzagging wildly through the trees. Suddenly, his foot slips on the damp leaves and the evil boy comes crashing down. Suddenly, a trap door swings open beneath him. He hurtles down a secret passageway and drops like a sack of rotten potatoes right in the middle of Dr. Frankenstein's secret lab! He barely has time to blink before the SPD pour in after him, surrounding him from all sides. There's no escape.

Like a cornered rat, the boy lashes out fiercely. He grabs the nearest thing he can get his hands on to defend himself -- a blow torch. The officers try to run but it's too late. In a moment of mad desperation, the crazed Bart sets the place ablaze!

The flames consume the chemicals and spread within seconds. There's no time to react -- BOOM! The lab rises in an awful mushroom cloud of fire and smoke.

Everything is deathly still.

Then something moves under the mud. *Or is that the ground moving?* A creature rises from the wreckage... half human, half sludge. Bart has become the Golem!

With the ability to shape shift and mold himself into anyone and anything he wants, he heads towards Storyville with one thing on his mind -- vengeance.

Episode 7: Trail of Riddles

Over the years, in the name of all that is good, the Jones family managed to acquire an impressive list of worthy enemies.

But none loathes Jimmy and Gretel more than the Headless Horseman.

Once a great warrior, he was the Dark Lord's right hand, an ever present sentinel, ready to carry out his every command. He was the invincible Black Knight.

A spell protected him from any physical harm. But during the Great War, everything changed. In the midst of an epic battle, he and Jimmy came face to face. Their blades clashed, sparks flew! Everyone thought Jimmy was a dead man. But they were wrong.

Jimmy moved, quick as a viper, and sliced the Knight's head off!

Thus, he became the Headless Horseman.

Dreams of violent retribution have plagued his thoughts for years and years but Jimmy has always been too well protected to attack, constantly surrounded by officers!

Then a soft murmur from deep inside gives him the answer... old lady Gretel.

All he has to do is join forces with Stiltskin, the mischievous riddler, and kidnap her first. Then, using the trickster's twisted talents, they can leave a trail of clues for her dear husband to follow... and Jimmy will come right to them.

The Headless Horseman will barely need to lift a finger... and his two greatest foes will be at his mercy!

The next day, Gretel disappears. All that is left is a riddle!

Sergeant Storm implores Jimmy to give the SPD some time to investigate. They both know this is some kind of trap. Regardless, Jimmy won't wait another second.

He goes in search of his beloved...

But will Jimmy manage to save Gretel? And himself?

Episode 8: The Lost City of Atlantis

There's not a measly breeze blowing in the air... and yet Storyville's beautiful beaches have been getting pounded by waves for days on end. The seven seas are a flurry with excitement!

Below the water's shimmering surface, grand preparations are in full swing. It's the Great King Neptune's Birthday!

Merfolk young and old await this special day fervently each year, for their adored ruler always hosts a most splendid ball for all his loyal subjects to attend. There's food and drink to suit all tastes. There's dancing and games. But nothing is more eagerly anticipated than King Neptune's famous Spectacle of Illumination.

Using his mighty trident of power, forged from the rarest of the sea's precious hidden metals, he summons the lights of the oceans and creates the most dazzling display ever to be seen. It is a true testament to his greatness.

But alas, just two days before the joyous celebrations commence, tragedy strikes.

Neptune's trident is stolen!

The King turns to Jimmy and the SPD for help. He cannot appear before his people without his magical trident!

Immediately, Jimmy sends Officer Beast out to the underwater realm to look into the case. The top three trainees of the Academy are given the opportunity to join him. The valometers are inspected. Jumper, Lilah and Tucker pack their bags...

However, when they arrive on the scene, evidence starts pointing to a very ominous conclusion. Could the Dark Lord be behind this? They have two days to find out.

Episode 9: It came from Outer Space

Hold the presses! Today is a day that will go down in Storyville history. A UFO has crash landed on the outskirts of the city!

As efficient as ever, the officers of the SPD move in to secure the area within minutes, and not a second too soon! A huge crowd of curious onlookers is gathering fast.

Suddenly, the flying saucer's giant door lifts open and an injured alien tumbles out.

The creature apologizes profusely -- he didn't mean to make such a mess! Something went wrong with the ship and his controls short circuited. Unable to get the problem under control, it sent him hurtling down to Earth like a rock.

The officers slowly lower their guard. This guy seems friendly enough.

But before they can ask any more questions, the alien collapses without warning... and falls face first into the dirt. He needs medical attention!

Immediately, two officers step forward and volunteer to take him to hospital. There, Storyville's new guest is nursed back to health with great care.

But a whisper has brought news of the alien ship to the ears of the wicked Dr. Frankenstein. It tells him of the amazing technology waiting for him inside. With it, he could take over Storyville and bring its people to their knees!

Before anyone realises what's going on, the crazy scientist barges through. He takes over the space craft and hijacks its futuristic machinery for his own warped purposes.

The alien, thinking the SPD is deceiving him and trying to hold him against his will, blows his top, big time. He attacks Storyville, wreaking havoc!

Can Jumper and his friends stop him and Dr. Frankenstein in time?

Episode 10: The Tournament

Tensions are running at an all-time high in Storyville. Officer Beast, and Aladdin, the famed SPD secret agent, two of the city's bravest warriors, have gone missing.

The SPD searches high and low for their lost comrades. Following every possible lead, questioning citizens, interrogating and cross interrogating criminals. But they just keep hearing the same thing over and over -- no one knows anything... no one's seen anything.

It's like they just vanished into thin air!

Jumper, Lilah and Tucker are eager to join the investigation but Chief Jimmy will not allow trainees to get involved. That's until Lilah's father, Huwawa Tree, royal Guardian of the Cedar Forest, suffers the same fate.

Sergeant Storm warns the trio once more to respect their superiors and follow orders. But they can't stand back any longer. They're off on their own in no time flat.

Together, they uncover a trail of clues that leads them right into the evil throes of Count N. Grimm and his followers. This is the Dark Society.

Bent on overthrowing Utrek and taking his place as the Dark Lord, the Count has been rallying his own troops. To demonstrate his growing power and attract more villains to his cause, he has now come up with a most cruel exhibit -- the Grimm Tournament.

A series of bleak battles, Storyville's abducted heroes will be forced to fight to the death for their viewing pleasure!

And Grimm's new guests are just in time... for the games start tomorrow.

Episode 11: The Village on Glassy Mountain

After disobeying orders yet again, and saving three of Storyville's greatest heroes, Jumper, Lilah and Tucker are finally rookies!

But their celebrations are nipped right in the bud.

Sergeant Storm is at boiling point. Their blatant disregard of orders could put others in grave danger. It must be addressed! And there is only one way to do it...

The trio is shipped off to the desolate Glassy Mountains. As wild as they are beautiful, this is not the kind of place anyone would want to get lost in.

Their job is simple. All they have to do is man a simple outpost.

But when a little dwarf child pops up from the snow begging for their help, Jumper, Lilah and Tucker do not hesitate. They set off after him immediately!

On their journey, the child tells them of his people's great misfortune.

An evil tyrant has ransacked and taken over their village. He's enslaved the dwarfs, forcing them all to toil day and night, building massive machines that reach up into the sky.

What the giant mechanisms do? Nobody knows. But it can't be good!

They arrive to find the savage wolves, Dother and Dain, running the show. Could the Dark Lord be the evil tyrant the boy spoke of?

Jumper and his friends are desperate for answers. But first they must find a way to free the dwarf village.

Episode 12 & 13: Total Darkness

Cheerful music and celebrations are erupting from every corner of Storyville. The SPD's prisons are bursting at the seams with detained villains and criminals!

And that is cause for merriment like no other.

On the inside however, the atmosphere couldn't be more different. Bitter and resentful, the evil ones curse the Dark Lord for abandoning them. No one has seen or heard from him in years -- all those rumours were nothing but false hope! Utrek is no leader.

Just then, a spine-chilling stillness takes over the cells and that last phrase hangs in the air like some sacrilegious blasphemy.

Suddenly, the Dark Lord materializes before them in a smoldering curl of black smoke – Utrek is back!

Terror ravages through his wicked minions like the plague. Amused, he lets out a bloodcurdling laugh -- his plan has worked to perfection!

All those whispers. All those seemingly flawless plots that landed them in prison. They were all his doing... all pieces of the intricate puzzle.

And now it is time for the epic climax!

In one savage uprising, Utrek and his minions take the prison and transform it into a jaw-dropping laboratory. The goblins dig a tunnel deep into the ground, using it to transport the supplies and materials needed.

The jarring sounds of construction ring out into the night!

The SPD launch countless assaults. They try to infiltrate the prison -- even knock it down! But in vain. Their very own fortress has been turned against them.

Within those impenetrable walls, a massive shield takes shape.

Then one night... darkness takes over. The people of Storyville wait for morning light, but alas, it never comes. For Utrek's shield has blotted out the sun!

Now plunged in perpetual night, the city and the Book of Fables is his for the taking!

Season 3

Episode 1: The Cure

Utrek is finally gone for good, and times of peace reign yet again in Storyville. Its fairytale citizens couldn't be happier. But there are some who aren't so lucky...

Igor, now free from the oppression and control of Dr. Frankstein, finds himself at a loss. Eager to lead a normal life, he's trying to integrate into society once more. But alas, his deformed looks are making his life miserable!

People recoil at the sight of him. Doors are slammed in his face constantly. Some people are so scared, they scream and disappear faster than a lightning bolt.

This is not the life poor Igor dreamt of at all. He hates himself for being so wretched.

Desperate to improve his appearance, Igor tries every remedy he could think of.

Spells, potions and lotions... nothing has worked. Now it's time for more drastic measures.

His only hope is Dalian blood.

Residing on the Fiery Mountains of Khartumm, the Dalians are strange blob monsters who eat everything in their path. Their blood is said to be more potent than the sparkling water of the fabled Fountain of Youth! Determined, Igor travels into the treacherous dark lands. There, he captures a Dalian, and succeeds in bottling his precious cure!

His heart bursting with joy, Igor rises the next day a new man. His back is straight, his legs are long and lean... even his nose is the right size. The Dalian blood worked!

From then on, Igor changes his name and sets up his own practice in Storyville. Igor becomes the respectable Dr. Jekyll.

But it is not just Igor's outside that has changed. Something has begun to stir within him. An overwhelming, venomous anger. Dr. Jekyll becomes terribly impatient and short tempered. Anything and everything can set him off.

Then, one day, a naughty little dwarf boy's pranks push him one step too far.

Dr. Jekyll flies into an uncontrollable rage. His body contorts, and his muscles contract and grow. He turns into a monster -- Hyde!

Consumed by fury, he turns on the city that once didn't accept him. They will pay.

Episode 2: Goblin Gold!

Ever since Utrek's last vicious attack on Storyville, Balor the Goblin King and his people have not seen the light of day. Tired of Storyville and the trouble the SPD always

cause them, they have retreated underground, digging deep into the bowels of the Earth, expanding their city far and wide.

But one dreadful day, the goblins' luck changes dramatically.

A vicious gang of workers have made a most grim discovery -- a mysterious gas is trapped below their city. The gas is so toxic it could kill a hundred burly men within minutes!

With Utrek gone, King Balor considers the finding a sign. The time has come for the goblins to take over the world above! The next morning, Old King Cole receives a poisonous sample of the gas along with a dire threat; *hand over the keys to the city or we will unleash our new weapon onto the city of Storyville and no one will be spared.*

The SPD swarms Old King Cole's home. The fatal gas is contained and sent to the labs for analysis. But King Balor's warning rings loud and clear in the Mayor's ears.

Jumper and his friends step forward. They volunteer to go on a secret mission. Together, the trio will infiltrate goblin territory and diffuse the threat from the inside.

Old King Cole is terrified -- he refuses. He wants to hand over the keys!

Unwilling to listen to reason, the Mayor sets a day for the awful exchange, and Storyville prepares for the goblin occupation.

But Jumper, Lilah and Tucker will not allow it to happen. They go against the King's wishes and set off through the goblin tunnels.

Will they be able to stop the wicked goblins before it's too late?

Episode 3: The Leader

Storyville is crawling with brave SPD officers -- the Pied Piper has escaped from jail!

Chief Jimmy has his best men on the case. They have to find out how he managed to escape and reinforce their cells once and for all, before any of the other villains locked up inside start getting any nasty ideas.

In the midst of all the commotion, a string of small burglaries pass by unnoticed. People are too caught up in the goings on outside their homes to even realise!

That's until Storyville Bank is hit. Hard.

Jumper, Lilah and Tucker are assigned to investigate the heist. Now rookies in the force, their reputations are steadily growing. But so are their responsibilities.

The trio delves into the case. They follow every lead, question every bank employee, analyse all the surveillance tapes. But they keep coming up empty-handed every time.

The sour stench of failure breathes down their necks.

Then, the Pied Piper shows up on their doorstep. He knows who the Kingpins are!

When Skid the rat busted him out of the SPD prison, the two had a massive fight. Tired of the Piper's failures, the rat wanted to take over as leader of the duo. But when the Piper refused to stand down, Skid abandoned him and partnered up with Herbert the Crow, the carrier of souls to the Land of the Dead.

They're the ones behind all the thefts in Storyville!

Eager to settle his grudge, the Piper makes his offer. He will help them catch the criminals they so desperately seek, but first, Jumper and his friends have to convince Chief Jimmy to call off his dogs and let him be.

Can the Piper be trusted?

Episode 4: The Return of the Boogeyman

A heavy darkness hangs over Storyville. The city is unrecognizable.

Doors have been locked and windows have been boarded up. The sound of children's laughter is gone, and the ever present titter of music has fizzled. Even the gentle bird song from the trees has been snuffed out.

Instead, an eerie silence reigns. Storyville has become a ghost town.

It all started with sweet little Red Riding Hood. On her way home from her shift at Grandma's famous bakery, something terrible happened. She turned up at Storyville Hospital stiff as a board, eyes wide as saucers -- terrified. But soon after, more and more people started pouring in, all paralyzed by fear! Now, the wards are bursting at the seams.

An evil creature is slithering through the shadows. He's crawling under beds in the night, hiding in closets waiting for his prey to walk past. He's cloaked by the shadows, hungry to imbue all who see him with pure, undiluted horror.

Jumper and his friends are ready and rearing to go. After sorting out Skid and the Piper, this will be a cinch for the splendid trio.

And they already know who the culprit is.

The fear, the tricks, the terror... all evidence clearly points to one malicious harbinger of evil -- the Boogeyman!

But they soon find that things aren't as simple as they think. For the Boogeyman is firmly locked in the SPD's jail!

Or is he?

Episode 5: The Dark Society rides again!

The Mad Hatter is running amok in Storyville, creating chaos for his own twisted pleasure!

Belle, Officer Beast's beautiful wife, gets the worst of his crazed attention. The Mad Hatter breaks into her home and starts tearing the place to pieces!

Officer Beast goes after him. His shrill cackle pierces the air as he takes him on a wild chase through the Dark Forest!

They whizz through the trees like a blur until suddenly -- a tree crashes on top of Beast out of nowhere! The Mad Hatter disappears into the darkness, leaving Beast behind, trapped and unable to move.

With no other options left, he calls into the station for help.

Jumper, Lilah and Tucker are on it in a heartbeat. Within minutes, the trio are on the scene, and Officer Beast is pulled out from under the massive tree. Everything seems fine but Jumper can't help feel that something is a bit 'off'. Beast is poker faced and rigid. He barely talks to them on the way back to the station. He doesn't even ask about the wife he loves so dearly.

That's because the Mad Hatter's ruse was all part of Count N. Grimm's plan. Officer Beast is now hypnotized and under his control.

In his manipulated mind, there is one simple mission -- to steal the Book of Fables.

Will Jumper and his friends manage to stop him in time?

Episode 6: Revenge

Ever since his was hypnotized by Count N. Grimm, Officer Beast hasn't been the same. He's become distant and reserved, even cold.

Some worry he's still under Grimm's control, but that's not it at all.

In reality, Officer Beast blames himself for everything that happened. He believes that if he truly were of noble heart, he would have been able to withstand the dark magic the Count used to manipulate him.

Despite not having said anything about his feelings to anyone, everyone at the SPD, even Chief Jimmy, has assured him time and time again that there was nothing he could have done to fight the curse placed upon him. But Officer Beast just cannot forgive himself.

He quits the force!

From that day forward, Beast retreats into the confines of his castle.

He spends most of his time tucked away in the darkness of their library, reading and thinking in deep silence.

As time passes, the situation worsens. Beast refuses to see any of his friends. Belle tries to talk to her husband but even she can't get through to him.

Then one day, he disappears.

That same day, Count N. Grimm vanishes from the SPD's prisons.

The conclusion is obvious!

Jumper, Lilah and Tucker jump into action and go in search of Officer Beast. They have to stop him before he does something he'll regret!

Episode 7: Alice? Who on earth is Alice?

A gang of mischievous goblins are wreaking havoc all over Storyville! Breaking and entering, terrorizing people in the dead of night, stealing, starting fires.

But enough is enough. Jumper, Lilah and Tucker have tracked down the band of delinquents and are in hot pursuit, snapping at their heels on Geppetto's famous sliders!

Our heroes dart through narrow lanes and alleyways like speeding bullets. Then, out of nowhere a beautiful girl with golden hair steps into their path. Jumper veers violently, missing her by a whisker! But Tucker is too slow -- BLAMM! He slams right into her and sends her flying into the air.

Jumper swoops in just in time, catching her before she hits the ground.

The stunning girl stares at them with her huge doe eyes, seemingly unharmed. Tucker melts instantly. It's love at first sight.

But it's when he asks for her name that problems arise. The girl can't remember who she is! All she can remember is that she fell through a rabbit hole.

Lilah wants to take her to the infirmary, but that will land Tucker in deep trouble! They decide the best course of action will be to take her to the Academy and hide her in their room until they can formulate a better plan.

They couldn't be more wrong...

For this girl is no innocent. She is Alice... Captain Hook's daughter!

Will Jumper see through her lies? And can he lift the veil over Tucker's eyes before she destroys their friendship and Storyville?

Episode 8: The Dilemma

Serving time in jail isn't a mean feat for anyone. But for Bart Knowles, it's worse than hell.

As the Golem, he's the perfect partner in crime. All kinds of villains try to befriend him. They want the monster on their team to help them execute their plans. But Bart has no interest in that. All he wants to do is get out of jail and start his life over, good as new.

Having genuinely turned over a new leaf, Bart turns to the SPD for help. He undergoes intensive treatment, and does everything possible to reduce his sentence; study, clean, cook. Anything that can get him out of there sooner? He's all over it.

Now cured from being the Golem, the long awaited day has finally arrived!

Today is the day Bart walks out of that prison. Today, he is a free man once more.

But starting afresh is going to be a lot more difficult than he thought. Even though he paid his dues in prison, the people of Storyville have not forgotten the pain he once caused.

People shun him. Children point their fingers. Some shopkeepers won't even serve him. Poor Bart is driven to misery.

Then, one day, Utrek appears!

Bart tries to run but the Dark Lord merely wants to talk.

Utrek tells him he will not be accepted by these close-minded people. That they will never forgive him because they are unable of such a noble gesture. The only place he could be happy again is by his side... as the Golem.

The words bore deep into Bart's heart. Will he fall into Utrek's clutches once more?

Episode 9: The Return of Golem.

The SPD hyperlab is an astounding sight for the lucky few who ever get to behold it. It's a thriving hub for all things mechanical and technological.

Headed by the great weapons master Geppetto, the place runs like clockwork, every part in harmony with the other. Geppetto's dedication for his work is undisputed.

That's until a massive explosion rocks Storyville to its core!

The entire SPD hyperlab goes up in a massive ball of fire. Shrieking elves are trapped inside, unable to flee from the roaring flames.

The SPD jump into action. Elves are evacuated by the hundreds. But alas, it's not enough. Three elves die that day. And an investigation starts immediately to pin point the cause of the murderous blast. Evidence of gross negligence begins to emerge.

Dangerous exposed wiring, faulty equipment, hazardous chemicals, improper storage facilities... the list of horrors is endless! But how can this be?

Chief Jimmy refuses to believe the reports. He goes on the scene to see for himself. But the evidence is undeniable. Jimmy has no choice... Geppetto is arrested.

Now, with their weapons master gone, the SPD is weakened greatly. And that is exactly what Utrek wanted all along.

The Dark Lord pounces!

He sends Golem in his stead to rip through the city once more.

Jumper, Tucker and Lilah step forward. They know they can get Bart under control again. But they need their weapons master's help. The trio bust Geppetto out of jail!

Episode 10: The Bride of Frankenstein...

Despite being right about Geppetto's innocence, Jumper and his friends have suffered a major loss in their valometers since they broke him out of jail. But that's not all...

Opinions about their 'brash' methods differ, but Sergeant Storm's is definitely on the old school side. To teach them a lesson about the importance of order in SPD prisons, Sergeant Storm has them doing paperwork in the administration's office.

The highlight of their day is their sweep of the cells during the villains' lunch break. But they're not the only ones who are miserable.

Time and time again, the trio have to force Dr. Frankenstein out of his cell during meal times. The demented doctor has lost his appetite for everything. He can barely be bothered to eat! Without his experiments he's in a complete rut.

His loyal wife, Elizabeth visits every day. She does everything she can to cheer him up but for naught. Even with his birthday coming up in a few days, Frankenstein is so sad and depressed that he is unable to crack a smile.

Deeply concerned, Elizabeth racks her brains. She wants to get her hubby the best gift he could ever dream of and she knows exactly what it is. One thing that is sure to slap a massive grin on that gaunt face of his? The head of Jimmy Jones, Chief of the SPD.

Episode 11: The Illusionist

Chief Jimmy Jones' safe return to Storyville is greeted by delighted cheers all round. Good has triumphed over evil once more! This is a cause for celebration.

That night, a huge party goes off in Storyville Square, and everyone is there!

Music plays and children dance. People laugh and enjoy themselves. Even Gretel lets her hair down and allows Jumper lead her onto the dance floor.

But the hero of the night barely has the energy to twirl her around once or twice. Too tired to stay on his feet, Grandma Gretel urges Jumper to go rest.

But while he is snoring away in dream land, in a corner of the square, a mysterious figure in a midnight blue cloak is getting heaps of attention... a magician has come to town!

More and more people gather round to watch as he performs his tricks... making pretty flowers grow from empty pots, and conjuring stars to flit around little girls' heads. This mystifying illusionist is the life of the party!

His feats become bigger and bolder as the night progresses. Those who watch are enthralled. But not in a good way.

Suddenly, Jumper is awoken in the middle of the night by a chilling scream!

He scrambles out of bed and jams his head out the window to behold the most terrifying of sights. Utrek is standing in the middle of Storyville Square, surrounded by hypnotized slaves. The Dark Lord is back!

With his army behind him, Utrek makes for the Tower. The Book of Fables is within his grasp.

Episode 12/13: The Time Pirates

The great day has finally come. At long last, his precious valometer has finally lit up. Jumper Jones is officially a police officer of the legendary SPD! Grandpa Jimmy and Grandma Gretel couldn't be more proud.

Even Sergeant Storm has the hint of a smile on his face when he walks into the station for the first time in his uniform, ramrod straight and proud as can be.

But an almighty crash brings the pleasantries to an end. There is no time for pats on the back and congratulations -- Captain Hook and the Time Pirates have burst through a portal and are storming the Tower of Fables!

The Dark Lord Utrek made a deal with the pirates to steal the Book of Fables in return for free reign when he returns to his rightful place as ruler of Storyville.

Jumper and the entire SPD retaliate!

Blades clash, guns fire and punches fly. The pirates are vicious and hungry for blood!

Tucker's jaw drops as he spots Alice in the fray. Hook's daughter and a gorgeous spy, Alice had tricked him into telling her all the secrets of the Tower. This is all his fault!

Tucker attacks with great zeal, but Alice overpowers him with ease. He nearly gets himself killed. Shockingly, in the chaos, one of the lowly pirates grabs the Book of Fables.

Jumper and Lilah give chase!

Just as the pirates are about to disappear, the duo sneaks into the ship unnoticed! They climb onto the deck and try to regain control. But there's no way that's going to happen.

A terrifying battle breaks out -- the navigation system is destroyed!

The ship goes reeling into another dimension, to a time long thought lost.

Jumper, Lilah and the pirates are trapped in prehistoric times.

And now they have a bunch of big scaly problems added to their list -- dinosaurs!

Season 4

Episode 1: T-Rex!

Thick black jungle, razor sharp ravines and the most dangerous creatures in all existence hidden at every turn, Jumper and Lilah are neck deep in some serious trouble. After fighting the vicious Time Pirates, and regaining possession of the precious Book of Fables, the two are marooned on an unknown, inhospitable island in the middle of nowhere!

Exposed, injured, and utterly exhausted, only one goal propels them forward -- finding their way back Storyville.

But Utrek has other plans. He will never allow them to leave the island alive.

The powerful word weaver takes over the mind of the most dangerous beast on the island -- the ferocious Tyrannosaurus Rex!

With Utrek's murderous rage coursing through its veins, the gargantuan lizard rips through the island after its prey. Jumper and Lilah zip through the trees like lightning.

The ground quakes and cracks beneath the monster's massive feet. Suddenly, the ground tears open, sending them soaring through the air. Before they can scramble away, a dark shadow looms over... Utrek!

The wizard pries the Book of Fables from Jumper's hands and walks away without a word, leaving his rabid dino-puppet to finish them off.

With his last shred of energy, Jumper grabs Lilah's hand and leads her through the trees once more. His eyes lock on hers as they run. She understands.

The two burst out of the forest with the T-Rex hot on their heels, heading straight for the ravines. The jagged edge appears, rushing closer and closer, but Jumper and Lilah show no sign of slowing down. *What are they doing?*

BOOM! They dive into the emptiness.

T-Rex slams on the breaks, trying desperately to stop, but it's too late. The beast tumbles into the ravine with a searing roar!

Then we see it. Jumper and Lilah hang over the ravine, holding tight to a tree root for dear life. But they're not safe yet.

Hidden in ravine's shadows is Utrek. He's been watching their every move. Softly, he weaves his dark magic and the root starts to shrivel between Jumper's fingers. Then – BLAM! Something hits him hard over the head and drags him back into the darkness.

Episode 2: Cannibals

Hidden in the jungle's undergrowth, Jumper and Lilah take in the sight that would have the entire town of Storyville in fits. The Book of Fables wallows in a pool of mud.

But that's not nearly all. Mere feet away, cages filled with terrified Time Pirates abound. Then, right in the middle, surrounded by chanting men and women dressed in animal skins, bones and nightmarish masks, is the night's 'honoured' guest -- Utrek.

Bound, gagged and tied to a wooden post shoved firmly into the ground, he can do nothing but watch as the strange people make preparations.

For these are cannibals, and Utrek is their next meal!

Honing in on the perfect opportunity, Lilah and Jumper sneak into the camp. As agile as ever, they flit through without a sound, retrieving the Book of Fables within minutes. Only when Lilah returns to the safety of the jungle does she realize -- Jumper's not with her!

Her eyes fill with horror as she watches her friend free all their enemies from their trappings. Too noble to allow such a cruel fate befall even his worst enemy, he even approaches Utrek.

Just then, his luck runs out.

Realizing what's happening, the cannibals turn on him, teeth bared!

Jumper, Lilah, Utrek and the Time Pirates hurtle towards the ship. For the moment, alliances and grudges are forgotten. Everyone bands together, defending each other against the onslaught, but this once mighty vessel is going nowhere yet.

Engineers work at full speed ahead to repair the ship's last injuries from its momentous crash. Then as soon as the engines roar to life, Utrek betrays them all.

The Evil One snatches the Book of Fables from a distracted Lilah, weaves his words and sends them all flying off the side of the ship. With a shrill laugh, he makes his escape, leaving Jumper, Lilah and the Time Pirates to fight for their lives!

Episode 3: Dr. Moreau.

Jumper, Lilah and the Time Pirates rip through the jungle like the wind, barely looking at where they're going. A pack of rabid cannibals is hunting them down.

Suddenly, the sound of rushing water fills their ears – a river.

Jimmy leads them on until the sound of splashing waves turns into a deafening roar.

Suddenly, the trees fall away and there, stretching before them in all its jaw-dropping glory, is a gigantic waterfall of epic proportions.

With the cannibals right behind them and nowhere else to turn, Jumper, Lilah and the Time Pirates go flying over the edge.

Fear floods their pursuers' faces. They will not follow there.

Unaware of lurking danger, Captain Hook, the most ruthless pirate of them all, orders his troops to set up camp. They need get to work on a new time machine. Now!

But before he bark his orders, the group is attacked by a new enemy. Half men, half beasts, they are the disturbing products of one man's crazy experiments – Dr. Moreau.

The eerie creatures drag the prisoners back to their master's compound.

Always in need of new test subjects, the mad doctor is ecstatic with this quarry. Moreau rewards his helpers with a painful crack of his whip at their heels as they run to hide.

As he prepares for his next twisted 'merging', Jumper slowly frees himself from his restraints. But before he can help his friends, Moreau catches him in the act!

Jumper manages to escape the compound, but two of Moreau's biggest brutes, Zero and Braxx are after him!

Too exhausted to run any longer, Jumper's legs begin to fail him. Then, just as the half-breeds are about to knock him out, a massive anaconda bursts out of the nearby swamp and grabs Zero.

Braxx bolts faster than a speeding bullet, but the valiant Jumper won't abandon the poor creature. Brave unlike any other, he saves Zero from the massive snake, showing him the first act of kindness he has ever witnessed since Moreau turned him into the creature he is now. In that moment, something changes in Zero. He extends his hand and utters his first words to Jumper. He will help him rescue his friends.

Episode 4: Rebellion.

The jarring sounds of machinery and bloodcurdling screams pervade Dr. Moreau's compound. The mad doctor's warped experiments now have a new focus -- the Time Pirates.

But their fates are not made yet, for outside this factory of nightmares are Jumper and his new ally, Zero. Options are weighed. Resources are rallied. A plan is formed.

The two infiltrate the compound. Knowing the place like the back of his hand, Zero leads them to the laboratory cells on the south side. Immediately, Jumper leaps in, freeing Lilah and the Time Pirates without hesitation.

Little does he know, Moreau's claws have dug deep into some.

Brainwashed into unquestioning loyalty, two pirates raise the alarm!

Moreau's beasts descend upon them with blinding force. Jumper and Zero don't stand a chance against their numbers. Within minutes, they too are sitting at the bottom of a cell.

Knowing that there's only one thing left to do, Zero turns to his brothers, appealing to them with a truth they cannot deny -- Moreau's monstrosities cannot be allowed to continue!

Terror registers. Some turn away. But Zero's words sink in. The brutal treatment they suffered at the hands of their master bubbles to the surface. Fear gives way to defiance.

With great courage Zero and his brothers go after Moreau and chase him away!

By the time they return, Jumper, Lilah and the Time Pirates have agreed on their next move. They need to build a new time machine and track down Utrek. With the Book of Fables in his hands there's no telling what evil will befall the world.

Grateful for their newfound freedom, Zero and the others agree to help. Moreau's laboratory is theirs for the taking.

Day and night, they toil on their new machine. With the tools at their disposal, it comes together beautifully. Then when it's finally finished -- disaster strikes.

Dr. Moreau returns!

With a vile army of corrupt creatures behind him, he storms the compound. Both sides clash with unbridled force. A punishing battle erupts.

Jumper, Lilah and the Time Pirates fight valiantly, but even Zero and his brothers cannot hold them back. Moreau's new servants are stronger than any before them.

Knowing they will not be able to resist much longer, Zero urges our heroes to leave. Jumper refuses, but one by one, their comrades drop like flies. Soon, they're left with no other choice. Lilah drags him away into the machine.

The Time Pirates furiously set their course. But before they can go... BOOM! They take a direct hit! The time machine screams in protest and starts reeling, spiraling wildly out of control. Then, suddenly, it disappears, vanishing into another dimension.

Episode 5: Mars.

Pieces of wreckage litter the fiery red ground. What's left of the time machine sits still in a six foot deep hole. Everything is still. Suddenly, the mangled door bursts wide open and out crawls Jumper, with Lilah close behind, followed by the Time Pirates. One by one, their mouths drop to the ground as they climb out and scan their surroundings.

They're certainly not on the island anymore. They're not in Storyville either. They're on Mars!

But they're not the only ones. Ululating battle cries rise up over the hill in front of them. Against all logic, Jumper rushes towards it.

When he reaches the top, his eyes take in the most shocking of sights.

A battle of epic proportions rages on in the chasm below. Two massive armies the likes of which have never been seen before clash in one massive surge – on one side, battalions of super-advanced beast droids, on the other a militia of humanoid aliens. Before he knows it, Lilah is dragging him away from the edge. They have to get out of there!

Only one problem. The time machine's energy generator is fried.

All seems lost. Where, in a desolate, barren planet such as this one, could they possibly find a powerful piece of hardware that will give their machine the juice it needs to take them home?

A smile crawls its way across Jumper's face, turning into a massive grin. Lilah catches the crazy look in his eye, but her protests are futile. He runs back to the chasm's edge, pointing excitedly -- they have to bring down one of the robots!

And the only way to do that is to join the alien war.

Episode 6: Utrekville.

Jumper and Lilah have finally made their way back home -- they're in Storyville at last! But this isn't the Storyville they left behind... not by a long shot.

A cold fog hangs heavy in the air. The sky is grey and so are the trees. Something is wrong. Suddenly, Snow White appears before them, blocking the way. One by one, the dwarves join her. Insanely relieved at the sight of them, Lilah rushes forward. The dwarves welcome her with picks and shovels raised. Something is very wrong.

Jumper takes Lilah's hand, pulls her into a side street and bounds towards the main square. There, Jumper finally lays eyes on the truth. Up in the Tower of Fables is Utrek... and he has the Book of Fables!

Immediately, everything falls into place. Utrek has taken over their beloved city and everyone in it. Before they can wrap their heads around it all, a familiar voice rings out behind them... Bart Knowles, the new chief of the corrupt SPD.

A huge grin rips its way across his face. Now, it's his chance to settle old scores.

Unarmed against the troop of dastardly turncoats, Jumper and Lilah take the smart way out of this predicament. They turn on their heels and make a run for it.

The pair goes into hiding in the dark, dank caves of Salisa Minor and start working on a plan of attack. Only the caves are not as deserted as they thought.

In the dead of night, villains of old come slinking out of the shadows. But these once loyal henchmen are not here on Utrek's behalf -- they've been thrown into exile!

With the Book of Fables in his possession, the Evil One became more ruthless than ever before. Mistakes were no longer tolerated. Those who failed him have been cast off, replaced by the corrupt SPD officers who betrayed the people of Storyville.

Now, the cells of the SPD prison that once held criminals are packed with those descending from the Old World, those on whom the Book of Fables holds no power. Instead of killing those who refused to back down, he's now keeping them for one gruesome finale.

The enormity of the events hits Jumper. He must act before it is too late.

The Headless Horseman, the wolf brothers Dother and Dain, Golem, Dr. Frankenstein and Count N. Grimm step forward. They want to help Jumper and see Utrek burn!

But can Jimmy trust the monsters who once hunted him and his friends?

Episode 7: Return to the Secret Grove.

Jumper, Lilah and their new evil allies are too small in numbers to take on Utrek, the crooked SPD and Storyville's puppet citizens. They need a new plan.

With Lilah's help and his inside knowledge of the SPD prison, Jumper manages to sneak inside -- Grandpa Jimmy will know what to do.

But alas, the joy of seeing his family again is stabbed with a terrible discovery.

While Jumper was gone, Jimmy fell terribly sick. Now in this squalid cell block, his condition is worsening by the minute. He doesn't have much time left.

Barely able to keep his eyes open, the old man tells his grandson he must build an "army". But Jumper fails to understand. There aren't nearly enough from the Old World to

take on Utrek and his forces. A shaking Jimmy reaches for his chest and pulls out an old key. Jumper recognises it immediately. It's the key Rupert the Elf used to steal the map to the Secret Grove when he was a rookie – Jumper finally understands!

The army his grandfather speaks of is a brand new one from the wood of the enchanted trees in the Secret Grove. Utrek will have no power over of them.

Jumper leaps into action. But as he sneaks through the streets of Storyville back to the caves, it hits him -- he can't share information on the Secret Grove with Storyville's sworn enemies. With it, they could raise Storyville to the ground some day!

Jumper struggles with his dilemma. But his choices are limited to one. There's no way he and Lilah could pull this off by themselves. A plan is hatched.

With Lilah and the wolf brothers burning down houses on one side, and the Headless Horseman, the Golem and Dr. Frankenstein wreaking havoc on the other, Storyville is plunged into deliberate chaos. As predicted, the SPD react, leaving the entire station unmanned, giving Jumper and Count N. Grimm the window of opportunity they've been waiting for. Together, the two break into Geppetto's laboratory.

There, Geppetto and his elves are waiting. Under the influence of the Book of Fables, they attack! Using his powers, Grimm subdues them, giving Jumper time to retrieve the coveted map. But the moment his fingers wrap around the parchment – the alarm blares!

Finally, the truth is revealed. Grimm never had any intention of helping Jumper. All he wants is to hand him over to Utrek and regain a place by his master's side once more.

But Jumper cannot allow the map to the Secret Grove to fall into enemy hands. Against all odds, he turns Geppetto and his elves on Grimm and makes a break for freedom.

But his friends are not so lucky. Lilah, the wolves, Dr. Frankenstein, the Headless Horseman and the Golem are brought down by the ruthless SPD.

Jumper is the only one left.

Episode 8: The Hunt.

All his allies have been captured. All his friends have been thrown into the deepest, darkest cells in the SPD prisons. There's only one man left standing now. And that is Jumper Jones -- Storyville's last hope.

But not everyone has faith in his abilities. Deemed nothing but a nuisance, Utrek won't waste his precious time and energy hunting him down. Instead, he sends his SPD cronies after him. Jumper Jones is on the run.

But with Bart Knowles leading this hunt, no matter how fast, or how far, Jumper goes, his enemies are always hot on his heels. Having had the same training, he possesses all of his opponent's skills.

Every turn is predicted. Every move anticipated. Jumper's training has been turned against him -- there is no escape.

Growing weak, Jumper knows he can't keep running. He has to do something big... something they will never expect. He challenges Bart to a battle for the SPD!

Too proud to ever turn down a direct challenge, Bart agrees.

Everything is at stake now. If Jumper fails, Storyville will fall.

Episode 9: The Secret Grove.

Jumper lies bloodied and bruised in a heap on the forest floor. Bart Knowles looms over him, eyes wild with long-harboured rage. He's finally killed his competition... or so he thinks.

Blinded by pride, he doesn't doubt his capabilities for a moment. Without a second thought, he turns his back on his arch-enemy and leaves him for dead.

Only when they disappear over the hill, Jumper rouses... his trick worked! With Bart off his back, the path is finally clear for him to make his way to the Secret Grove.

With his priceless map held safely to his chest, Jumper braves the most rugged terrain he has ever endured. From the deathly cold Whispering Woods, to the perilous mountains of Khartumm and beyond. There is no easy path to the Secret Grove.

But there is worse yet to come. Because when he finally reaches his destination, he realises... his problems haven't even started yet.

For unbeknownst to him, the Secret Grove is protected by the Guardians of the Forest -- strong, powerful female warriors. And they are not letting him getting anywhere near their precious trees.

Episode 10: The Nightmare.

Utrek stands in the darkness, engulfed by deep sinister shadows, lost in nothingness. But he's not alone. Whispers, gentle and fleeting, float through the emptiness. Then out of nowhere, his sister Maliora's ghost appears!

Utrek tries to weave his words against her but they fall dead. Powerless. Fear racks his eyes, but Maliora makes no move to hurt him. She has come to bestow one last warning upon her beloved brother. She urges him to make the right choice and find it in his heart to repent, for a great army is marching upon him and no walls, no matter how thick and strong, will hold them back. They will crush him... destroy him... obliterate him!

Utrek screams bloody murder, then -- BLAM! He wakes up. It was nothing but a dream. Or was it?

The Evil One goes to the Mirror of Magic and orders him to reveal this great army. And there, marching through the mountains, is Jumper with thousands of wooden soldiers behind him.

Panic rising in his throat, Utrek calls for his Generals... but none respond -- he's exiled them all!

Utrek grabs the Book of Fables and does his worst, but with no fairytale written about them in the book, its magic is powerless against them!

Unable to stop them, Jumper and his army storm the SPD and its prison. Caught by surprise, Bart Knowles and his cronies brought down.

Tears of joy flow like rivers as families and friends are reunited once more. But while the battle may have been won, the war is far from over. For in Geppetto's secret lab, Bart is rallying his troops once more. Armed by Geppetto and his elves, they're going to show the people of Storyville what a real army can do.

Episode 11: The battle of the Blue Valley.

A brutal war has erupted, and the lands of Storyville are awash in chaos.

Corrupt SPD agents clash against a steadfast army of wooden soldiers from the Secret Grove with unrestrained force. In the middle of it all, their leaders, Bart Knowles and Jumper Jones, tear into each other with great ferocity, every past grudge dredged up and laid bare.

Lilah, Tucker and the rest of the town's citizens join the battle. Blows are traded, swords come down, men fall.

Unable to keep up with the onslaught, Bart's cronies start to struggle -- good prevails and Jumper's army takes the upper hand! But not for long. Watching the events unfold from the topmost chamber of the Tower of Fables is the Dark Lord -- Utrek!

Eyes narrowed into dangerous slits, but still deadly calm, he takes the Book of Fables into his hands and starts writing. Suddenly, a deafening roar erupts from behind him, shaking the Tower itself -- a clan of fire-breathing dragons rises like a vision from hell!

The beasts hurtle towards the battle at lightning speed, their leathery wings pushing them through the air like scaly angels of death. Before they realise what's happening, Jumper's Secret Grove soldiers go up in raging flames...

All seems lost as the entire army is reduced to a soldering pile of ashes, but Jumper is not done yet. Wading through the sea of people, he makes his way to his old friend Tucker -- he wants him to turn into an elephant!

Without a second's delay, Tucker does as he is told. Using his trunk, he starts putting out as many of the remaining soldiers as he can. But the danger is far from over.

The mighty dragons must be stopped.

Episode 12/13: The fall of Utrek.

Bart Knowles' corrupt SPD forces have been brought down. Fire breathing dragons have been subdued. And against all odds, Jumper's formidable army still stands. Now there is only one thing standing in the way of Storyville and peace -- Utrek himself!

With that truth, Jumper rallies his forces.

They march onto Utrekville to reclaim their precious city! But despite losing all his evil allies, Utrek is far from defenseless. With one last bullet in his arsenal, the wizard has been saving the best for last.

With the Book of Fables firmly in front of him, he uses its immense power to assemble the last army he will ever need, one that will render his enemies powerless in its wake -- one made up of the entire magical population of Storyville!

Unable to control their own actions Geppetto, Peter Pan, Snow White and countless others launch a violent attack.

Shocked to the core, Jumper, Lilah, Tucker and the rest of Storyville's defenders are pummeled by their ravaging onslaught -- but they cannot fight back. No matter what, they cannot hurt their friends! Retreat is their only choice. But the war is far from over.

Backed into a corner, Jumper, Lilah and Tucker now know what they have to do. They must retrieve to Book of Fables and bring down the evil Utrek themselves.

ONCE UPON A CRIME

"THE RUN"

ACT ONE

FADE UP:

EXTREME CLOSE UP: A PAIR OF BLOOD RED EYES.

Focussed. Lacking any humanity -- pure evil!

WIDEN to find that those monstrous eyes belong to UTREK, the darkest and vilest of word weavers.

Utrek unleashes a wicked smile...

UTREK

The Age of Hope is over. Chaos
will reign tonight. A new order
will rise.

A HEAVY NIGHT MIST swirls around him. Utrek stands on top of a CLIFF overlooking a MAJESTIC CITY below -- this is a place of wonder, known to us all as Storyville! Smack in the middle is the legendary TOWER OF FABLES -- imposing -- about 40 stories high...

Behind him: A low disturbing GROWL... Then: TWO ENORMOUS BLACK WOLVES, slink out of the shadows -- baring their malefic fangs. Meet DAIN and DOTHER -- sinister servants of darkness.

UTREK (CONT'D)

Go now, my trusted minions.
Deliver my greetings.

DAIN

We will not fail you.

DOTHER

The Book of Fables will be
yours!

UTREK

(hissing)
Return to me victorious!

The menacing wolves BOLT... charging down the face of the cliff --

CUT TO:

EXT. THE WHISPERING WOODS - NIGHT

A pregnant moon hangs over these picturesque woods.

All seems quiet and peaceful -- just a faint sound of SNORING!

Then: The ground TREMBLES. *Something is approaching fast!*

EYES snap open! The TREES in this part are not your average kind of trees. They are of the magical kind. They have EYES, EARS and MOUTHS. They are called WISTFULS.

WISTFUL #1
(panicked)
What was that?

Fear grows! TWO MASSIVE SHAPES move through the air...

WISTFUL #2
(hyperventilating)
I don't know! But it doesn't sound good!

Dain and Dother rip through the woods at lightning speed... The Wistfuls become hysterical!

WISTFUL #1
(terror stricken)
Oh My.. Oh My! The wolves!

WISTFUL #3
We're under attack.

Wistful #2 turns to Wistful #1.

WISTFUL #2
Do something!

WISTFUL #1
Why me?

WISTFUL #3
You're the eldest!

WISTFUL #1
Oh... right!

Wistful #1 lets loose a terrible SCREAM -- ITS ANGUISH RINGS through the night!

The others join in!

Dain stops dead in his tracks. Turns round -- a deadly GROWL rises... sharp teeth gleaming... ready to spring!

DAIN
Who dares defy me?

The Wistfuls' screams are abruptly choked off, leaving nothing but disturbing silence.

DAIN (CONT'D)
You!

Wistful #1 is petrified -- looks around. The others pretend to be asleep.

WISTFUL #1
Who? Me?

DAIN
One more sound from you and
I'll...

Dain is now inches away from his face, flashing his teeth
-- glaring threateningly.

WISTFUL #1
Got the message! Loud and clear.
No more sounds... NOTHING! Not
from me. For sure. I am closing
my eyes. Here you go. You see. I
closed my eyes. Good night...

Satisfied, Dain leaps away and disappears into the
darkness.

Wistful #1 breathes a deep SIGH of relief.

Wistful #2 opens his eyes --

WISTFUL #2
Coward!

CUT TO:

The wolves blast through like the devil himself...
flattening foliage, crushing anything that stands in
their way. They finally lunge out of the woods and splash
across the river... towards the fields...

DOTHER
Hurry, brother.

CUT TO:

EXT. STORYVILLE - STREET - CONTINUOUS

Dain and Dother -- saliva dripping from wild, snapping
jaws -- fly dangerously through the streets...

-- SCARED CATS FLEE in all directions -- hiding in post
boxes and under pots.

-- HUMPTY DUMPTY is fast asleep... the earth shakes. His
eyes pop open -- *What's going on?* He sees the two wolves
thrashing towards him... a muted SCREAM. He panics...
topples over but manages to hold on miraculously with one
hand...

The wolves vanish into the night.

HUMPTY DUMPTY
Help! Someone help me! Please!

But no help comes... he's all alone.

CUT TO:

Dain and Dother push straight towards the Tower of
Fables.

INT. TOWER OF FABLES - CONTINUOUS

A LOUD KNOCK! The door rattles on its hinges. Then another KNOCK.

A SLEEPY GNOME, one of the librarians in this place, approaches the closed door. Groggily, he peers out of the PEEPHOLE. His eyes widen. A flash of panic -- but no time to react!

The door SMASHES INWARDS, torn from the hinges... flattening the poor gnome.

Dain and Dother crash through like irate bulls... grinning malevolently. Lips curling! They move inside this impressive building -- run up a staircase...

We're in a large ROTUNDA-SHAPED LIBRARY -- rows upon rows of bookshelves, extending from floor to ceiling. Scrolls and books of all shapes and sizes are stacked away perfectly like one glorious puzzle.

The wolves disappear from sight as they keep climbing up, and up, and up...

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP:

CLAYGAS, the Chief Librarian -- bespectacled, cute -- looks straight at us, unflinching!

CLAYGAS

You will not touch that Book!

A massive shadow looms over his face...

WIDEN to reveal that Claygas is nothing but a puny worm. Dain and Dother tower over the miniscule creature. They burst into a fit of laughter -- a hideous cackle that echoes around the room.

CLAYGAS (CONT'D)

I said you will not touch that book!

DOTHER

And who's going to stop us? You? A bookworm?

The wolves laugh louder! Maniacally!

They move towards the centre of the room -- Dain is hypnotized by the BOOK OF FABLES in front of him... a beautiful volume etched with the finest of gold.

DAIN

So this is it... The famous Book that can change our fortunes.

He grabs the Book from the LECTERN.

CLAYGAS
I warned you...

A proud defiance blazes in Claygas' eyes. He hits RED A
BUTTON.

An alarm SCREAMS! Red, strobing emergency.

The wolves look around in mounting panic.

DOTHER
What's this?

CLAYGAS
This is the end, my friend! The
end!

The wolves share a look -- puzzled!

Then: GLASS SHATTERS... In the blink of an eye: TWO
UNIFORMED MEN, hardware cocked and ready, burst through
the windows on a SLIDER! (A FLYING SKATEBOARD)

THIS IS THE NEWLY FORMED STORYVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT.
They're so cool! -- James Bond cool!

JIMMY JONES and SERGEANT STORM -- young, dashing --
chiselled faces -- real heroes.

Dother grimaces...

DOTHER
Dinner is served, brother!

The wolves laugh as their bodies crouch, ready to spring.

Jimmy and Storm exchange a smile as they too shift
stance... readying for a fight.

JIMMY JONES
Shall we introduce ourselves?

INT. TOWER OF FABLES - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

We're just outside the door...

The SOUND of a FEROCIOUS BATTLE rises. SMASH! CRASH!
BOOM! The wolves HOWL in agony!

Then: A terrified Dother scampers out of the room,
crashing into the wall -- picks himself up and tears down
the corridor...

EXT. TOWER OF FABLES - NIGHT

Claygas is all satisfied and smug.

CLAYGAS
Nice work, guys. You saved us
all.

JIMMY JONES
Just doing our job.

Storm secures Dain... tightening the rope around the bewildered wolf.

JIMMY JONES (CONT'D)
I'll get the other one...

Jimmy grabs his slider... leaps out of the window... We FOLLOW -- dropping sharply... UNTIL: The jets on his slider kick in... *This is awesome!*

Jimmy dashes through the air like a speeding bullet -- pushes straight towards Dother.

Race on.

Dother zigzags through the streets, trying to shake Jimmy off his tail... IMPOSSIBLE! This policeman will not let go!

CUT TO:

Humpty Dumpty finally heaves himself up onto the wall with some difficulty. He settles in once more... Then: the ground starts to shake... AGAIN!

He looks around, panicked -- NOTHING! Then: Dother jumps up onto the wall next to him. Humpty Dumpty is paralyzed with fear. The wolf's breath ruffles his hair. Humpty Dumpty -- hyperventilating! Dother sniggers... glares at the incoming policeman -- kicks Humpty Dumpty who sails into a sickening spin.

Dother flees in the opposite direction.

Jimmy forgets about Dother and dashes after Humpty Dumpty who is YELLING like a crazed Banshee. Jimmy snatches the poor fellow up, mere inches away from the hard ground!

Jimmy puts Humpty Dumpty down safely on the grass...

HUMPTY DUMPTY
You saved my life!

JIMMY JONES
We're here to serve and protect!

Jimmy gives him a big smile... darts away... produces a lasso... he's ready to put an end to this!

CUT TO:

EXT. PLUSH HILLS - NIGHT

Dother, exhausted, trips and rolls down the hill uncontrollably...

EXT. THE WHISPERING WOODS - LATER

The Wistfuls are fast asleep. Suddenly, Dother bursts through and CRASHES heavily into one of them.

WISTFUL #1
I wasn't making any noises...
like I promised. I slept. That's
what I did. The others can vouch
for me.

WISTFUL #2
(whispering)
Coward.

WISTFUL #1
I'm not a coward.

Dother is dazed...

DOTHER
Shut up!

WISTFUL #1
Yes sure... as you wish. Of
course. I will shut up... see,
I'm closing my mouth... not a
word. Nothing!

Dother GROWLS VICIOUSLY...

All goes silent... Dother looks around, sniffs the air...
NOTHING! He feels safe...

He turns around to move away -- BAM! Something YANKS him
out of frame at an unnatural angle. AAAHHHHHH!

SMASH CUT TO:

A HEADLINE flashes before our eyes, displaying an
accompanying photograph.

"SPD - NEW HEROES IN TOWN!"

PHOTO: Our champions, Jimmy and Storm, strike a victory
pose. Beside them, the wolves -- tied up like cattle at a
rodeo, stare at the lens in shock.

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
And that how it all began. When
two brave men decided to stand
up against the forces of chaos
and evil.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - NIGHT

Lightning FLASHES. Thunder BOOMS.

A huge scary fortress looms over a jagged mountainside...

UTREK (V.O.)
Nooooooooo!!!!

INT. UTREK'S FORTRESS - NIGHT

Utrek stands over a bubbling cauldron. He throws in some horrid ingredients...

UTREK
I will have my revenge.

The cauldron glows and sparks. He utters some words in an unspeakable language...

UTREK (CONT'D)
North Wind... heed my call...
rally my troops. A war is about
to commence!

An eerie wind WHOOSHES through this dark room... Utrek raises his arms -- the wind blows harder!

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. STORYVILLE - TRAINING GROUNDS - DAY / NIGHT

SERIES OF CUTS: Dwarfs, gnomes, fairies, talking animals and fairytale heroes (all in fatigues) are busy training -- running, jumping, working their way through an obstacle course.

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
Soon the ranks of the Storyville
Police Department swelled with
valiant souls...

SERIES OF CUTS: A blueprint is placed on a table... ELVES are frantically building weapons and machines... testing equipment!

SERIES OF CUTS: The SPD cadets are still training on the shooting range...

JUMPER JONES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
My grandfather and his friends
toiled day and night... to ready
their troops.

GRETEL, a beautiful girl, is amongst the new recruits. Jimmy shows her how to use the new GATLING GUN. She learns quickly... her shooting skills are impressive. *We immediately know that something is going on between these two...*

But some of the cadets are quite clumsy. A DWARF FIRES A BAZOOKA -- the recoil sends him flying backwards...

Sergeant Storm covers his eyes in despair --

Jimmy stands before the recruits...

JIMMY JONES
In this battle, we will be
knocked down again and again.

But we will never give up.
Instead, we will always get up!

A loud CHEER. The sound is deafening!

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. GNOME VILLAGE - DAY

SCREAMING GNOMES -- WHOLE FAMILIES... RUN from their MUSHROOM HOMES, pursued by AN ARMY OF HIDEOUS NAMELESS MONSTERS.

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
And when the forces of Darkness
made their move...

Utrek, oozing power, looms over the field of battle...

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP:

Jimmy holds aloft the greatest of all SWORDS: EXCALIBUR!

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
The SPD answered in kind...

With desperate courage, Jimmy leads a charge... SPD officers attack the enemy...

JIMMY JONES
For our survival!

SMASH CUT TO:

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE MONTAGE:

HEADLINES flash before us, displaying their accompanying photographs.

"UTREK IS FINALLY DEFEATED!"

PHOTO: Wideshot of the valiant officers of the SPD. Jimmy Jones stands proudly in the middle. Beside him are Gretel, Sergeant Storm and Geppetto.

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
It was an astounding victory.
Utrek and his minions ended
behind bars... unable to bring
misery to the good people of
Storyville...

Various images start to flash by even quicker, each showing Utrek's humiliating defeat and capture.

We ZOOM IN to the last headline.

"STORYVILLE IS FINALLY SAFE!"

PHOTO: A huge celebration. Classic fairytale characters in a festive mode. Jimmy and Gretel kissing! This image reminds of the famous "kissing the war goodbye" picture.

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
Years of peace and prosperity
followed.

"CHIEF OF POLICE MARRIES OFFICER GRETEL."

PHOTO: Typical wedding photo with all our heroes smiling widely at the lens.

FADE TO
BLACK.

ON BLACK:

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
But one cruel day, the
impossible happened...

FADE FROM
BLACK:

INT. PRISON - CELL - NIGHT

An empty cell...

TWO PRISON GUARDS stare incredulously... mouths agape!

A long beat.

PRISON GUARD #1
This is impossible!

Prison Guard #2 picks up the manacles from the ground...

PRISON GUARD #2
Raise the alarm... Quick!

Prison Guard #1 produces a wooden baton and hits Prison Guard #2 over the head... dropping him like a rotten apple.

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
An ally betrayed the cause.

Utrek materializes before our eyes. Prison Guard #1 bows respectfully.

PRISON GUARD #1
Master.

UTREK
You did well. But I don't need
you anymore...

Utrek -- eyes like those of an executioner -- acutely controlled -- speaks in a language we do not understand... hurls balls of fire at the guard... incinerating him!

INT. PRISON - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Utrek walks down the corridor...

Cell doors open behind him... his minions emerge... FREE!

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
Another cruel war erupted.

FADE FROM
BLACK:

ON BLACK:

The thunder and fracas of a battle in progress.

CUT TO:

EXT. PRISON - DAY

A PLATOON OF OFFICERS on sliders fly towards the prison.
The leader is a young dashing lad by the name of Junior
Jones...

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
This time it was my father who
led the brave officers into
battle.

ANGLE ON UTREK.

The vile word weaver realises that he's losing the
battle. One by one, his minions are captured...

A few flee -- what follows is a mass exodus!

The SPD officers are everywhere... closing in...

Fury mounts.

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
Evil was vanquished once again.

Utrek punches an SPD OFFICER and hurls him away. He
raises his arms and shoots BALLS OF FIRE at the enemy.
The SPD respond, using their protective shields...

Utrek is surrounded... he SCREAMS and disappears before
our eyes in a white nova blast of fire.

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
My father, just like his father
before him, was hailed as the
savior of Storyville!

CUT TO:

EXT. STORYVILLE - HOUSE OF JUNIOR JONES - NIGHT

Moonlight glistens on frost-laden branches. Right in
front of us: A beautiful, well-kept mansion!

We PUSH in, across the street, past the gate... across the lawn and stop next to a cute SNOWMAN...

We can hear LAUGHTER from inside the house...

Suddenly, the snowman comes to life... moves a few steps towards the house -- snow melts quickly to reveal -- Utrek.

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
But after the celebrations
quietened down...

A cold wind blows... the bell RINGS...

A BEAT.

JUMPER JONES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...something horrible took
place.

The door opens... AN ATTRACTIVE WOMAN appears -- a smile to die for... ALL CHANGES QUICKLY! Her eyes widen with fear... she SCREAMS -- slams the door... runs back inside... too late!

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN (O.S.)
Junior! Junior...

Utrek walks up the steps... uses his powers to open the door and enters into the house...

GLASS SHATTERING... BABY CRYING! The wind WHIPS the door.

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
Help arrived too late...

Lightning in the distance!

CUT TO:

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE:

"STORYVILLE HERO IS KILLED."

PHOTO: Gretel and Jimmy, heartbroken, stand in front of two graves. Gretel holds a CUTE LITTLE BABY in her arms. The rest of the community watches in silence... many are in tears.

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
Only I was saved...

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS: Jimmy, hair now streaked with white, gets back into his old uniform... checks his weapons, puts on his badge!

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
My grieving grandfather blamed
himself. He donned the uniform
once more...

He steps out of the door...

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
And went after Utrek!

EXT. KHARTUMM - MOUNTAIN RANGE - DAY

PARCHED EARTH. INTENSE HEAT -- a HORIZON OF BONES --
DANGEROUS REPTILES slither around.

Utrek, hounded, pushes through this unforgiving
terrain... he hears something -- the SOUNDS of ROARING
JETS -- hides behind a massive boulder.

SPD officers flying in formation pass overhead...

As soon as they pass Utrek sneaks into a cave...
disappearing into the darkness... we follow!

JIMMY JONES (V.O.)
Don't move!

Then: A LIGHT blazes onto Utrek's face... he shields his
eyes.

The cave is swarming with SPD officers.

Jimmy Jones steps forward.

JIMMY JONES (CONT'D)
You're under arrest.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON:

Utrek -- shaking with rage!

WIDEN to show Utrek in chains, standing before a huge
crater known as "The Abyss"...

Behind him: The SPD and the COUNCIL OF THE WISE.

UTREK
You won't get rid of me this
easily!

OLD KING COLE -- plump, white beard, can easily pass as
Santa -- steps forward. He's in charge.

OLD KING COLE

For all the crimes committed
against the good people of
Storyville I condemn you to...
(two beats)
... oblivion.

Utrek sniggers.

Jimmy, pained by all, gives the signal.

Sergeant Storm grabs Utrek... who turns his head --

UTREK
My dream does not die today!

Sergeant Storm, unflinching, pushes him into the Abyss.
Utrek falls -- and is swallowed by the darkness!

INT/EXT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - CORRIDOR/COURT YARD - DAY

A DARK corridor... Jimmy Jones, much older, hurries
through... Sergeant Storm is right behind him.

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
But my grandfather was not done
yet.

They emerge into a courtyard --

ROWS OF UNIFORMED OFFICERS. They all stand to attention.
An impressive sight!

JUMPER JONES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
He toiled tirelessly to
strengthen the Police Force.

Jimmy speaks into a microphone.

JIMMY JONES
You are the last bastion of all
that is good!

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - OPERATION ROOM - DAY

A SMALL STAFF of ELVES are huddled around the MIRROR --

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
Recruits were now selected by
the greatest of all seers -- The
legendary Mirror of Magic...
once owned by the Evil Queen.

Like in some trance, the Mirror spews out names...

MIRROR OF MAGIC
There's a little guy who is
quite brave. He goes by the name
of Aspen Dave. Then, there's
Roger Floss, who still is a zero
but will be a sure hero...

The Elves scribble everything down...

SERGEANT STORM
Send out the calls.

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - ROOF - LATER

The Elves release a flurry of pigeons...

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
Only the incorruptible and brave
would wear the uniform.

We PAN to see the pigeons flying overhead... rushing away
in various directions...

INT. STORYVILLE - HOUSE OF JIMMY JONES - DAY

A row of picture perfect houses...

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
My name is Jumper Jones. Today
is the day I get my call. Today,
I become an SPD recruit. Today,
I follow in my father's
footsteps.

A pigeon descends quickly -- nosedives straight at a
house and bursts through the window. A LOUD PIERCING
SCREAM...

The door opens... A SMALL KID, aged eleven, runs out,
jumping up and down. This is one of our heroes. Meet
JUMPER JONES... who so far was our narrator.

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
I got the call! I got the call!

ANGLE ON GRETEL.

She stands in the doorway, face etched with worry. Jimmy
approaches from behind... places a loving hand on her
shoulder.

JIMMY JONES
We must defend this place!

GRETEL
Hasn't this family given enough?

JIMMY JONES
He'll be fine.

GRETEL
He's young. Very young. And
he'll have to do "The Run".

JIMMY JONES
He's a Jones...

Her eyes fill with tears.

GRETEL
That's what I'm worried about!

He hugs her tightly -- She takes in the closeness. Needs it!

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. STORYVILLE POLICE ACADEMY - DAY

We're facing a sign -- "We choose to be heroes!"

We PAN DOWN as gates open...

A MIXED GROUP of NEWBIES enter... all are in awe. We recognise JUMPER... he's in heaven!

Before them: CADETS in fatigues -- training hard!

BART KNOWLES, typical jock, pushes his way through the crowd... sure of himself... hitting a PLUMP KID, all lost and scared, making him drop all his bags -- meet TUCKER NORTHBROOK...

Jumper stops to help him pick them up.

JUMPER JONES
Don't worry about that guy. He's an idiot. We were at school together... I'm Jumper Jones.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
I'm Tucker Northbrook.

JUMPER JONES
I'm so excited to be here.

Tucker is not excited in the least. He tries to hide his jitters behind a smile.

ANGLE ON SERGEANT STORM.

He strides smartly towards the new recruits and comes to a brisk, heel clapping halt in front of them. *He means business!*

SERGEANT STORM
Fall in and form a line.

The newbies shuffle into a single line.

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
Heels on the chalk. Quick!

Jumper is all eager and enthusiastic... beaming with joy!

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
My name is Sergeant Storm. And
you will always address me as
Sergeant Storm. Do you
understand?

ALL
Yes, Sergeant Storm.

SERGEANT STORM
Louder!

ALL
YES, SERGEANT STORM!

Sergeant Storm strolls menacingly down the ranks, probing
the newbies with his eyes.

SERGEANT STORM
You've all received the Call.
Our Mirror of Magic has found
you worthy candidates to don the
uniform. But that means nothing
to me. Tomorrow, you must prove
yourselves on the field and pass
the biggest test of all -- THE
RUN!

Jumper beams with joy. Knowles rubs his hands together.
But Tucker raises his hand...

The Sergeant SNARLS. His eyes nearly pop out of their
sockets.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
I think there has been a
mistake... I shouldn't be here!

Sergeant Storm stares daggers at him --

SERGEANT STORM
Is that so?

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
I... I can't be an officer of
the law.

The Sergeant gets closer and closer... until their noses
are almost touching. Poor Tucker shakes in his boots.

SERGEANT STORM
What's your name?

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
(stammering)
Tucker Northbrook!

SERGEANT STORM
And why is it that you can't be
an officer of the law, Tucker

Northbrook? Are you one of
Utrek's spies?

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
No, Sergeant Storm! No. No.
Definitely not!

SERGEANT STORM
Then why don't you want do your
part to keep our city safe?

Tucker hesitates. He's embarrassed -- becomes bright red!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
It's because...

SERGEANT STORM
(growling)
Speak up, son!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
It's because every time I get
nervous...

PLOOOP! Tucker magically transforms himself into a
CHICKEN.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/CHICKEN
(resigned)
This happens.

SHOCK gives way to LAUGHTER. Only Jumper doesn't laugh.

PLOOOP! Tucker turns into a DONKEY!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DONKEY
And this!

Then a SHEEP!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/SHEEP
And this!

The newbies are in fits! Jumper still doesn't join in.

SERGEANT STORM
(screaming)
Did I give anyone the permission
to laugh? Did I?

All freeze!

Tucker keeps changing into various animals -- GOOSE, CAT,
MULE.

Sergeant Storm gives him a murderous look...

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
And Tucker Northbrook, stop
doing what you're doing!

Tucker can't! DOG, EAGLE, RABBIT, ELK.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/ELK
I can't. The Wicked Witch placed
this curse on me... every time I
get nervous... this happens.

Tucker: LAMA, DUCK, TURKEY, GOAT!

SERGEANT STORM
I don't care about the Wicked
Witch or her curse! When I order
you to stop, you stop!

A PANICKED Tucker just can't do it: PIG, GIRAFFE, BABOON!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK /BABOON
I-I can't!

The Sergeant is a volcano ready to explode. He doesn't
know what to do. He turns to the group --

SERGEANT STORM
Push ups. On the ground. All of
you... NOW!

All comply.

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
You'll stop when he stops!
Understood?

ALL
Yes, Sergeant Storm!

Bart gives Tucker an evil look.

BART KNOWLES
I'm going to get you for this!

TUCKER: BEAR, DEER, SQUIRREL, MONKEY!

JUMPER JONES
Leave him alone, Knowles!

BART KNOWLES
Shut up, Jones!

Thunder ROARS in the distance!

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Harsh, dank and terribly cold. We're inside a huge dark
cave. A HOWLING storm blows outside. *It makes our skin
crawl.*

Lightning FLASHES... Dother, pensive, watches Dain as he
gnaws on a bone.

DOTHER
I tried to make them reason! It
was impossible!

DAIN
And why won't they join our
ranks?

DOTHER
It's obvious! They're afraid,
brother!

DAIN
There is strength in numbers.

DOTHER
I know.

DAIN
On our own, we're easy prey for
the SPD! Together, we can
destroy them!

Lightning CRACKS.

DAIN (CONT'D)
(hissing)
We're living like bottom
feeders! I'm sick of rats and
snakes.
(a beat)
I hate the SPD.

Dain hurls the bone away...

DAIN (CONT'D)
If Utrek was here...

DOTHER
He isn't. And he's not coming
back. We have to forget about
him!

DAIN
How do you know he won't come
back?

DOTHER
Because no one returns from the
Abyss!

A long beat.

DOTHER (CONT'D)
We have to unite the Army of
Darkness...

Dain, resigned, picks up the bone again.

DAIN
But how? They won't listen to
you!

DOTHER
Then we need to show them what
we're made of.

DAIN
And how will we do that?

Something is grinding in Dother's mind.

DOTHER
We must attack the enemy.

Dain looks puzzled.

Dother leans in...

DOTHER (CONT'D)
The North Wind brought news from
Storyville... a Jones youngling
just got the call. You know what
that means?

Eyes blazing -- they can taste blood!

DAIN
He'll have to do the "Run".
He'll be coming through these
parts.

DOTHER
Exactly. And when he does, we'll
kill him. We'll show those
cowards that we are not afraid
of the SPD.

An evil grin.

Lightning STRIKES!

CUT TO:

EXT. KHARTUMM - MOUNTAIN RANGE - EARLY MORNING

LONG SHOT:

Razor sharp rocks, deadly animals, sizzling sand and an
angry volcano... These are the unforgiving parts known as
Khartumm which we have already seen before.

Sergeant Storm steps into the frame.

SERGEANT STORM
Welcome to Khartumm. This is
where we separate the wheat from
the chaff.

The newbies stand before him -- all wearing shorts and t-
shirts. They're also carrying backpacks...

A small tremor...

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
You have one task ahead of you -
- return safely home. You have
twelve hours. In your backpacks
you'll find a survival kit.

ANGLE ON THE NEWBIES.

Everyone checks their gear. Tucker takes out a strange box... *what is this?*

SERGEANT STORM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You also have a special device.
If you want to quit... push the
red button, stay put and we'll
pick you up!

Jumper is ready, focused... Knowles too! It shows they want this badly...

BART KNOWLES
(turning to Jumper)
Jones, prepare to eat my dust!

JUMPER JONES
(whispering)
If I recall well, my father beat
your father when they did their
"Run".

Bart hisses...

SERGEANT STORM
Those of you who will make it
safely home will be granted the
honour of becoming cadets.

Tucker: The enormity of the task hits him... PLOOOP! IT HAPPENS AGAIN! PIG, GOAT, MONKEY.

The earth trembles...

ANGLE ON SERGEANT STORM.

He shakes his head... climbs on top of the coolest MOTORCYCLE ever...

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
One last piece of advice...

Sergeant Storm speeds off...

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
RUN!

In the distance: The volcano spews fire... a series of explosions tear into the air -- it rains ROCKS!

The race is on. The newbies BOLT through the terrain... at a punishing pace...

All leave except Tucker -- he's frozen to the spot... DOG, MULE, MONKEY.

Knowles turns to Jumper...

BART KNOWLES
Your friend's going to be toast.

Jimmy stops -- looks back -- realises that Tucker is still stationary... trembling with fear. *He has to make a choice -- win this race or help his friend?*

Flaming rocks fly towards him.

Tucker/Monkey covers his eyes.

Jumper pulls him out of harm's way in the nick of time, saving his life...

JUMPER JONES
Tucker... we have to go.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
I CAN'T MOVE!

TUCKER: PEACOCK, DUCK.

JUMPER JONES
We're sitting ducks.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DUCK
That's it! I'm quitting!

JUMPER JONES
You can't quit. We were chosen by the Mirror of Magic. We received the call.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DUCK
They clearly made a mistake. I'm of no use to anyone. Look at me! I'm different. Strange.

JUMPER JONES
So? Everyone is strange. I have a Greek foot... I can't sleep during a storm... I'm terrified of spiders.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DUCK
But they don't laugh at you!

JUMPER JONES
Your curse is a gift... an asset. Imagine a police officer who can transform into whatever animal he wants...

Tucker/duck smiles...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DUCK
Really? You think that?

He calms down and turns back into his normal self...

JUMPER JONES
Yes I do. I think you're a valid candidate...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK

Wow...

JUMPER JONES
We'll see this thing through to
the end together.

Rocks plummet like comets...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
OK.

SMASH! BOOM! It's practically raining boulders!

JUMPER JONES
Come on. Let's move.

Tucker forgets his backpack...

They start running -- fast -- like STARTLED RABBITS --
dodging a bombardment of fire and rock.

CUT TO:

EXT. KHARTUMM - NARROW WINDING GORGE - LATER

Unseen creatures scurry away, fleeing from the
approaching footsteps.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK (O.S.)
(exhilarated)
That was...

JUMPER JONES (O.S.)
Awesome!

Jumper and Tucker appear...

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
I told you we'd do it...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
Do you really think I can use
this thing I have?

JUMPER JONES
Of course. The Mirror of Magic
saw something in you...

Tucker smiles.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
Maybe...

JUMPER JONES
Now we need to try and catch up
with the others. Let's see where
we are...

Tucker wipes his brow. The SUN is high and blazing hot...

Jumper produces a map from his backpack -- assesses the situation.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
My backpack... my backpack...
Shoot, I left it behind! I have
no food, no water.

JUMPER JONES
It's OK. We can share mine.

Tucker hits himself repeatedly.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
I'm such an idiot!

Jumper stops him before he can inflict some serious damage...

JUMPER JONES
Stop it. No, you're not.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
I shouldn't even be here. I'm
sorry. I'm just a burden! I'll
slow you down.

TUCKER: PLOOOP! CHICKEN, CAT, TURKEY.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/TURKEY
You're better off without me.

JUMPER JONES
I'll never leave a man behind.
Now calm down... we can make up
lost time if we take this
shortcut. Are you in?

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/TURKEY
Yes!

The pair start to jog... Tucker: PIG, LAMA, RABBIT.

ANGLE ON OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE GORGE.

Dother and Dain melt out of the shadows.

DOTHER
Can you smell him, brother?

Dain's NOSTRILS twitch -- lips curl in a low, slow SNARL.

DAIN
When we're done with this, they
will all bow before us!

Dother and Dain disappear back into the darkness!

CUT TO:

EXT. KHARTUMM - CHASM - LATER

Jumper leads Tucker across a LOG... the going is VERY TREACHEROUS.

JUMPER JONES
Don't look down.

They put one careful foot in front of the other...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
Are you sure this is the right way?

JUMPER JONES
Yes.

Tucker is trying very hard not to let the humungous DROP unnerve him.

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
You're doing great! Come on... a few more steps.

Suddenly, Jumper stops... tensely scanning the other side of the CHASM...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
(panicking)
What's wrong? Why did you stop?
What's going on?

Jumper motions for Tucker to be quiet. He stares intently into the DARK SHADOWS.

CREEPY POV:

Something is watching them.

Then: EVIL GLEAMING EYES. DAIN steps into the light --

Tucker: RABBIT, MONKEY...

Instinctively, Jimmy covers Tucker protectively behind him.

DAIN
Youngling Jones... it's so nice of you to drop by for a visit!

Dain SNARLS at them, FURIOUS and DEADLY.

JUMPER JONES
Who am I speaking to?

DAIN
I'm an old family friend!

Jumper moves back... slowly, very slowly.

JUMPER JONES
(whispering)
Back, back... move back.

They start to BACK AWAY... Jumper turns to Tucker.

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
Run... run!

Tucker obeys... but blocking the other side is DOTHER.

DOTHER
My brother and I have been
expecting you.

A RUMBLING, BESTIAL GROWL! *This is scary!*

JUMPER JONES
We are both members of the SPD.
This goes against...

Dain cuts him off --

DAIN
Bla bla bla...

They are trapped with nowhere to go...

The wolves inch closer... jaws SNAPPING!

A petrified Tucker does not dare breathe: PLOOP: PIG,
MULE, SHEEP!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/SHEEP
What do we do?

Jimmy thinks hard... mind reeling.

JUMPER JONES
We need to call for help...
Where's the thing?

Jumper fishes inside his backpack... produces the
emergency device...

The wolves move closer... Tucker freaks out... Jumps into
Jumper's arms, making him drop the gadget into the abyss
below...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/SHEEP
Shoot!

Is this the end?

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. KHARTUMM - CHASM - CONTINUOUS

Tucker and Jumper are trapped between SLAVERING SNOUTS!

A WHIMPERING SOUND escapes from the back of Tucker's throat. PLOOP: SQUIRREL, MOUSE, MONKEY.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/MONKEY
We will never make it out of
here alive.

JUMPER JONES
Yes, we will.

Gaping JAWS OPEN impossibly WIDE!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
How?

Jumper's mind races, fuelled by FEAR... trying to find a solution!

The wolves inch closer. The boys can feel their hot sour BREATH.

Jumper has an idea. He empties the backpack...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/MONKEY
What are you doing?

JUMPER JONES
Hold on tight!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/MONKEY
What are we doing???

JUMPER JONES
Just do as I say!

Tucker/monkey does as he's told...

The wolves prepare to pounce -- they attack!

In a flash Jumper leaps into the chasm... Tucker/monkey holding tight to him for dear life...

The stunned wolves CRASH into each other...

DOTHER
Where did he go?

They look around --

Jumper has used his backpack as a parachute... *Ingenious!*

The wolves HOWL wildly...

DAIN
I hate the Jones family.

DOTHER
Quick. We can still catch him...

The wolves charge after them...

CUT TO:

EXT. KHARTUMM - CLIFF - LATER

Bart Knowles is way ahead the others... his movements -- effortless. He's a real athlete...

Behind him: The rest of the newbies, chests heaving... heavy gusts of exhausted breaths.

Bart Knowles keeps looking back. Satisfaction turns to anger when he sees --

CLOSE ON:

Jumper and Tucker/Monkey sailing smoothly through the air...

JUMPER JONES

Look... we caught up with the others...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/MONKEY

We're back in this thing!

PLOOOP! Tucker changes back to his old plump self. BAD TIMING.

JUMPER JONES

No. No. No.

They FALL!!! Landing HARD on the ground! A sickening CRUNCH! This must hurt like hell.

ANGLE ON BART KNOWLES.

He's fuming. There is evil intent in his eyes...

BART KNOWLES

How the--?

He continues running -- reaches a rickety ROPE BRIDGE. He stops... pretending to tie up his laces, allowing the others to pass... then slips across. He looks around -- not a soul in sight! He takes out a small KNIFE and starts cutting through the rope...

ANGLE ON TUCKER AND JUMPER.

Jumper and Tucker -- half dazed and in pain -- stand up and dust off their clothes...

HOWLING. They exchange grave, tense looks. *They're still in danger!*

JUMPER'S POV: A faint, twisting column of dust rises from that hostile plain. Slowly it takes the shape of the wolves -- their form distorted by the rippling heat haze.

Jumper grabs Tucker by the arm and bolts...

JUMPER JONES

RUN!

ANGLE ON BART KNOWLES.

The boy is still hacking and hacking until -- THE ROPES ARE CUT!

BART KNOWLES

(sniggering)

I will win this Run.

ANGLE ON JUMPER AND TUCKER.

Jumper and Tucker watch on in sheer horror as the bridge falls apart in front of their eyes...

ANGLE ON BART KNOWLES.

He disappears...

CLOSE ON TUCKER

The boy falls to his knees... but there is no time for such scenes... Jumper pulls him to his feet.

They're on the run again.

Tucker loses it: GOOSE, PIG, SHEEP!

The wolves are gaining ground... fast.

JUMPER JONES

Over here! Over here!

Jumper leads Tucker to a NARROW FISSURE between TWO HUGE ROCKS -- the wolves can't squeeze through here. At that exact moment, Tucker changes into a HORSE -- BLAM! HE SLAMS STRAIGHT INTO THE BOULDERS! OOOUUUCH...

He collapses... is back to his normal self...

The wolves are closing in...

Adrenaline pumping -- Jumper grabs Tucker by the shirt and drags him into the fissure...

Dain and Dother PLOUGH straight into the rocks... BLAAAM!
It hurts!

The wolves go insane -- clawing furiously... snapping at the boulders -- their fury mounting...

DAIN

You will not escape our wrath...
Do you hear me? You will not
escape!

CUT TO:

COMPLETE DARKNESS

JUMPER JONES (V.O.)
We're safe for now... but we
need a plan...

Jumper manages to light a fire... we're in a CAVE!

An increasing sense of dread --

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
This is all my fault... If only
I could control these
transformations... I could help.

JUMPER JONES
You can still help...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
How?

CUT TO:

EXT. KHARTUMM - LATER

Dother and Dain prowl the area...

DAIN
Where did they go?

DOTHER
We'll find him, brother.

JUMPER JONES (O.S.)
Hey... flea bags... FLEA BAGS!

The wolves spin around.

ANGLE ON JUMPER.

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
Come and get me!

Jumper leaps away.

He barely has time to start running before the wolves
give chase...

CUT TO:

INT. CAVE - UNKNOWN TIME

JUMPER JONES
It's me they want... I'll lure
them away from this cave... and
you can go and get help. Do you
think you can do that?

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
Yes... I'm pretty sure. I can do
that. I will do that.

JUMPER JONES

Great.

CUT TO:

EXT. KHARTUMM - CAVE ENTRANCE - EVENING

Tucker slips out of the cave. His eyes dart around nervously... all clear. He skitters away!

CUT TO:

EXT. KHARTUMM - CLIFFS - CONTINUOUS

Jumper runs as fast as his legs can carry him. His LUNGS are bursting, but the wolves are hot on his heels...

He ROLLS and SCRAMBLES down the side of the cliff -- sees Tucker getting away... smiles to himself and bolts in the opposite direction...

INT. CAVE - UNKNOWN TIME

TUCKER NORTHBROOK

Jumper?

JUMPER JONES

Yes.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK

I've always admired your family.

Jumper nods -- doesn't really know what to say.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK (CONT'D)

And you're just like them... a great person.

JUMPER JONES

Good luck.

CUT TO:

EXT. KHARTUMM - PROMONTORY - EVENING

Jumper comes to an unsteady halt -- he's got himself into a muddle... there's no way forward! Must turn back -- too late.

Dain and Dother approach menacingly.

DAIN

Finally... you have nowhere to go!

JUMPER JONES

I'm not afraid of you!

The wolves laugh...

DOTHER

He does remind me of his pesky
father!

JUMPER JONES

Don't you dare mention my
father...

DAIN

Why? Will you burst into tears
like a little baby?

Jumper, furious, lunges at Dother -- they tussle... it's
a pathetic mismatch! With great ease Dain sends him
flying through the air... Jumper lands dangerously close
to the edge of the promontory.

Jumper, weakened by his injuries, stands up again...

JUMPER JONES

My name is Jumper Jones. I will
not give in to evil.

The wolves laugh... enjoying their little game...

DAIN

Let's finish this!

Jumper attacks once more!

Dother inhales deeply... BLOWS OUT A PUNISHING GUST OF
WIND!

Jumper is lost. He fights against the invisible wall but
he just keeps sliding back... loose stones give way -- he
slips. Falls...

Jumper dangles off the edge of the cliff with nothing but
emptiness below...

The wolves savour the moment.

Jumper's losing his grip with each passing second. But he
will not give up. He keeps struggling...

DAIN (CONT'D)

Allow me to finish him,
brother...

DOTHER

Be my guest...

Dain moves in for the kill --

Suddenly, a WAR CRY:

The wolves spin around.

WOLVES' POV: TUCKER CHARGES BLINDLY... a MASSIVE ANGRY
BULL, no a LAMA, no a BULL, no a CHICKEN, no a BULL --
HITTING THEM LIKE A FREIGHT TRAIN -- the wolves get
tossed over the edge... YELPING LOUDLY!

The bull drops to the ground... PLOOOP! Tucker is back to his old self. Face ashen...

Jumper climbs back up... amazed to see his friend...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
What happened? Where are the
wolves?

Jumper, all smiles, gives him a huge hug!

JUMPER JONES
You saved me!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
I did?

JUMPER JONES
You did...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
I couldn't leave you alone. You
said that we'd finish the Run
together...

JUMPER JONES
The Run! We have to finish the
Run! Let's go... we can still
make it!

Jumper pulls Tucker behind him and off they go...

EXT. STORYVILLE POLICE ACADEMY - NIGHT

A terrible silence -- Sergeant Storm stands ramrod
straight...

Jimmy Jones approaches -- his face a mask of worry!

JIMMY JONES
How many?

SERGEANT STORM
We're missing two. Your grandson
is one of them. Should we...

JIMMY JONES
No. If he didn't call for help,
then we must wait the full
twelve hours...

Jimmy Jones swallows hard. He hates himself for having to
say this --

JIMMY JONES (CONT'D)
But we can start preparing the
search party...

No sooner does he finish uttering those words -- Jumper
and Tucker -- bloodied, torn, sweating -- roll through
the gates. Barely able to stand... they scramble towards
the finish line!

Jimmy's eyes widen... a huge smile appears on his face.

JIMMY JONES (CONT'D)
(mumbling to himself)
Come on, son! You can do it!

Jimmy and Tucker push as hard as they can... but they have no energy left!

ANGLE ON THE BARRACKS.

The other newbies emerge from the barracks... watching in awe. They SCREAM and SHOUT -- encouraging them on! Bart Knowles is rabid. He goes back inside...

Jumper and Tucker cross the finish line...

JUMPER JONES
Jumper Jones and Tucker
Northbrook reporting for duty...

SERGEANT STORM
Tomorrow we start at 0600 hours.
Don't be late!

Sergeant Storm walks away...

Jumper and Jimmy exchange a smile...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
We did it!

JUMPER JONES
Yes, we did it!

Both fall on their faces, gasping for breath...

THE END

ONCE UPON A CRIME

"A NIGHTMARE ON ELF STREET"

ACT ONE

FADE UP:

EXT. STORYVILLE - ELF STREET - NIGHT

We're TIGHT on a street sign -- "ELF STREET."

We PAN DOWN --

BEAUTIFUL HOUSES stretching endlessly... lush lawns, designed bushes, pristine fences, trees lined on both sides of the street -- perfection!

A PLUMP CHESHIRE CAT is fast asleep on a branch in one of the trees... snoring happily!

Then: CLIP-CLOP, CLIP-CLOP, CLIP-CLOP...

COUNT N. GRIMM (V.O.)
(a rasping tone)
One, two, I'm coming for you.
Three, four, lock your door.

The Cheshire cat lazily opens one eye --

FAST ZOOM IN: SHOCK! HORROR! PANIC! -- opens its mouth to scream but nothing comes out... WHOOOOT! The petrified cat disappears into thin air!

A BLACK HORSE trots through the street -- carrying a sinister looking COWBOY garbed in black. Trench coat, classic hat, rifle, whip... and a battered lantern that bathes the street in an eerie yellow light. This is the Lord of Fear -- COUNT N. GRIMM -- "N" stands for Nightmare. His face remains hidden.

COUNT N. GRIMM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Five, six, you're in a fix.
Seven, eight, I'm not your mate.

INVISIBLE CHESHIRE CAT POV:

The Count reins in his horse outside one of the houses. He climbs down off his steed, opens the gate... stops... sniffs the air.

COUNT N. GRIMM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Nine, ten, you're a marked man.

ANGLE ON INVISIBLE CAT.

The poor animal is shaking. We can't see it but we can hear it -- a faint whimper rising in its throat.

TIGHT ANGLE ON COUNT N. GRIMM.

He MOVES -- FAST -- pulls out his WHIP, gripping it by its STERLING SILVER HANDLE -- he sweeps his arm in a wide arc -- the whip WHIZZES OUT with fluid, frightening speed -- SMACK!

A MUFFLED SCREAM! The Cheshire cat becomes visible again -- white as a sheet. The whip seems to have missed... or so we think. Then: The branch the cat is resting on starts to CRACK -- breaks in two... the cat falls hard! BLAMM! A sickening crunch!

Next thing we see is the cat sprawled on the ground, dazed!

The cowboy GRINS mischievously from under his hat -- enters the property and slams the gate SHUT. We read the sign: "THE FRILLS FAMILY WELCOMES YOU."

The Count's skeletal hand knocks on the front door...

CUT TO:

INT. RUPERT'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - SAME TIME

We're looking down at a BED from OVERHEAD:

A peaceful RUPERT FRILLS lies fast asleep amidst expensive bed linens. His wife Brunhilde is beside him.

A LOUD KNOCK. Once! Twice!

BRUNHILDE

Rupert?

Rupert gropes blindly in the darkness to silence the alarm clock...

And goes back to sleep...

MORE KNOCKING! LOUDER -- INSISTENT.

BRUNHILDE (CONT'D)

Rupert?

RUPERT

Three more minutes!

Brunhilde elbows her husband -- lights come on...

BRUNHILDE

(exasperated)

Rupert! Someone is at the door!

Rupert wipes the sleep from his eyes --

RUPERT

Who could it be at this hour?

BRUNHILDE

Well, go and check... before they wake the boy.

Rupert sits up, blows out a breath, groggy. MORE
KNOCKING.

RUPERT
I'm coming. I'm coming!

Rupert puts on his slippers and wobbles out of the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. RUPERT'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

We're TIGHT on the door -- lights come on.

RUPERT (O.S.)
Who is disturbing our sleep?

DOOR OPENS!

RUPERT (CONT'D)
Don't you know who... ?

There's no one there! Anger mounts --

RUPERT (CONT'D)
(hissing)
Another stupid prank!

Rupert marches outside... fuming.

RUPERT (CONT'D)
I will find you! Whoever you
are... I will find you.

LONG SHOT of Rupert in the front garden... looking
around. In the foreground we see the Cheshire cat coming
to its senses... it stands up.

Rupert sees the Cheshire cat. His eyes narrow...
screaming revenge!

RUPERT (CONT'D)
There you are...

He removes his slipper and hurls it at the animal. BULL'S
EYE!

The Cheshire cat is knocked out cold!

Rupert -- a grunt of satisfaction -- returns to his
house. SLAMS the door shut!

INT. RUPERT'S HOUSE - CHILD'S BEDROOM - LATER

An ANGELIC LOOKING BOY is fast asleep... INNOCENT! SO
SWEET!

The door opens slightly... Rupert peers inside -- manages
to smile at that sight. Door closes again.

INT. RUPERT'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rupert returns to his room.

Brunhilde is frozen... FEAR etched on her pale face! She doesn't move, doesn't breathe -- staring straight at a dark corner of the room...

Rupert is oblivious...

RUPERT
I'm going to report that pesky
feline to the authorities!

He dives back under the covers and sags into his pillow once more, exhausted.

RUPERT (CONT'D)
That's what I'll do. Mark my
words, Brunhilde. No more Mister
nice elf come sunlight. I'm done
playing doormat.

No answer... that's strange.

He turns to Brunhilde --

RUPERT (CONT'D)
Darling?

The woman does not move... he taps her on the shoulder. Puzzled!

RUPERT (CONT'D)
Brunhilde? Darling?

NOTHING! NOT A SIGN! Her eyes remain fixed on the same spot. Finally, she manages to point her index finger -- Rupert turns his gaze towards the corner...

Then: A rasping voice.

COUNT N. GRIMM
Good evening, Mr. Frills!

Rupert panics... springs out of bed... stands back against the wall, pale and shaken...

RUPERT
Who's that?

And then, slowly emerging from the shadows, a skeleton -- eyes glowing, demonic -- flashing a wild gypsy grin. Finally, we can see Count N. Grimm's face -- an unnerving creature of pure viciousness!

Brunhilde faints in a rather dramatic fashion!

COUNT N. GRIMM
I wish to parley with you!

RUPERT
Stay away! Stay away from us...

Rupert has no idea what to do... He wants to help his wife but his legs have turned to jelly!

COUNT N. GRIMM
Please, Mr. Frills. Let's avoid all this melodrama. All I seek is a gentle tête-à-tête.

CUT TO:

INT. RUPERT'S HOUSE - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

A PIERCING SCREAM!

Rupert tears out of the room -- tumbles down the stairs... lands HARD! It hurts. No time to feel the pain. He hobbles to the front door but then stops suddenly...

RUPERT
The kid! The kid!

He races back upstairs and bursts into the boy's room.

CUT TO:

INT. RUPERT'S HOUSE - CHILD'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door swings open. Rupert spills inside. STOPS! The cot is empty.

A playful laughter.

Rupert spins round to see his son playing on Grimm's lap -- the Count is comfortably seated in an armchair.

The poor elf goes limp, whimpering... drops to his knees -- color drains from his face.

RUPERT
Please... Mister Grimm. I beg you!

COUNT N. GRIMM
Count, not mister. I'm one of those who loves his noble lineage...

RUPERT
Count... I beg you. Don't hurt my son.

The Count pats the boy on his head... The child LAUGHS loudly, clearly enjoying himself.

COUNT N. GRIMM
Oh come on... I'm not here to spill blood. Not tonight, at least. So, shall we stop with

all these fancy shenanigans of screaming and running and crying? All I want is to talk business. You give something to me and in exchange I give something back to you... Does this sound to your liking?

Rupert nods his head...

COUNT N. GRIMM (CONT'D)
Superb, Mr. Frills! But before we start, let me congratulate you on your promotion. You must be the hard working type if Gepetto saw it fit to trust you as his second in command!

RUPERT
What is it that you want?

COUNT N. GRIMM
Ah! Finally. We seem to be getting on the right track...

The kid laughs again as the Count tickles him...

COUNT N. GRIMM (CONT'D)
I love your boy! He's a right gem...
(addressing the kid)
Aren't you a cutie?

CUT TO:

EXT. STORYVILLE POLICE ACADEMY - MORNING

We're TIGHT on the closed gate facing the sign, "We chose to be heroes!"

JIMMY JONES (V.O.)
The forces of darkness stand outside our walls...

We PAN UP and go over the gate to see -- CADETS training.

JIMMY JONES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
... ready to pounce and plunge our beloved city into chaos.

We FOCUS on an advanced class of CADETS eating up the obstacle course as if it were child's play. We are in awe!

JIMMY JONES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
The Storyville Police Department is all that stands in between.

ANGLE ON SERGEANT STORM and JIMMY JONES.

JIMMY JONES (CONT'D)
Are you ready to wear the badge?

The rookies stand to attention in front of them, proud.
We recognise Jumper, Tucker and Bart.

ALL
Yes, Sir.

Jumper winks at his grandpa... and gets a smile.

JIMMY JONES
Sergeant... They're all yours.

SERGEANT STORM
Thank you, Sir.

The Sergeant eyeballs the cadets hard...

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
Yesterday you passed your first
test. You are now officially
cadets of this glorious school.
Make our history proud!

Many of the cadets beam with great satisfaction. This
irritates the Sergeant. He ROARS --

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
I wouldn't be smiling just yet.
I expect to lose half of you
before the week is out.

The Sergeant grins as he walks away.

SERGEANT STORM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Follow me! Quickly!

Jimmy watches the new recruits follow the Sergeant.

CUT TO:

INT. UNIFORM SUPPLY ROOM - LATER

POLICE OFFICERS are handing out TRACKSUITS to the cadets.

All happens under the watchful eyes of Sergeant Storm.

Jumper takes his tracksuit... polite as always --

JUMPER JONES
Thank you...

Tucker stumbles right behind. The poor boy stares at his
tracksuit like it's radioactive. It shows he doesn't like
such clothes...

Jumper turns to Tucker -- beside himself with excitement.

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
Isn't this cool?

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
(shocked)
But it doesn't have a bow tie!

Lost in his world, Tucker bumps into Bart Knowles...

BART KNOWLES
You're in my way!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
I'm sorry. So sorry!

BART KNOWLES
You'd better be! Out of the way,
loser!

Unnerved by the bully, Tucker obeys...

SERGEANT STORM
Come on. Come on. Less talking
and more moving!

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS - STAIRCASE/ CORRIDOR - DAY

The cadets are herded up the stairs like cattle. We MOVE behind them... through a corridor until they all stop.

In front of them: Sergeant Storm, tall and mighty -- hands on his hips.

SERGEANT STORM
This is where you will live for
the next months. Boys on the
left. Girls on the right. Two
per room. You have three minutes
to unpack! Quick!

They obey. It's a mad rush -- everyone pairing up... laughing...

Tucker is left all alone... *so sad!* Then Jumper's smiling face pops out of one room...

JUMPER JONES
Tucker... Here...

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM - LATER

Bare. Monkish. Just a bunk bed and two lockers.

Tucker is busy unpacking -- ALL KINDS OF FOODS. He can't resist... digs in... (one might say like an animal)

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
(busy munching)
This place needs some colour.
It's so bare!

ANGLE ON LOCKERS.

Jumper immediately hangs a photo of his parents on his locker door.

He touches the picture affectionately.

 SERGEANT STORM (O.S.)
 Fall out! Fall out!

Jumper closes the locker to see -- Sergeant Storm standing in the doorway.

 SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
 Tucker Northbrook... what are
 you doing?

The boy freezes on the spot. Sweat beads gather around his forehead.

 TUCKER NORTHBROOK
 But it's almost ten.

Sergeant Storm -- seething with anger, jaw clenched.

 SERGEANT STORM
 You're a cadet now. That means
 you belong to me. You eat when I
 say you eat. Do you hear me?

 TUCKER NORTHBROOK
 Yes, Sergeant Storm!

 SERGEANT STORM
 Fall out now!

Tucker drops everything and charges out of the room. Jumper joins him.

The Sergeant follows.

BLAMMM! We realise that Tucker fell.

 SERGEANT STORM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Tucker Northbrook! Don't you
 dare transform yourself into
 anything! I double dare you.

 TUCKER NORTHBROOK (O.S.)
 No, Sergeant Storm.

EXT. GEPETTO'S UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - DAY

A MASSIVE HANGAR filled with all kinds of hypertech GADGETS and MACHINES -- an otherworldly gallery of great inventions! *This is the first time we see Geppetto's lab. It is breathtaking just for sheer size...*

ELVES scurry around on SEGWAYS -- busily doing all sorts of things -- welding, hammering etc... SPARKS fly... it's dazzling!

Suddenly, the ceiling opens up and a mechanical platform descends slowly... Sergeant Storm and the cadets enter this mythical place...

Jaws drop... *very understandable!*

ANGLE ON ELVES.

Blue prints are transformed into mesmerising realities. TWO ELVES -- safety glasses, lab coats -- build a ROCKET BELT.

JUMPER JONES (O.S.)
WOW! Did you see that?

ANGLE ON TUCKER AND JUMPER.

Even Tucker is excited about all this.

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
Geppetto is a real genius! I tell you!

SERGEANT STORM
Ladies and Gentlemen, consider yourselves lucky.

The boys turn to face the Sergeant.

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
Only a select few are able to lay eyes on this place... Welcome to where all the magic happens.

We PAN through the lab --

ELVES are constructing and testing various weapons and gadgets... *James Bond would be so jealous!*

Of course not everything goes smoothly -- as we pass the testing labs... a few experiments go haywire...

The cadets giggle...

Equipment that is damaging is taken away and placed in separate metal boxes labelled, "DISCARDED"

Bart reaches out and grabs a FIRE CRACKER from a passing elf... his eyes brimming with evil intent. He hides it behind his back...

ANGLE ON SERGEANT STORM.

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
These Elves are our best allies in the fight against evil. Thank them now, for they will one day save your lives...

The platform reaches its destination and stops on a small landing...

ANGLE ON A HEAVY DOOR.

We read the sign: "TOP SECRET"

Rupert, whom we recognise from earlier, knocks on the door... and waits. He's wearing a three-piece suit... Looks like a respectable, solid citizen.

Then the door opens and an old chirpy man exits. This is GEPETTO, the master, the Da Vinci of Storyville. He locks the door with a SPECIAL KEY and puts it inside his lab coat pocket. His gaze falls on the cadets. A huge smile appears on his face...

GEPETTO

Welcome... Welcome. The first day is always very exciting. New things. New friends. But enough chatter... we're here for one reason -- the watches.

Excitement mounts... as Rupert wheels a cart full of WATCHES into frame. Geppetto picks one up and holds it high.

GEPETTO (CONT'D)

Every cadet here today will be given one of these watches... we call them VALOMETERS.

One by one, the cadets are given a valometer by Rupert.

GEPETTO (CONT'D)

Its function is simple. Each watch holds a tiny computer that monitors your progress. Every time you choose the right path, a bar will light up. And when all the bars light up...

Each put on their watch.

GEPETTO (CONT'D)

... your valometer tells us that you are ready to wear the badge.

This is Christmas for Jumper -- so proud of his new gadget -- LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT! *There's no other way to put it!*

GEPETTO (CONT'D)

But remember one thing: What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving them.

ANGLE ON BART KNOWLES.

The bully sneaks in behind Tucker. He takes the fire cracker he stole earlier and drops it inside the boy's sweatpants. BLLLLAAAAAMMMM! BLLLLAAAAAMMMM!

Jumper intervenes -- he hammers his fist against Bart's jaw... who reels backwards...

Sergeant Storm grabs Jumper by the collar and nips the fight in its bud.

But it's just chaos now!

Tucker is unstoppable -- he jumps up and down -- screaming and howling in pain -- bumping into Rupert, toppling the cart. And before we know it... PLOOOP! He magically turns into a COW. DOG. RAT. CAMEL!

Everyone bursts into fits of laughter. Everyone except Sergeant Storm.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
I'm sorry... I'm sorry.

FIG. MOUSE. RABBIT.

The Sergeant grabs Tucker by his collar too.

SERGEANT STORM
You're going to be very sorry.
Both of you. I promise you that.

JUMPER JONES
(protesting)
It's not fair. You didn't see
what happened!

SERGEANT STORM
We'll talk about all this later.
Now, back to the training
grounds.

The cadets are waved goodbye by Geppetto... *such a sweet man -- the perfect grandpa!*

GEPPELTO
They're a feisty lot, aren't
they?

RUPERT
Let us hope they can serve our
cause well.

GEPPELTO
Well said. Well said.

Rupert sees the special key in Geppetto's pocket... his hand snakes in and steals it.

CUT TO:

EXT. CROSS-COUNTRY COURSE - A SERIOUS OF SHOTS -
DAY/EVENING

Sergeant Storm holds a stopwatch, timing the cadets as they run through mud... climb over walls... skip through tires... until they drop at the finish line.

He's not happy. It shows! He sneers down at his exhausted class.

SERGEANT STORM
Again. Come on. Move, move...

Most can barely stand on their feet. They trudge back to the starting line...

ANGLE ON TUCKER NORTHBROOK.

Desperate. He gulps down air... unable to react!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
I can't do this no more. I
can't.

JUMPER JONES
Yes you can!

Jumper helps Tucker to his feet. They move back to the starting line... and here we go again...

Through the mud... pushing hard... a punishing pace --
Sergeant Storm snorts disdainfully.

SERGEANT STORM
One more time... and this time -
- FASTER!

CUT TO:

INT. MESS HALL - NIGHT

Jumper, Tucker and the rest can barely sit at a table... Exhausted, drained! They stare at their meals -- unable to move a muscle. Tucker's face drops into his plate... Bart emits a solitary, strained snigger. The rest have no energy to join in!

SERGEANT STORM (O.S.)
Northbrook and Jones... with me.

Jumper turns round --

ANGLE ON SERGEANT STORM.

He's pissed off...

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
MOVE. NOW!

Jumper helps Tucker to his feet... they follow the Sergeant!

A huge smirk flashes across Bart Knowles' face.

CUT TO:

INT. RUPERT'S VEHICLE - NIGHT

A spooked Rupert sits in his vehicle... fiddling nervously with the SPECIAL KEY he stole.

The radio plays softly, a happy tune, taunting him --

His eyes, terrified, are riveted to the Laboratory up the path.

RUPERT'S POV:

Geppetto and TWO ELVES exit the premise... exchange pleasantries and depart...

ANGLE ON RUPERT.

His discomfort grows.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. RUPERT'S HOUSE - FLASHBACK

COUNT N. GRIMM

I need two things from you...
First, I need you to steal the
secret map to the Secret Grove.

RUPERT

(visibly torn)
I can't. I can't do that. It is
locked in Geppetto's office.
Only he has the key.

COUNT N. GRIMM

Then I want you to destroy the
laboratory. Fail me and you will
never see your family again!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. RUPERT'S VEHICLE - NIGHT

He opens the glove compartment, clumsily pulls out a TORCH -- and a GUN.

He turns off the radio. Abrupt silence... then a long, deep breath. He concentrates his mind on the task he can't avoid -- opens the door and steps out of the car.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO GEPPETTO'S UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - CONTINUOUS

Rupert's shoes crunch on gravel...

He heads towards the main door... looks around -- not a soul in sight... PERFECT! He slips inside...

CUT TO:

DARKNESS

TORCH LIGHT slices through. Rupert sneaks down a hallway. Nervous. Eyes darting. You can almost see his heart slamming in his chest.

He reaches Geppetto's door... takes out the special key and opens the door. He steps inside...

CUT TO:

EXT. ENTRANCE TO GEPPETTO'S UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - SAME TIME

Silence... and then: VOICES!

SERGEANT STORM (O.S.)
Did you really think I would
forget what happened?

JUMPER JONES (O.S.)
But Sergeant... it was Bart
who...

SERGEANT STORM
Don't you dare backtalk me!

Sergeant Storm marches into frame... MOPS and BUCKETS in hand. He stops next to the door and opens it.

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
Inside!

Tucker and Jumper obey orders...

CUT TO:

ON BLACK

A few seconds. Then:

FOOM-FOOM-FOOM -- the overhead fluorescents come to life -- we're back in this gigantic hangar. But this time the place is one gigantic mess... JUNK EVERYWHERE! *It's plain shocking...*

ANGLE ON THE BOYS.

Their jaws drop. Jumper runs both hands through his hair.

SERGEANT STORM
I want you to clean this place
up...

JUMPER JONES
(intervening)
B-b-but...

SERGEANT STORM
...and I want it spotless.

The Sergeant gives him a hard look before dumping the mop and bucket at their feet. He turns round and walks away -
- SLAMMING the door behind him...

Tucker looks as if he can't breathe. Jumper speaks, choking on the words.

JUMPER JONES
It's not fair!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
(dejected)
This will take us a whole night!

Jumper picks up the mop...

JUMPER JONES
That which does not destroy me,
makes me stronger...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
What?

JUMPER JONES
That's what my grandfather used
to say...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
I'm tired... I have no energy...

PLOOOP -- and here it starts again... Tucker turns into a
DOG. GIRAFFE. GORILLA.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/GORILLA
No... not now!

JUMPER JONES
You need to calm down... come
on. Say it with me...

PIG. RABBIT. HARE.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/HARE
Say what?

JUMPER JONES
That which does not destroy me,
makes me stronger...

GOAT. BULL. CHICKEN

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/CHICKEN
Do I have to?

JUMPER JONES

Yes... You need to believe that
this experience will teach us
something.

CAT. RAT. LAMA.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/LAMA

I need sleep, not motivation.

JUMPER JONES

Come on...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/LAMA

That which does not destroy me,
makes me stronger.

JUMPER JONES

Again... but this time with real
conviction. That which does not
destroy me, makes me stronger.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/LAMA

That which does not destroy me,
makes me stronger. That which
does not destroy me, makes me
stronger.

His intensity grows. He turns round and SHOUTS LOUDLY to
the machines. This is a new Tucker -- a motivated one --
PLOOP! Tucker is normal again.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK

That which does not destroy me,
makes me stronger.

He spins round... Jumper is not there!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK (CONT'D)

Jumper?

Where did he go?

TUCKER NORTHBROOK (CONT'D)

Jumper?

His body tenses. He hurries down the staircase that leads
to the main laboratory and testing area --

Then suddenly: Jumper shoots out of nowhere on a
SEGWAY...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK (CONT'D)

(angrily)

Jumper!

JUMPER JONES

This is so cool!

Jumper is ecstatic...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
You're going to get us into so
much trouble!

JUMPER JONES
Look here...

Jumper ditches the segway and runs to another area...

Tucker is right behind him...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
Jumper... please. Let's just
clean and leave...

JUMPER JONES
You have to see this...

Jumper is like a kid in a candy shop -- eyes taking it all in -- thrilled, amazed! He plays with a BOX SHAPED GADGET -- its function we can only guess... he shakes the contents. Nothing. Jumper discards it. Tucker picks it up... it starts to tremble in his hands! Panicked, he hurls it behind him. BLAM... The box becomes a CAGE.

He moves away... quickly!

Jumper picks up the rocket belt...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
Please... Jumper... stop this.

JUMPER JONES
You worry way too much...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
We need to clean this place up.

Tucker snatches the rocket belt from Jumper's hands... a RUMBLING NOISE -- somehow he has managed to switch it on! The inevitable happens -- the THRUSTERS vomit fire and Tucker ROCKETS UP AND AWAY -- speeding from one side of the lab to another... everything in their wake catches fire.

It's a disaster of epic proportions!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK (CONT'D)
No... I'm feeling sick!

Tucker SCREAMS WILDLY as he spins out of control.

JUMPER JONES
I'm coming to help you! Hold on!

Jumper needs a plan! He looks around -- DESPERATE... he fishes inside a number of boxes... finds a BUTTERFLY NET. He doesn't notice the box's label: "DISCARDED".

Happy with his find, Jumper climbs on top of a table and waits for Tucker to pass overhead -- *looks like a sensible idea. IT'S NOT! And we will soon see why.*

As soon as Tucker is close, Jumper swings his net... manages to capture his runaway friend -- but the rocket belt lifts them higher and higher... then the NET delivers an ELECTRIC SHOCK...

Both Tucker and Jumper are electrocuted... They SCREAM!

The rocket belt fizzles out --

THEY BOTH PLUMMET... the ground coming up fast...

Then: The heavy door with the TOP SECRET sign opens... Rupert, clutching a SCROLLED MAP, exits. He looks up -- a flash of panic in his eyes!

Tucker and Jumper fall right on top of him... OOOUUUCCHHH! That hurts!

Jumper stands up quickly, tousling his hair. Tucker does the same... Jumper runs to help a dazed Rupert to his feet, dusts him off quickly... then grabs the scrolled map. His eyes linger on the paper... we read: "SECRET LOCATION OF SECRET GROVE".

Rupert nabs the map back.

RUPERT
That's mine.

JUMPER JONES
Right... Right.

RUPERT
What are you doing...?

THE LABORATORY IS IN RUINS!!!

JUMPER JONES
We can explain everything!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
(trembling)
We're... We're... sor--

Jumper elbows Tucker -- SHUT UP!

JUMPER JONES
We're cadets. You might remember us from today. We heard some strange noises and thought we'd check the place out... and look at this mess!!!

Tucker is becoming very agitated...

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
But don't worry. We'll find out
who did it... and we'll arrest
him. Isn't that right partner?

And there it goes again -- PLOOOP: COW. MONKEY. DOG.

Emotions war on Rupert's face, finally giving way to grim
resolve. He snaps and whips out his pistol.

Jumper and Tucker stare at each other... Jumper extends
his hands. Palms out. Tucker/Dog does the same. Both
surrender!

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

INT. GEPPETTO'S UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - NIGHT

No one moves a muscle. A jittery and confused Rupert
waves his gun around.

JUMPER JONES
Hey mister, aren't you over-
reacting a little?

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DOG
We lied... and we shouldn't
have. We're sorry. We're sorry.
We made this mess. We were
stupid!

Jumper rolls his eyes and elbows Tucker -- SHUT UP!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DOG (CONT'D)
Please don't tell the Sergeant!
We'll clean it all up!

Tucker: PONY. RABBIT. SNAKE.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/SNAKE
I promise!

JUMPER JONES
It's not as bad as it seems!

He hardly finishes the sentence -- BLAMM -- a machine
collapses. SPARKS fly -- hydraulic liquid gushes out. It
is THAT BAD!

RUPERT
You're not supposed to be here!

JUMPER JONES
Tell that to the Sergeant!

RUPERT
(lost, mumbling to
himself)
You're NOT supposed to be here!

Rupert reels back. Panic rising in him like a wave.

RUPERT (CONT'D)
I'm sorry! But you can't stop
me! I have to give him this map.

JUMPER JONES
Stop you? Give him the map? What
are you talking about?

Rupert closes his eyes and FIRES wildly. The weapon
recoils Rupert starts shooting into the air...

The boys duck for cover behind some crates....

ANGLE ON CRATES.

Tucker: CAT. GOOSE. DONKEY.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DONKEY
We said we're sorry. We won't
lie again!

More bullets ZIP and SNAP above their head.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DONKEY (CONT'D)
What's going on? Why is he
shooting at us?

EUREKA! It dawns on him --

JUMPER JONES
He's stealing the map!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DONKEY
Map? What map?

JUMPER JONES
The secret map that reveals the
location to the Secret Grove.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DONKEY
So this is not about us?

He breathes a sigh of relief!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DONKEY (CONT'D)
So he's the bad one here!

More bullets whizz past them.

RUPERT
I'm not bad. But he's holding my
family hostage!

JUMPER JONES (O.S.)
Who is?

RUPERT
Count N. Grimm. He will kill
them. I have no choice. I have
to steal it!

ANGLE ON JUMPER AND TUCKER.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DONKEY
(choking)
Count N. Grimm!

JUMPER JONES
We can help you...

Tucker becomes a CHICKEN.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/CHICKEN
It's Count N. Grimm! No one can
help him!

Jumper tries to silence Tucker.

BANG! BANG! BULLETS RICOCHET CRAZILY -- chipping through
the wooden crates...

Tucker: ELK. MOUSE. DUCK.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DUCK
Jumper, do something!

Jumper: His mind grinding. Then --

JUMPER JONES
You don't have to do this. I'm
sure we can work something out!
(a beat)
Let's talk!

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DUCK
Let's talk? Really? That's it?

ANGLE ON RUPERT.

A BEAD of SWEAT trickles down the Rupert's forehead.

JUMPER JONES
You don't have to do this!

The crates are totally destroyed. The boys are now
exposed... with nowhere to hide!

RUPERT
I have to save my family! I'm
sorry.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DUCK
We won't say a word to anyone. I
promise. We never saw you! We
never spoke to you.

Rupert's finger squeezes the trigger... NOTHING! THE GUN IS EMPTY!

Tucker faints... Jumper looks around. He sees the fire alarm... BREAKS THE GLASS! Punches the red button... A LOUD PIERCING SHRILL bleeds through the hall!

RUPERT
No! No! No! You'll alert everyone.

JUMPER JONES
It's over. Give me that map!

Rupert, desperate, takes off running.

Jumper darts after him...

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
Stop right there... In the name of the law.

Rupert barges through the laboratory knocking over a number of machines, momentarily slowing Jumper behind him.

The elf bursts purposefully into a side room and SLAMS the door shut...

Jumper reaches the door -- too late! He grabs the handle, pulls as hard as he can, struggles, but it stays locked...

We read the sign above; "MAIN CONTROL ROOM".

CUT TO:

INT. GEPPETTO'S UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - MAIN CONTROL ROOM - SAME TIME

Rupert sits at a desk... typing in a number of commands frantically --

ON THE MONITOR: "START LOCK DOWN".

Jumper's face appears through the small window in the door.

JUMPER JONES (O.S.)
Open this door...

RUPERT
You were not supposed to be here!

JUMPER JONES
Let us help you...

RUPERT
You can't help me.

JUMPER JONES
Don't give the map to that
monster!

Rupert keys in a few more commands... then moves across
the room and raises a LEVER!

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF SHOTS

-- WHANG! WHANG! WHANG! -- All METALLIC DOORS inside the
building are SHUT TIGHT in a split second!

The echo reverberates throughout the building!

The whole place is now sealed!

CLOSE ON:

Jumper's eyes go wide.

JUMPER JONES
What are you doing?

They face each other through the glass in the door, mere
inches between them.

RUPERT
I'm sorry.

Rupert walks away.

CUT TO:

INT. GEPPETTO'S UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - MAIN CONTROL
ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rupert's face explodes in sweat, heart pounding like a
percussion drum -- he punches the last command into his
system...

A VOICE is heard bellowing throughout the building...

COMPUTER (V.O.)
Self-destruct sequence will
commence in two minutes. Please
vacate the building.

On the monitor: A countdown starts --

JUMPER JONES (O.S.)
What are you doing?

Rupert, torn by all this, steps to the far end of the
room --

RUPERT
I have no choice!

Rupert punches a button on the wall. A MACHINE GROANS to life... and an elevator descends. The Elf enters... and disappears...

JUMPER JONES (O.S.)
Don't leave us here. Please!
Don't do this!

CUT TO:

INT. GEPPETTO'S UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - MAIN HALL - SAME TIME

Jumper has another go at the door, pulling as hard as he can... NOTHING!

JUMPER JONES
No... No!

Confidence ebbs for a few seconds...

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
We need to find a way out...

He turns in a frantic circle and stops. His eyes: scanning the whole place -- thinking of solutions -- measuring everything!

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON TUCKER.

His eyes roll back into his head, as he slowly reorients himself. He stands up, looks around... All seems well -- the armed elf is gone... a shuddering sigh of relief.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
We're safe!

Then --

COMPUTER (V.O.)
Please vacate the building.
Self-destruct sequence will
commence in 60 seconds.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
What? Self what?

His face goes from white to a sickly yellow... He's trembling, shaking his head from side to side. *This can't be happening.*

TUCKER NORTHBROOK (CONT'D)
Jumper! Jumper! We need to get
out of here!

He sprints across the hall, SCREAMING!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK (CONT'D)
Jumper! Jumper!

He reaches Jumper -- chest heaving, hands on his knees.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK (CONT'D)
We have to get out of here. NOW!

But Jumper is far away... concentrating -- his mind working on a solution.

Then --

COMPUTER (V.O.)
Please vacate the building.
Self-destruct sequence will
commence in 50 seconds.

Tucker runs to the EXIT! Inspects the sealed door... and bolts off in search of some tool -- sorting through shelves, opening drawers, diving into cupboards. He finally finds a SLEDGEHAMMER.

Tucker attacks the door with everything he's got... pounding it again and again! A hideous METAL SHRIEK! He stops to check his progress -- NOTHING! NOT EVEN A DENT!

COMPUTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Please vacate the building.
Self-destruct sequence will
commence in 40 seconds.

Tucker swallows hard!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
Forty seconds?

Then PLOOOP: He's a SQUIRREL. LAMB. RABBIT.

CUT TO:

EXT. GEPPETTO'S UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - SAME TIME

SIRENS ring out -- rising -- closing in!

Rupert emerges from a SECRET EXIT... runs towards his parked vehicle and hops inside...

CUT TO:

INT. RUPERT'S VEHICLE - CONTINUOUS

Rupert turns the key in the ignition. The engine rumbles to life. He jams the GAS PEDAL... leaving the laboratory behind him...

Then: POLICE CARS, FIRE ENGINES AND AMBULANCES come speeding toward him, sirens wailing...

Rupert watches them pass by...

He shifts gear and PEELS OUT!

CUT TO:

INT. GEPETTO'S UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - CONTINUOUS

Tucker/Rabbit stares helplessly at the door.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/RABBIT
Jumper? What are we going to do?

Jumper is in motion... Tucker hops behind...

JUMPER JONES
There's only way out of here.

Tucker: CHICKEN. MONKEY. DOG.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DOG
Yes?

JUMPER JONES
Yes... Through that glass
ceiling!

Tucker/Dog looks up! SHOCK!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DOG
And how do we get up there?

COMPUTER (V.O.)
Please vacate the building.
Self-destruct sequence will
commence in 30 seconds.

JUMPER JONES
We fly through!

Tucker/Dog is petrified! PLOOOP: TOAD. MOUSE. OSTRICH.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/OSTRICH
Fly?

Jumper picks up the rocket belt. Jams on a helmet.
Tucker/Ostrich buries his head in the ground...

JUMPER JONES
We don't have time for second
guessing...

Tucker/Ostrich lifts his head --

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/OSTRICH
But we don't know how to pilot
that thing!

JUMPER JONES
We have to learn... fast.

Tucker: PANDA. FOX. TAPIR. MOUSE. DOG. CAT. LAMA.
TORTOISE.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/TORTOISE
I'm scared!

JUMPER JONES
I'm scared too. But we have to
try!

Tucker can't stop changing: HARE. BEAR. GOAT. GOOSE.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/GOOSE
I can't stop these
transformations. I just can't!

Tucker: CAT. BEAR. GIRAFFE. ELEPHANT.

JUMPER JONES
You need to calm down.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/ELEPHANT
I can't!

JUMPER JONES
Yes you can!

COMPUTER (V.O.)
Self-destruct sequence will
commence in 20 seconds.

TUCKER: BAT. LIZARD. HORSE. PIG.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/PIG
(Choking)
Twenty seconds!

JUMPER JONES
You can do it! You can control
your transformations... I know
you can! You've done it before.

Jumper squeezes Tucker/Pig's shoulder. His courage is
contagious.

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
I believe in you!

Tucker/Pig closes his eyes... Thinks hard. PLOOOP! He
turns into a MOUSE and leaps into Jumper's pocket...
Holds tight...

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
(full of determination)
Let's do this!

The ON BUTTON is slammed -- thrusters COUGH repeatedly...

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
Come on... Come on...

Finally, they start to spit fire. Jumper tugs the
THROTTLE and off they go... LIFT OFF --

A LOUD SCREAM as they speed uncontrollably around the
hangar. Jumper struggles to control the rocket belt...
he's manages... slowly. His confidence grows -- they're

ready! They charge towards the glass ceiling -- BLAM!!!
THEY BOUNCE OFF and drop to the ground -- THUD!
OOOOUCCCHHH! *That must hurt like absolute hell!*

Is it over?

EXT. GEPPETTO'S UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - SEEN FROM ABOVE
- SAME TIME

Organised chaos. Red lights flashing -- the whole area
has been sealed off.

On the opposite rooftops, SWAT TEAMS are deploying.

ANGLE ON COMMAND POST.

This has been hastily improvised behind an SPD van.
Geppetto confers with the Jimmy Jones and OTHER OFFICERS.

JIMMY JONES
Are there any people inside?

OFFICER BEAST
We don't know yet.

JIMMY JONES
Can we override the system?

GEPPETTO
It's jammed.

JIMMY JONES
Jammed?

GEPPETTO
Someone has tampered with our
program.

This rocks Jimmy for a second but he covers it well. A
Chief of Police can never show any sign of weakness.

JIMMY JONES
What do you need?

GEPPETTO
I need time and space.

JIMMY JONES
All I can give you is space.

GEPPETTO
I'll try!

Jimmy turns to his people...

JIMMY JONES
Make space. Anything Geppetto
needs, we give him...

Geppetto gets back to work on his mini-computer.

INT. GEPETTO'S UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - SAME TIME

There's no time for pain. Jumper pulls himself back on his feet. Teeth gritted. This is a boy who will never give up!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/MOUSE
What will we do?

They need another plan... quickly.

JUMPER JONES
Think Tucker. Think!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/MOUSE
The sledgehammer! The
sledgehammer.

Jumper nods. He makes a mad dash for the sledgehammer... picks it up. It's heavy...

COMPUTER (V.O.)
Self-destruct sequence will
commence in 10 seconds... 9...
8...

And off they go AGAIN! Eyes blazing -- YELLING!

CUT TO:

EXT. GEPETTO'S UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON SERGEANT STORM.

Still in his pyjamas, he marches through the CROWD of OFFICERS.

SERGEANT STORM
What's going on?

JIMMY JONES
Someone attacked the laboratory!
They set the main computer to
self-destruct.

SERGEANT STORM
Where are the boys?

JIMMY JONES
What boys?

SERGEANT STORM
Cadet Jones and Cadet
Northbrook! I left them there to
clean the laboratory.

JIMMY JONES
Jumper? My grandson?

As soon as he says the word...

A MASSIVE EXPLOSION!!!

Everyone is hurled backwards... ALL SOUND FADES OUT
MOMENTARILY -- an electronic white noise takes over... it
overwhelms us --

CUT TO:

INT. RUPERT'S VEHICLE - SAME TIME

Rupert looks at the RISING FLAMES in the rear-view
mirror... sadness in his eyes!

RUPERT
I'm sorry boys.

CUT TO:

EXT. GEPETTO'S UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - SAME TIME

Jimmy fights for consciousness... dread etched in every
line on his face.

THE DEVASTATION around him is numbing...

Sergeant Storm rushes to his side to check if he's
alright... he bends down...

JIMMY JONES
What will I tell his
grandmother? What will I tell
Gretel?

Sergeant Storm looks at him with great compassion.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. GEPETTO'S UNDERGROUND LABORATORY - SAME TIME

Fire and smoke curl upwards from the laboratory...

A fire engine, manned by BEAVERS, has begun pumping a
massive stream of water...

Jimmy stares at the savage flames chewing up the walls of
the laboratory... feeling the bile of fear in his throat.
A wave of pain rolls through the old man -- his eyes
cloud over with tears.

JIMMY JONES
I'm going inside.

SERGEANT STORM
It's too dangerous, Sir.

JIMMY JONES
I'm not going to tell my wife I
just watched from the side
lines.

He picks up a HELMET and AXE from a parked fire truck.

SERGEANT STORM
I'm coming with you.

JIMMY JONES
No. You said it yourself. It's
too dangerous.

SERGEANT STORM
This is my fault. I failed you.

JIMMY JONES
No. You did not!

Suddenly: A loud piercing SCREAM... of exhilaration --
and out of the THICK BLACK SMOKE we see Jumper and
Tucker/Mouse emerge... flying down along the side of
ravaged building -- almost scraping the ground... *a
miracle! They're alive!*

SHOCKED FACES follow the boys as they blast towards
them... The rescue forces jump out of the way -- Jumper
and Tucker/Mouse BLUR PAST...

Jimmy can't help but smile...

SERGEANT STORM
(yelling)
You two are in big trouble! Come
down. NOW!

ANGLE ON JUMPER and TUCKER/MOUSE.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/MOUSE
I'm getting sick. Land this
thing...

JUMPER JONES
We need to stop that Elf.

Tucker/Mouse turns green!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/MOUSE
Please...

Tucker/Mouse can't help it... he empties his stomach!

ANGLE ON SERGEANT STORM.

SERGEANT STORM
I will not say it --

PLOP!!! The Sergeant is showered with Tucker's sick!
YUUUCCCKKKKK! The Sergeant is livid... but Jimmy and the
other officers are laughing their hearts out...

ANGLE ON JUMPER.

JUMPER JONES
Do you really want to land and
face the Sergeant?

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/MOUSE
(resigned)
Let's get that Elf!

Jumper -- a twinkle in his eye -- forces the throttle forward and off they go... the fire from the thrusters racing right behind them...

ANGLE ON SERGEANT STORM.

He wipes his face in disgust.

SERGEANT STORM
You two are in so much trouble!

CUT TO:

EXT. STORYVILLE - PRINCESS AVENUE - TRAFFIC LIGHTS -
LATER

A lonely intersection.

Low fog skims the sidewalks giving the street a surreal feeling.

Hardly any traffic, just a few HEAVY HAULERS.

A traffic light turns: GREEN. AMBER. RED.

Rupert's car screeches to a halt.

INT. RUPERT'S VEHICLE - SAME TIME

Rupert, fidgety, leans forward... eyes glued on the lights.

RUPERT
Come on. Come on.

His fingers tap nervously against the wheel...

Then: A RAPPING ON HIS WINDOW! HE TURNS ROUND... SCREAMS LIKE A GIRL!

Jumper and Tucker/Mouse are at the window.

JUMPER JONES
Sir, please step out of the
vehicle.

Rupert, panicked, stomps the gas pedal --

EXT. STORYVILLE - PRINCESS AVENUE - TRAFFIC LIGHTS -
CONTINUOUS

Rear tires spin, smoke. The vehicle shimmies for beat and then -- VROOOOOM! It rockets forward through the red light, swerving wildly -- missing an on-coming TRUCK by a whisker...

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON JUMPER AND TUCKER/MOUSE.

JUMPER JONES
Buckle up, partner!

THEY give chase!

CUT TO:

What follows is the mother of all chase sequences: It will embody all that we love -- wild speed, sickening crashes and spectacular mayhem!

EXT. WIZARD WAY - CONTINUOUS

Rupert's vehicle devours the asphalt -- VROOOOOM --

INT. RUPERT'S VEHICLE - CONTINUOUS

Rupert, edgy, looks through the rear view mirror. To his horror, Jumper and Tucker are still in hot pursuit...

Determined, he works the wheel and gear -- guns it!

CLOSE ON

Ascending speedometer -- passing the 110MPH mark.

The engine SCREAMS in protest!

EXT. MALIORA PARK - CONTINUOUS

We PAN around this QUIET, PEACEFUL OASIS of NATURAL BEAUTY, smack in the middle of the city! We STOP at the GATE.

A growing, ominous ROAR --

BLAAAAM! Rupert's car SMASHES right through... slicing across the grounds... swerving violently to avoid the trees...

Jumper and Tucker/Mouse are right behind, snapping at his heels... zigzagging through this deadly maze... gaining ground... Jumper forces the throttle --

There's just one problem -- the fire from the thrusters is torching everything behind them!

ANGLE ON RUPERT'S VEHICLE.

Rupert flattens a second gate. His car, covered in grass, shrubs and leaves, whips into a hard right -- nearly jack-knives, threatening to tip... and we're off again!

Jumper and Tucker/Mouse are right behind him. They stop for a second... and turn to see:

The whole park is now one huge, blazing FURNACE!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/MOUSE

Oh my!

JUMPER JONES

We don't have time for this. We have to stop the Elf.

Off they go!

CUT TO:

EXT. SNOWFLAKE ALLEY - MINUTES LATER

We're into the narrowest of streets... Rupert's car SCRAPES its way between PARKED VEHICLES, taking out its side mirrors...

Rupert reaches the end of the street. There's nowhere to go... just a SHALLOW FLIGHT OF STAIRS. *Beggars can't be choosers* --

CLUMP-KUMP-KA-DUMP-DUMP-DUMP...

Rupert leaves a trail of car parts behind him... REAR BUMPER gone! FRONT BUMPER gone!

Jumper and Tucker/Mouse zip through.

EXT. TOAD ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Rupert's vehicle bursts out of nowhere and whips through the street like a gunshot! SUPER FAST...

INT. RUPERT'S VEHICLE - SAME TIME

He looks through his rear view mirror... nothing! A smile creeps across his face. But that was premature... THERE THEY ARE -- back on his tail -- a couple of lengths behind...

He floors the gas!

The speedometer climbing.

EXT. TOAD ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Jumper and Tucker/Mouse close in... forcing the thrusters to the max.

But then --

INT. RUPERT'S VEHICLE - SAME TIME

Rupert expertly yanks the hand brake and jerks the wheel to the left....

The world outside spins 180 degrees -- he guns the pedal and he's off again, slipping into a side street on the left!

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON JUMPER AND TUCKER/MOUSE.

Flying through the street --

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/MOUSE
Left! To the left!

Jumper works the throttle -- can't stop! They're on a COLLISION COURSE with a TOWERING BLOCK OF FLATS.

Tucker/Mouse covers his eyes...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/MOUSE (CONT'D)
Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhh!

INT. BEAR'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

THREE BEARS (MAMA BEAR, PAPA BEAR and LITTLE BEAR) sit down to dinner. Calm. Cheerful... all smiles!

GOLDILOCKS, a pretty, little girl, puts a BOWL of hot grub on the table... it smells delicious. Before they can dig in --

Jumper and Tucker burst through the window in an explosion of glass... Trashing the table... wrecking havoc -- smashing right through the front door of this apartment!

LITTLE BEAR
They spoiled our dinner!

Little Bear cries uncontrollably!

EXT. WAND ALLEY - CONTINUOUS - LOOKING UP

Jumper and Tucker/Mouse CRASH out of a window -- SCREAMING -- cross the alley and burst into another...

INT. GRANDMA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

GRANDMA, a perky older lady, walks into the bathroom, drops her robe and steps into the tub -- turns the shower on.

She soaps herself up... humming some cute tune.

The door CRASHES open...

Jumper and Tucker/Mouse rip through, taking the shower curtain with them... before slamming against the wall -- collapsing to the ground...

PLOOOP Tucker returns to his normal self...

Grandma lets out a gut wrenching SHRIEK!

Their eyes flare wide -- SCREAMING when they see Grandma standing there naked as the day she was born.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOAD ROAD - LATER

Jumper and Tucker are literally thrown out of this block of flats...

They tumble to the floor... Their hair a mess, their faces bruised, their clothing ripped.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
We said we're sorry!

They get to their feet. Unsteady. Wobbly.

ANGLE ON GRANDMA IN THE DOORWAY.

She hurls the rocket belt at the boys.

GRANDMA
And keep your nasty toys away
from me!

Tucker is hit square in the face -- sinks to the ground again!

Jumper hurtles beside him...

JUMPER JONES
Are you OK, buddy?

No response.

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
Tucker... talk to me.

NOTHING!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
It was all for nothing. We lost
him.

Tucker flickers his eyes open...

JUMPER JONES
No we haven't.

Jumper points along the road -- littered with various body parts...

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
He was kind enough to leave us a
trail... come on...

The boys exchange a quick look.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELF STREET - LATER

Rupert's battered car turns into the street, engine HOWLING, COUGHING. A small EXPLOSION under the hood. The vehicle dies... a slow, painful death! It rolls to a stop...

Rupert abandons it...

Map in hand, he runs the last few metres to his house... enters and slams the door shut!

INT. RUPERT'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rupert finally enters the house, in a mad rush.

COUNT N. GRIMM (O.S.)
Finally home.

ANGLE ON COUNT N.GRIMM, RUPERT'S WIFE AND SON.

All are seated on the sofa staring at the TV. Brunhilde is still pale a ghost, frozen...

COUNT N. GRIMM (CONT'D)
We were missing you...

RUPERT
I did what you asked.

COUNT N. GRIMM
I know. It's all over the news...

RUPERT
Here's the map. Now leave my family alone.

Rupert bangs the map on the coffee table. Grimm smiles... his lanky hands reach out for the prized map... eyes wide as saucers.

COUNT N. GRIMM
It was pleasure doing business with you.

EXT. RUPERT'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Jumper and Tucker sneak around the bushes and peer inside through the window.

They see Rupert and Grimm, still in conversation.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
What do we do now?

JUMPER JONES

We stop them!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
We can't defeat Count N. Grimm!
Let's call the police.

JUMPER JONES
We are the police.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
We're cadets.

JUMPER JONES
That's just a detail. Come on. I
need you!

Tucker BLINKS. Fear rising! PLOOOP: He's a LAMB!

INT. RUPERT'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The Count inspects the map... he's more than satisfied!

COUNT N. GRIMM
Then I guess this is an adieu.

Rupert hugs his wife and son...

COUNT N. GRIMM (CONT'D)
But before I depart, how about
one tiny slice of that delicious
apple pie...

RUPERT
Leave us alone! Go away!

COUNT N. GRIMM
Do we really have to be so mean?

Then --

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/LAMB (O.S.)
Mr. Grimm... Mr. Grimm...

CUT TO:

EXT. RUPERT'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/LAMB
Mr. Grimm.

Tucker/Lamb is petrified...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/LAMB (CONT'D)
(whispering to someone
we do not see)
This is crazy...

ANGLE ON JUMPER HIDING IN THE BUSHES.

JUMPER JONES
Go on... It will work.

Tucker is overwhelmed... does his best.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/LAMB
(shouting)
This is the police. You are
under arrest.

INT. RUPERT'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Grimm growls, whips out his pistol... points it straight
at Rupert's son.

COUNT N. GRIMM
Did you rat me out to the
police? Is that what you did?

RUPERT
No. No. I swear.

Rupert steps in front of Grimm's gun... he's on the verge
of tears...

RUPERT (CONT'D)
I did everything you asked. I
stole the map and destroyed the
lab. Please. Leave my family out
of this.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/LAMB (O.S.)
Count N. Grimm... step out of
the house with your hands in the
air!

Count N. Grimm peers out of the window.

GRIMM'S POV: Tucker/Lamb stands in the middle: PLOOOP:
He's a PANDA. An OSTRICH. A LAMA. A POSSUM.

Grimm squints.

COUNT N. GRIMM
What's going on out there?

RUPERT
It must be the two cadets...
they followed me here.

COUNT N. GRIMM
Cadets you say.

RUPERT
Yes. Yes.

COUNT N. GRIMM
Then let's make them regret
accepting the Call.

EXT. RUPERT'S HOUSE - LATER

Tucker/Possum is trembling...

The door bursts open... Count N. Grimm steps outside -- map in one hand... gun in the other -- a showdown stance.

COUNT N. GRIMM
Who dares call my name?

Tucker/Possum faints!

The Count bursts out laughing -- *so creepy!*

COUNT N. GRIMM (CONT'D)
Is that all?

Jumper, rocket belt in hand, springs out of the bushes... SLAMS the ON button... the rocket belt is launched like a fiery bullet -- hitting the Count straight in the chest... tossing him high up into the air! He falls backwards... head hitting the wall.

The Count drops the map. Jumper is quick to pick it up and bolt away.

JUMPER JONES
Come on Tucker.

Tucker/Possum stands up and darts after Jumper...

ANGLE ON COUNT N. GRIMM.

He comes to his senses -- rabid!

He stands up... WHISTLES. His black steed appears out of nowhere... Count N. Grimm climbs on quickly... spurs the horse... and THUNDERS after them... firing his pistol!

ANGLE ON JUMPER and TUCKER/POSSUM.

The cadets run hard... as bullets whizz by...

They turn into another street... then another. They look behind them... the Count is nowhere to be seen... *did they manage to escape?*

NO. The Count and his fierce steed are right in front of them... gun cocked and ready!

COUNT N. GRIMM
The map... give me the map!

JUMPER JONES
No...

Tucker/Possum hides behind Jumper.

JUMPER'S POV:

The barrel is right in our face!

COUNT N. GRIMM
Then say goodnight...

Both close their eyes...

Suddenly: Rupert lunges out the darkness, YELLING
DEFIANTLY, and knocks the Count off his horse! Rupert
lands badly... he's no fighter. It shows! The Count is
quickly back on his feet.

COUNT N. GRIMM (CONT'D)
You dare defy me?

POLICE SIRENS rising in the distance...

RUPERT
It's over.

COUNT N. GRIMM
We'll see about that!

HUNDRED of POLICE CARS race through the night... red and
blue flashing. They stop a few metres away...

A solid wall of OFFICERS, armed to the teeth, descend...

Grimm is trapped. He can't fight such numbers. He mounts
back on his steed.

COUNT N. GRIMM (CONT'D)
Mark my words, we'll meet again.

He spurs his horse... and GALLOPS away!

Jumper and Tucker sink to their knees -- the map is safe!

The police officers push forward...

Jimmy runs towards his grandson...

CUT TO:

EXT. RUPERT'S HOUSE - LATER

A distressed Brunhilde hugs her son as Rupert is taken
away by the police.

ANGLE ON TUCKER AND JUMPER.

Both are sitting in an ambulance...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
What will happen to him?

SERGEANT STORM (O.S.)
You'd better worry about what's
going to happen to you!

They both turn their heads... Sergeant Storm is standing
right beside them... and he's not happy at all!

JUMPER JONES
But we saved the map...

The Sergeant whips out a notebook...

SERGEANT STORM
And you destroyed the park... 23
vehicles. Two apartments. Shall
I continue?

JUMPER JONES
We did our best.

SERGEANT STORM
You're in deep trouble!

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Jumper is sitting next to his parents' tombstone. It
reads: "JUNIOR and AVA JONES - WE HONOUR THEM BY DOING
WHAT IS RIGHT!"

He's all excited...

JUMPER JONES
It was a great night... Guess
what? You're not going to
believe me. My first bar lit up.

Jumper proudly shows his valometer.

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
I'm one step closer to becoming
a police officer. Isn't that
swell? I told you I'd do great.

A beat.

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
I'll make you proud. You'll see.
Good night Dad. Good night Mum.

Jumper walks away.

THE END

ONCE UPON A CRIME

"THE PERFECT STORM"

ACT ONE

FADE UP:

EXT. STORYVILLE POLICE ACADEMY - DUSK

The red brick building of the Academy towers over the closed gate... the sign reads: "We choose to be heroes!"

SNORING...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARRACKS - VARIOUS ROOMS - DUSK

We PAN around these plain rooms. The CADETS are fast asleep... some SNORE, some toss and turn...

We recognise a few faces: BART and TUCKER -- so exhausted, he's mumbling in his sleep, "Yes Sergeant Storm. Yes!"

DISSOLVE to:

Jumper lies in bed, fully dressed in fatigues -- eyes wide open -- glued to the ceiling...

JUMPER JONES
Five, four, three, two...

Jumper's face breaks out in a huge grin.

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
... one.

CUT TO:

TIGHT ON A DOOR -- LOW ANGLE.

The sound of HARSH FOOTSTEPS.

The door swings opens. POLISHED BOOTS march in --

The overhead lights explode.

We PAN UP to Sergeant Storm's stern face...

SERGEANT STORM (O.S.)
(barking)
GET UP! GET UP!

He struts down a corridor, ramrod straight, hands on hips.

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
On your feet... training starts
in two minutes!!!

The whole barracks stirs in a panicked frenzy. Sleepy cadets rush around, bumping into each other, tripping... It's pure chaos!

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
Move. Move. Move.

CUT TO:

Jumper leaps out of bed -- all excited...

JUMPER JONES
Come on, Tucker... it's time for training.

Tucker is a zombie. He groans and gestures Jumper off...

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
We'll be late. We don't want that.

Jumper struggles hard to drag a sleepy Tucker out of bed... but the boy just doesn't want to get up -- he clings to the bed. It turns into an ugly tug of war --

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
Tucker... come on. We're the men of the hour!

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
Need... sleep!

JUMPER JONES
We're heroes... we should lead by example!

Tucker's eyes open wide on the word "heroes" -- he lets go... they reel backwards -- SLAMMING HARD against the wall. Bodies crumple on impact, sliding down to the floor.

Tucker is all perked up.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
Heroes? You really think we're heroes?

JUMPER JONES
Yes. We saved Storyville.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
We did... we did!

Tucker springs to his feet and quickly slips into his fatigues -- a huge smile plastered on his face.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK (CONT'D)
No one will be making fun of me today... Come on, Jumper... what are you waiting for. Let's roll!

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR - SAME TIME

Sergeant Storm, fists on hips, stiff as a board, watches as the cadets whizz out of their rooms and stream towards the exit...

Tucker and Jumper are the last to stumble out. The Sergeant, growling like a dog, bars their path --

SERGEANT STORM
Not so fast. You two won't be
training today.

JUMPER JONES
But...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
(confused)
We're heroes!

SERGEANT STORM
Follow me...

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON TV SCREEN:

CCTV FOOTAGE plays -- we see Jumper and Tucker trashing Geppetto's hyperlab... AN EPIC DISASTER!

SERGEANT STORM (V.O.)
This was recovered this
morning...

PULL OUT to show that we are in Sergeant's Storm office.

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
YOU FAILED TO MENTION ALL THIS
IN YOUR REPORT!

The Sergeant is shaking in anger...

ANGLE ON TUCKER AND JUMPER.

Sweat drips down Tucker's face in rivers...

JUMPER JONES
(timidly)
But we saved the map... didn't
we?

SERGEANT STORM
One thing I hate in this
world... is a smarty pants.

The Sergeant's face contorts with rage...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. OFFICES - LAVATORY - DAY

Rows and rows of cubicles...

SERGEANT STORM
You will scrub the toilets, then
you will scrub the floors...

Jumper and Tucker, eyes bulging, mop and bucket in hand,
shake their heads in disbelief!

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
This building has ten stories.
That means ten lavatories. I
want each one of them spotless
and sparkling. So much so that
if I decide to break bread
inside one of them, I will be
proud to do so! Understood?

The cadets SNAP to attention.

JUMPER AND TUCKER
Yes, Sergeant Storm.

SERGEANT STORM
I have my eyes on you two!

Sergeant Storm marches off like a wind up toy.

Deflated, the two stare at the herculean task at hand.

Then, from the far end of the lavatory: the loudest FART
in the history of the world...

Utter shock registers on both their faces...

THE FLUSHING OF A TOILET... a door opens and a PLUMP
OFFICER walks out... washes his hands... and exits...
without acknowledging the two.

They stand there, in silence. It stinks... BAD! Jumper
covers his nose -- Tucker turns white... then faints.

DISSOLVE TO:

DIFFERENT LAVATORIES - VARIOUS SHOTS - DIFFERENT TIMES

-- Tucker, wielding a plunger, pumps at a clogged toilet
with a disgusted look imprinted on his face... this is
degrading!

Jumper is standing right behind him -- a motor mouth --

JUMPER JONES
This is so unfair... we're
cadets. We're supposed to be
training not cleaning.

-- Tucker is on his knees scrubbing the floor...

Jumper shadows him, mop in hand...

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
We saved Storyville... how could
he forget that? This is not the
way to repay us... we should
have been given medals not mops!

Jumper throws the mop away as if it was toxic.

TWO SPD DETECTIVES enter the place chatting, ignoring the boys. Each enter into a cubicle... leaving behind a trail of muddy footprints...

Tucker and Jumper share a stretch of silence... Tucker waits expectantly for Jumper's reaction...

ANGLE ON JUMPER.

Oblivious to all the dirt...

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
Do you know what Grimm could
have done to Storyville if he
found out where the Secret Grove
is? It would have been a
disaster of epic proportions...
It would have been chaos!

Tucker looks like he's going to explode -- he can't take anymore of his constant complaining! He breathes deep... suppresses everything... and starts cleaning again.

-- Tucker is busy polishing a mirror... Jumper appears in the reflection...

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
Seriously... think about it... a
villain like Grimm having all
that power in his hands... he
could wipe us all out in the
blink of an eye!

Tucker rolls his eyes.

-- Tucker sits on a toilet... enjoying a moment of silence. Then: Jumper pops his head in from above...

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
We shouldn't be here. We should
be on the ground, training.
We're invaluable.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
Jumper!

JUMPER JONES
I know. It's shocking. That
Sergeant Storm doesn't
appreciate talent when he sees
it!

Tucker, opens the door and walks away... Jumper trailing right behind...

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
This is unacceptable...

Totally exasperated, Tucker finds a spot on the wall and starts to hit his head repeatedly --

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
See in what condition he's
reduced you to...

Jumper looks around... no one in the room. He whispers --

JUMPER JONES (CONT'D)
I have serious doubts about him.
I think Sergeant Storm is losing
it. Maybe it's time for him to
call it a day. Don't you think?

A voice startles them --

CLAYGAS (O.S.)
Shame on you for thinking
something like that...

They look around... but there's no one in sight -- Tucker panics.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
Who's there?

CLAYGAS (O.S.)
It's me.

He looks around... still nothing!

Tucker, shaking in his boots: PLOOOP -- it starts again -
- CHICKEN, FERRET, DUCK...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK/DUCK
This place is haunted.

He bolts out of the lavatory, leaving Jumper alone...

JUMPER JONES
I'm warning you. Whoever this
is... I am an SPD cadet...
highly trained...

CLAYGAS (O.S.)
Down here...

Jumper looks down...

HIGH ANGLE ON CLAYGAS.

CLAYGAS (CONT'D)
Can you see me now, Mr Jones?

JUMPER JONES
Chief Librarian?! I was just...

CLAYGAS
I know what you were doing. I
heard you well. Bad mouthing
your Sergeant is a cheap
endeavour. And you of all
people...

JUMPER JONES
But it's so unfair.

CLAYGAS
Do you know who Sergeant Storm
is?

JUMPER JONES
He's our instructor...

CLAYGAS
Before that...

JUMPER JONES
He was an SPD officer... with
grandpa.

CLAYGAS
Correct. But did you know that
if it wasn't for him... your
grandpa wouldn't be here with us
today?

JUMPER JONES
I didn't know that...

CLAYGAS
Sit down. There's a story I must
tell you.

THUNDEROUS HOOFBEATS! THE UNNATURAL SCREECHING OF A
HORSE...

DISSOLVE TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. THE DARK FOREST - DAY

NOTE: *This whole story has a monochromatic color that
differentiates it from the present.*

Unbearable misery -- a feral landscape of ice, snow and
dead trees. A cold wind kicks up --

CLAYGAS (V.O.)
The Great War was just won. The
Dark Lord was locked in our
prison... his powers rendered
useless by our brave wizards...

HOOFBEATS POUND THE GROUND VICIOUSLY!

Deep in the FOREST -- A HUGE BLACK STALLION gallops at breakneck speed -- coming straight at us. (No clear view of the RIDER, but we see he's holding a MASSIVE WAR HAMMER) --

CLAYGAS (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But many of Utrek's minions were
still at large.

The beast, a freight train of rotting flesh, flies over us --

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: THE EDGE OF THE DARK FOREST - LATER

The animal EXPLODES out of the tree line... ripping across a glacial desert. Welcome to the ICY WASTELANDS -- a cruel and inhospitable stretch of ice -- miles and miles of it!

The RIDER, garbed in black armour, drives his spurs into the steed's flank. The horse -- SCREECHING -- bolts -- only to be swallowed up by that white feral whiteness...

A deafening SILENCE follows!

CLAYGAS (V.O.)
A plan was set in motion to
bring them all to justice.

Then: the ROAR of powerful TURBINES, throbbing in heavy air -- dominant, overpowering. An SPD ASSAULT CHOPPER drops into frame... fast...

PILOT (V.O.)
This is REDBREAST. Bearing
North, eight, four, zero. Target
has been identified. Over.

OPERATION LEADER(V.O.)
Roger. Prepare to engage and
capture. Over.

The chopper also disappears into that whiteness.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. SPD CHOPPER - LATER

Illuminated by the eerie red glow of the dials, are SEVEN SPD OFFICERS. We recognise the leader -- A YOUNG JIMMY JONES. We also recognise OFFICER BEAST.

On Jimmy's orders the men check their WEAPONS, making last minute adjustments to their GEAR.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. THE ICY WASTELANDS - LATER

The SPD chopper -- nose down, tail high -- builds up speed as it rips through a blinding storm...

In the distance -- A SPECK -- we move closer... its features become more and more identifiable. Suddenly we're facing a SPECTRAL MOUNTAIN -- this is TOUL SLENG... the words mean Death Sentence in the old language. The mountain rises thousands of feet from the ground below -- so high that its summit is wreathed in clouds.

The chopper pushes towards it.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. MOUNT TOUL SLENG - GORGE - CONTINUOUS

A NARROW WINDING GORGE... the black steed, foam at the mouth, breath coming in great steaming clouds, gallops dangerously through this eerie pass... (The rider still remains unseen)

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. DOOMSTAND - LATER

The wind MOANS. Snow whips a grey, imposing structure --

This is DOOMSTAND -- Utrek's infamous lair, carved out of the mountainside... GARGOYLES guard these ruins!

The rider brings his horse to a halt... the exhausted animal SNORTS nervously.

The rider drops to the ground and stomps towards the IRON DOOR...

The THUDDING of the chopper rotors reaches him before he steps inside. He whips around...

We MOVE IN TIGHT: This is the first time we see him in full. Meet THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN, Utrek's dark General. He was once known to the world as the BLACK KNIGHT. This warrior of legend is an immortal creature, who literally lost his head in battle. He must now cling to it tightly by the ruffles on the helmet --

HEADLESS HORSEMAN

They're here, my Lord. I've done as you asked!

A voice -- POWERFUL and RESONANT -- is carried by the harsh wind!

UTREK (V.O.)

I need them alive! Remember that!

HEADLESS HORSEMAN

As you command, Master!!

CUT TO:

We're TIGHT on Utrek... eyes closed... so Zen -- as if he's meditating.

UTREK (V.O.)
Do not disappoint me!

PULL OUT to reveal that the evil word weaver is locked in a MAGICAL BUBBLE... guarded 24/7 by TWO WIZARDS.

CUT TO:

BINOCULARS POV: THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN - HIGH ANGLE

He SCREAMS a ferocious challenge --

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
Come and get me! I dare you!

ANGLE ON THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN.

The warrior of legend turns, steps inside... BOOM!!! He SLAMS his head into the side of the door...

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (CONT'D)
Ooouuuchhh! That hurt!

The great warrior appears to be a tad clumsy. He vanishes inside.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. THE ICY WASTELANDS - CONTINUOUS

RAPPELLING LINES CRASH right in front of our eyes. As if by magic, Jimmy and his team materialize -- highly focused, alert, ready to rock! SO COOL!

The SPD chopper performs a radical left bank turn and departs...

ANGLE ON JIMMY AND HIS MEN.

They are in awe...

JIMMY JONES
This is where it all started...
where Utrek planned it all!

OFFICER BEAST
You think this could be a trap?

JIMMY JONES
Only one way to find out!

He gives the order... a hand signal. The team moves forward as if organically connected... straight towards Castle Doomstand!

CUT TO:

Jimmy pushes the door open... peers inside -- DARKNESS!

JIMMY JONES (CONT'D)
Eyes peeled everyone!

Jimmy enters. His men follow.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. DOOMSTAND - VARIOUS ROOMS AND CORRIDORS -
CONTINUOUS

Jimmy's men push inside... FLASH FLIGHTS ON! Their feet
crunch loudly on the broken masonry...

The walls are covered in complex SYMBOLS -- runes, hexes,
and spells. This place is unnerving... the men are on
edge.

OFFICER BEAST
(in shock)
What on earth is this?

Jimmy leads them forward. The SPD officers move with
practised precision -- through a number of doorways.
Advancing cautiously into the heart of the castle.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. THRONE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A large circular room -- Jimmy and his men enter...

They are being watched from above...

ANGLE ON THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN.

The warrior of legend emerges from the shadows...

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
Welcome to Castle Doomstand!

Jimmy and his men point their guns at the enemy...

JIMMY JONES
You're under arrest!

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
Am I?

JIMMY JONES
We don't need to complicate this
further... surrender quietly!

The Headless Horseman LAUGHS...

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
Make yourselves comfortable.
You won't be leaving any time
soon.

Suddenly, HEAVY WALLS shoot up from the cobblestones, blocking all exits. They're trapped --

The SPD officers cluster around their leader

JIMMY JONES
(whisper)
Call the base... we need help!

Officer Beast obeys... NOTHING! All we hear is STATIC! They share a tense look. The radio's not working.

ANGLE ON THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN.

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
I've been dreaming of this day
for such a long time!

The General produces a GLOWING GEM...

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (CONT'D)
A gift from my Master...

He lifts the gem in the air... AN EXPLOSION OF LIGHT! The whole place starts to rumble. Then the earth cracks like an egg -- something awful and corrupt moves and twists in the shadows...

Jimmy and his men move back... *they're in big trouble -- and they know it!*

HUNDREDS of SNAKES, SCORPIONS AND SPIDERS slither out of the shadows. It's horrific!

The SPD open fire... desperately trying to repel the assault. Their guns, chew bullets and spit shells... but nothing can stop this poisonous swarm. They are quickly overrun -- bitten all over...

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (CONT'D)
This was almost too easy...

All the SPD officers start to weaken from the venom -- They stumble backwards, losing their balance... they black out.

CLOSE ON THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN.

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (CONT'D)
The deed is done my Lord.
They're my prisoners now.

UTREK (V.O.)
Perfect... it's time to make my
move.

The Headless Horseman recedes back into the darkness... Then: BOOM!

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (V.O.)
Oooouuuuccch! My head! Watch it!

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON UTREK

His predatory eyes snap open. He grins like a wolf.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LAVATORY - PRESENT DAY

CLOSE ON CLAYGAS.

CLAYGAS
We thought we had subdued the
Dark Lord... but Utrek had
played us again. Our Chief of
Police was now his prisoner.

Jumper is shocked.

JUMPER JONES
I was never told of this.

CLAYGAS
It was decided that none were to
know about those days.

SMASH CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. STORYVILLE - SPELL AVENUE - NIGHT

A PUMPKIN SHAPED CARRIAGE races recklessly down the
street...

CLAYGAS (V.O.)
The Council of the Wise was
dragged out of bed... and
secretly rushed to the prison...

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. STORYVILLE PRISON - LATER

The gates open... and the pumpkin shaped carriage
disappears inside.

CLAYGAS (V.O.)
Utrek wanted to lay down his
terms.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON UTREK.

He stares directly at us -- utterly confident. Chillingly
so!

UTREK
The choice is very simple! Let
me go and your men will be free.

Keep me here and they will never
see the light of day again!

REFLECTED IN HIS EYES -- is OLD KING COLE -- still in his
pyjamas -- face ashen!

OLD KING COLE
How do we know they're still
alive?

PULL OUT -- Utrek -- still prisoner of this magic bubble
-- moves with savage grace towards Old King Cole. He
leans in as close as possible --

UTREK
Because I am telling you so.

Old King Cole shudders.

OLD KING COLE
I need proof.

A malevolent grin cracks Utrek's stern features.

UTREK
And so it is...

He claps his hands... and voila'!

The ground begins to VIBRATE. *What's going on?* Old King
Cole panics -- the world starts to spin... FAST! The
SOUND is DEAFENING.

Blaaaaaam!

We're now somewhere else -- in a dank DUNGEON, deep in
the bowels of Doomstand --

Pervasive blackness. Dripping water. Filth. RATS.

Jimmy and his men are chained to the wall like animals --
freezing to death -- scared, wondering if they'll ever
return home.

Old King Cole can hardly speak -- he hesitates.

OLD KING COLE
How did...?

UTREK
Twenty four hours... that's all
you have!

Utrek claps his hands... the world spins again... and
they're back in Storyville Prison.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. TOWN HALL - CRYSTAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A SPECTACULAR CRYSTAL DOME... spreads warm light to this magical place...

Old King Cole and the REST OF THE COUNCIL are in the middle of a heated debate --

We recognise a number of fairytale characters --
GEPETTO, PRINCE CHARMING, SNOW WHITE, LITTLE BOY BLUE,
SANTA CLAUS.

The door bursts open... Sergeant Storm steps inside.

SERGEANT STORM
Time is ticking. What are we
doing?

OLD KING COLE
Nothing!

SERGEANT STORM
What do you mean, nothing?

OLD KING COLE
We cannot let Utrek go.

PRINCE CHARMING
It would be disastrous for us
all.

Sergeant Storm fights hard to suppress his anger!

SERGEANT STORM
Fine. I get that. But we can't
just sit around with our arms
folded.

OLD KING COLE
What can we do?

SERGEANT STORM
We have to rescue our men!

PRINCE CHARMING
How?

SERGEANT STORM
Give me a team and I'll bring
them back.

The Council huddles together -- a heated debate --

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
(utterly convinced)
I promise you that!

The verdict is out -- Old King Cole turns to face
Sergeant Storm...

OLD KING COLE
No. We will do nothing of the
sort.

SERGEANT STORM
WHAT?

PRINCE CHARMING
It could be another trap!

OLD KING COLE
What if he's just trying to
weaken our forces?

PRINCE CHARMING
We can't trust Utrek. We just
can't!

SERGEANT STORM
This is Jimmy we're talking
about here. Jimmy Jones. How
many times did he save all of
you? HOW MANY?

OLD KING COLE
(timidly)
He knew the risks.

SERGEANT STORM
I'm going after them.

OLD KING COLE
Stand down, Sergeant! This is
not your decision to make. It is
ours.

SERGEANT STORM
It's the wrong decision!

OLD KING COLE
I'm sorry. We need all our
forces here to protect the Tower
of Fables.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. DOOMSTAND - COURTYARD - DAWN

Seven gallows, silhouetted against the rising sun.

A lever is pulled. A heavy sack dangles from the rope...
the gallows are being tested!

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

INT. LAVATORY - PRESENT DAY

Jumper's eyes say it all -- he's disturbed by all this!

JUMPER JONES
How could they do something like
that?

Claygas raises an eyebrow.

CLAYGAS
Calm down young Jones...

JUMPER JONES
I thought we made a choice. A
long time ago we said that we
would always be the good guys,
no matter what.

Claygas SIGHS, heavily.

CLAYGAS
Don't blame them. Fear can make
bumbling fools out of wise men.

SMASH CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

The door is thrown open... A FIGURE enters secretly.

CLAYGAS (V.O.)
It is at this moment of peril
that those truly brave step
forward.

DISSOLVE TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A table -- an incredible assortment of gadgets, weapons,
supplies etc.

Sergeant Storm is hunched in the corner, working on
something.

We PUSH closer to see him streaking his face with
camouflage paint -- it looks unearthly, iconic! *An
obvious homage to Rambo.*

SERGEANT STORM
You will not stop me.

Who is he talking to? We see no one! Then a voice --

GEPPELTO (O.S.)
I have no intention to.

Geppetto steps out of the shadows.

GEPPELTO (CONT'D)
I'm here to offer my help.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. ARMOURY - LATER

HARSH FLUORESCENT LIGHTING -- A crowbar pries the lid off a wooden crate...

Geppetto picks up an ULTRA MODERN CROSSBOW. He checks the action... squeezes the trigger. He's satisfied.

SERGEANT STORM
What's so special about this?

Geppetto presses a button on the side -- the weapon folds repeatedly becoming smaller and smaller, until it's no bigger than his thumb...

GEPPETTO
My latest invention...

Geppetto beams with satisfaction... he hands him an arrow!

GEPPETTO (CONT'D)
It comes with this.

SERGEANT STORM
What does it do?

GEPPETTO
Damage. Lots of damage!

Sergeant Storm looks on with some incredulity as Geppetto folds the arrows time and time again...

GEPPETTO (CONT'D)
Put them in your pocket! Come on...

Sergeant Storm obeys...

Geppetto attacks another crate --

GEPPETTO (CONT'D)
I also suggest that you take this...

He hands him an ICE AXE...

Storm looks on puzzled...

SERGEANT STORM
What does it do?

Geppetto, all serious --

GEPPETTO
It's an ice axe... what do you think it does?

A LOUD ROAR!

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. AIRFIELD - NIGHT

An aircraft rolls down the runway...

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER (V.O.)
(filtered)
HAWK 200, what are you doing?

GEPETTO (V.O.)
This is HAWK 200, we're going
for a quick stroll... we need to
stretch our wings.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER (V.O.)
HAWK 200, you do not have
clearance... I repeat you do not
have clearance!

The plane gathers more speed... until the nose picks up -
- and off they go!

FLASHBACK: INT. COCKPIT - LATER

Geppetto is awkwardly hunched over the controls -- nose
fixed on the dials, eyes flitting everywhere --

SERGEANT STORM
You're going to get into trouble
for this.

GEPETTO
Could you be so kind and pass me
the manual? It should be in that
compartment there...

Sergeant Storm does as he's told...

GEPETTO (CONT'D)
I should tell you a secret. I've
never flown a plane before...

A long beat of silence. *Is he serious?*

They trade a quick glance -- Geppetto smiles, then yanks
the throttle forward.

Sergeant Storm is jolted out of his seat... face crushed
against the windscreen...

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. CLOUDS - CONTINUOUS

The plane plummets wildly -- spiralling out of control --
IT'S TERRIFYING -- the turbines SCREAM in protest!

CUT TO:

TIGHT ON GEPETTO.

PALE; SWEATING; YELLING; DESPERATELY FIGHTING to control the savage descent!

The pressure gauge needles are dropping fast.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. SKY - SAME TIME

A SOLID LAYER OF CLOUDS rushes up... the plane punches through and the landscape below is something breathtaking -- THE DARK FOREST!

The plane manages to reset itself...

FLASHBACK: INT. COCKPIT - SAME TIME

Sergeant Storm is SLAMMED back against the seat...

Geppetto's face suggests supreme satisfaction... hands squeezing the throttle.

GEPPELTO
I'm a fast learner, you see!

He LAUGHS loudly... Storm is not amused at all.

FLASHBACK: EXT. DARK FOREST - SAME TIME

The sleek silhouette of the plane above the moonlit forest -- it banks to the left... racing towards the Icy Wastelands...

GEPPELTO (V.O.)
Do you have a plan?

SERGEANT STORM (V.O.)
Yes... do everything I can to bring our boys back home.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. STORYVILLE - PRISON - SAME TIME

Utrek -- is sitting on the floor in a full lotus, completely calm. Immobile. Eyes closed.

We PUSH IN towards him...

UTREK (V.O.)
They are coming!

CUT TO:

VERY TIGHT ON THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN...

The helmet is barely visible in the thin trace of moonlight from a nearby window --

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
We will be ready to receive
them!

UTREK (V.O.)
We can't afford any mistakes.

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
There will be none. You have my
word!

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON UTREK.

UTREK (V.O.)
I await news of your victory...

His evil eyes SNAP open. INHUMANE!

A grin. Malevolent.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. DOOMSTAND - THRONE ROOM - SAME TIME

The helmet is resting on the throne. The body, in full
armour, stands guard.

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
Tonight, your loyalties will be
tested.

ANGLE ON THREE ICE WARRIORS.

Faces of distinct cruelty -- primordial, clad in animal
skins -- donning spears, shields, bows and arrows!

*Note: The Ice Warriors speak their own particular
language. A language we do not understand. Their dialogue
will be subtitled.*

ICE WARRIOR #1
We are here to serve the Dark
Lord.

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (O.S.)
Prepare for battle!

The Ice Warriors, licking their lips, lusting for blood,
exit. The Horseman's body follows, leaving the helmet on
the throne... alone!

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (CONT'D)
Hey... you forgot about me! You
forgot about me!! Hey!! Come
back!!!

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. ICY WASTELANDS - DAWN

The Hawk 200 streaks out of the clouds... racing across the night sky, performing deadly, high-speed manoeuvres...

GEPETTO (V.O.)
(filtered)
We just entered enemy territory.
One minute to insertion.

SERGEANT STORM (V.O.)
Roger that!

Mount Toul Sleng appears in the distance -- the Hawk 200 hurtles towards it...

FLASHBACK: INT. COCKPIT - LATER

Sergeant Storm removes his headset, unbuckles his seat belt. Rises. Moves to the passenger compartment... suits up, straps on his gear, opens the door. Wind rushes in -- he's ready for anything! It shows!

GEPETTO (O.S.)
And we're ready to rumble...

The ready-light turns GREEN.

SERGEANT STORM
I'll see you in a bit!

Sergeant Storm winks at Geppetto then, without a moment's hesitation, takes a single, powerful jump... he's out of the door. Gone.

FLASHBACK: EXT. MOUNT TOUL SLENG - CONTINUOUS

Sergeant Storm shoots through the clouds at 150 km.p.h... hands tight to the body -- like a speeding bullet!

-- Until: POP! A parachute bursts open! We watch him glide down lazily...

He lands like a pro... shrugs out of his chute harness. He looks around... tries to get his bearings.

Then: A ROAR... RABID AND TORMENTED echoes through.

Storm looks up... gazes at a point in space. In front of him -- a thick wall of snow! He can't see but he can sense something!

ANGLE ON HIGHER GROUNDS.

A POLAR BEAR of GARGANTUAN SIZE steps forward -- the beast bares its fangs before letting out another HIDEOUS ROAR.

We PAN up -- The leader of the Ice Warriors sits proudly on this beast...

ICE WARRIOR #1
Let the games begin!

Ice Warrior #2 steps forward... raises his bow -- five arrows already strung -- FIRE!

ANGLE ON SERGEANT STORM.

His eyes narrow.

A WHISTLING SOUND!

He looks up...

An arrow sizzles right at him -- he dives out of the way... just in the nick of time! But before he can catch his breath --

MORE ARROWS whizz towards him...

Sergeant Storm, like a feline, narrowly evades three more... but gets pinned by the last one...

He drops his weapon, buckles to his knees... YELLING in pain and fury...

ANGLE ON ICE WARRIOR #1.

ICE WARRIOR #1 (CONT'D)
Send in the dogs...

Ice Warrior #3 steps forward... struggling to control TWO WILD DOGS... Vicious... Deadly!

He lets them go...

The animals pelt down the rock face... BAYING!

ANGLE ON SERGEANT STORM.

He grabs the arrow embedded in his shoulder -- pulls it out callously. His face winces.

ANGLE ON THE DOGS.

Vicious jaws snapping -- they close in --

ANGLE ON SERGEANT STORM.

He prepares for battle. His sharply defined muscles tense... becoming rock hard!

The two wild dogs leap at him in perfect unison. He doesn't move... waiting for the right moment to act -- in a flash, he knocks their head together in midair... BLAAAAM!

The dogs drop like rotten apples... hard!

They whimper away like two drunk louts... the threat is neutralized with style!

ANGLE ON ICE WARRIORS.

The leader is rabid!

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (O.S.)
Is this how you honour the Dark
Lord?

The Headless Horseman appears from behind. His presence is threatening.

Ice Warrior #1 is seething with anger --

ICE WARRIOR #1
We will remedy...

He lifts his spear... A BLOOD-CURDLING ULULATION --

ICE WARRIOR #1 (CONT'D)
ATTACK!!!!

THREE ICE WARRIORS race down the rock face... firing arrows at a full gallop --

ANGLE ON SERGEANT STORM.

He tries to grab his weapon -- can't -- arrows bar the way...

They're closing in --

He has to run... and that's what he does. He's on the move... fast -- like his feet were on fire -- pushing through the snow... rushing for cover...

ANGLE ON THE ICE WARRIORS.

The nefarious polar bears devour the ground!

ANGLE ON SERGEANT STORM.

He sprints towards some JAGGED ROCKS...

MORE ARROWS find their target... hitting the rucksack on his back.

Sergeant Storm disappears behind the rocks...

ANGLE ON THE ICE WARRIORS.

Hot on his heels, they jump over the rocks... STOP! *Where is he?* The Sergeant is nowhere to be seen...

The only thing they find is the abandoned rucksack bristling with arrows.

ICE WARRIORS #2
(growling)
Find him! He can't be far...

on his impromptu SNOW BOARD... accelerating downhill on this ice slope --

Sergeant Storm looks behind him, sees the last Ice Warrior still charging after him... gaining more and more ground. Glistening jaws SMASH and SNAP inches away --

He avoids the inevitable by zigzagging radically through some trees --

ANGLE ON ICE WARRIOR #4.

He urges his beast forward with blind force... closes in... more and more... inches away! The Ice Warrior leaps from his bear and CRASHES into the Sergeant...

They slide uncontrollably down the icy slope -- fighting, trading punches! They burst out of the trees -- heading toward --

THE EDGE OF A PRECIPICE...

Quick-thinking, the Sergeant grabs the ice axe just as they reach the edge. The Ice Warrior tries to pry it away from his hands... he's unsuccessful. Sergeant Storm swings the axe forcefully -- the scythe-like blade catches on the ice, right at the very edge of the sheer drop.

Sergeant Storm is wrenched to a painful halt... the Ice Warrior shoots over the edge and falls into the nothingness.

A victorious Sergeant Storm smiles to himself, feet dangling over the perilous drop... Then heaves himself up --

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON HIGHER GROUNDS.

The Headless Horseman is furious...

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
Worthless fools... I'll have you
all flogged!

ICE WARRIOR #1
My Lord... allow me to --

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
(barking)
NO. Step aside...

The Headless Horseman pushes him roughly out of the way... Ice Warrior #1 drops to the ground. Humiliated!

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (CONT'D)
I'll show you how it's done!

The Headless Horseman produces that same glowing gem we have already seen. He raises it high in the air...

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (CONT'D)
I unleash the Dark Power...

Another explosion of light -- the ground shakes.

Ice Warrior #1 is frightened...

An earsplitting THUNDER... *what could this be?*

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON SERGEANT STORM.

A flash of panic in his eyes... He knows what's about to happen...

The CRUNCHING NOISE closes in...

The Headless Horseman has triggered AN AVALANCHE.

CUT TO:

An AVALANCHE of frozen fury sweeps down the mountainside... crushing everything in its deadly path...

The Ice warriors, the savage polar bears -- all are swallowed mercilessly.

Sergeant Storm tries to run... but who can outrun Mother Nature? The Sergeant is quickly thrown down the slope and buried...

All goes quiet except for the HOWLING wind.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON HIGHER GROUNDS.

The Headless Horseman looks on... satisfied with his work.

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
Master... rejoice. For the enemy
has been destroyed by the hands
of your mighty General.

UTREK (V.O.)
You have honoured my name! You
will be rewarded for your
efforts.

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

FLASHBACK: EXT. MOUNT TOUL SLENG - DAY

An eerie SILENCE...

Nothing stirs. Before us a vast stretch of white.

CLAYGAS (V.O.)
Everything seemed lost... The
end was nigh for all of them!

FLASHBACK: INT. DOOMSTAND - DUNGEONS - SAME TIME

Darkness. A RAT scurries around like royalty.

Jimmy, Beast and the others lie in filth, still manacled
to the wall...

The heavy cell door is unbolted... and the Headless
Horseman appears at the door. He throws in Storm's
tattered rucksack...

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
The man you called Storm, lives
no more...

Jimmy picks up the bag... he recognises it...

JIMMY JONES
No... No...

Jimmy, inconsolable, drops the rucksack and lunges at the
Headless Horseman but his chains hold him back...

The Headless Horseman lets out an evil laugh!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LAVATORY - PRESENT DAY

Jumper is visibly shaken...

JUMPER JONES
Did the Council finally react?
Did they do something?

CLAYGAS
No... young Jones. They were
crippled by panic!

JUMPER JONES
How could they?

CLAYGAS
You are lucky. You have never
had to face Utrek's power...

His fists clench... anger rises.

SMASH CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. STORYVILLE - PRISON - DAY

Utrek -- powerful -- his expression hard. Menacing!

UTREK
You may hold me prisoner. But
I'm not defeated. My power grows
by the minute...

Old King Cole tries to hide his fear --

OLD KING COLE
Enough of this!

UTREK
What is it going to be Old King?
Life or death?

OLD KING COLE
We will not negotiate with you!
The Council has spoken...

UTREK
Have they? Maybe it's time to
reconsider.

Utrek -- master manipulator -- cackling, screaming
laughter...

FLASHBACK: INT. TOWN HALL - CRYSTAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Council is in session. No one agrees on anything.
SHOUTING. LOTS OF IT! All talk on top of each other...

Old King Cole, desperate, is unable to control anyone...

OLD KING COLE
Please... one at a time... one a
time!

SNOW WHITE
What did he mean by that?

PRINCE CHARMING
Probably nothing.

OLD KING COLE
He's just trying to scare us.

Then: The door bursts open... GRETEL -- stunningly
beautiful, visibly pregnant, blood boiling -- comes
storming in... a hurricane of pure, undiluted anger.

They all stop!

GRETEL
You should be ashamed of
yourselves... all of you!

Old King Cole glowers at her --

OLD KING COLE
I have a city to protect.

Gretel stands her ground.

GRETEL
My husband needs your help.

PRINCE CHARMING
We're sorry.

OLD KING COLE
There's nothing we can do.

GRETEL
Jimmy is family to you all. Have
you forgotten that?

Her words cut deep... a moment of hesitation. Then --

SNOW WHITE
Maybe, we should reconsider our
position.

Old King Cole whips towards Snow White -- his expression
hard --

OLD KING COLE
We've discussed this all night!
The decision has been taken.
Utrek cannot walk free!

SNOW WHITE
I call for a new vote.

OLD KING COLE
Don't you see what he's doing?
He's toying with our minds,
creating divisions, weakening
us. We can't allow him to do
that!

Gretel -- deep sadness in her eyes -- a knot tightens in
her stomach...

GRETEL
Cowards. That's what you are.
All of you -- cowards!

PRINCE CHARMING
Gretel, please!

Gretel wipes her tears -- tries to be strong. Snow White
steps forward to hug her. Gretel pushes her away...

GRETEL
How could you let Storm go out
there alone... HOW?

Silence.

GRETEL (CONT'D)
You sacrificed a great man. He
believed in us more than you
ever did... Jimmy too...

Most of the Council stare at the floor.

GRETEL (CONT'D)
Where is your conscience? We
must save them.

Tears stream down her face. She can't take it anymore.

CLAYGAS (V.O.)
Luckily courage is not easily
quelled...

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. MOUNT TOUL SLENG - DAY

A fist PUNCHES through the white...

CLAYGAS (V.O.)
Especially when a brother needs
another brother.

Storm pulls the snow away, climbs out, gasping and
coughing... shivering uncontrollably -- but alive!

FLASHBACK: INT. DOOMSTAND - THRONE ROOM - DAY

We PUSH TIGHT on the Horseman's helmet -- it rests on the
throne... The body stands guard beside it.

UTREK (V.O.)
It's time to show them who
wields the real power. We must
deliver the final blow!

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
Your will is my command!

ANGLE ON TWO ICE WARRIORS.

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Bring me the Chief of Police.

The Ice Warriors exit.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. DOOMSTAND - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Stifling gloom... A dank corridor.

Jimmy is dragged out of his cell, seemingly broken...

Suddenly, Jimmy SPRINGS into action -- ATTACKS the Ice
Warriors escorting him -- pushes the one to the left
against the wall, then delivers a crippling blow to
other's face and ribs. Ice Warrior #1 cries out hoarsely
and slumps to the floor.

But Jimmy's victory is short lived. He's knocked on the
head by the other Ice Warrior... ALL GOES BLACK.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. MOUNT TOUL SLENG - DAY

Sergeant Storm, torn with pain, moves up a wall... the toughest climb of his life!

SERGEANT STORM
(teeth chattering)
I won't give up.

The wind and snow threaten to throw him off the wall, but he forces himself on with superhuman strength!

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
Keep going. Keep going!

Exhausted, he grits his teeth, continues -- a tremendous surge of blind will -- straining like a demon! *This man is impressive!*

We PULL OUT to REVEAL the massive face of this gargantuan cliff... the Sergeant is nothing but a tiny dot now...

An impossible task!

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. DOOMSTAND - THRONE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jimmy is flung in the middle of the room like a sack of potatoes.

Ice Warrior #1 still nursing his nose --

ICE WARRIOR #1
The prisoner... as you
commanded.

The Headless Horseman HISSES as he rises from the throne.

ANGLE ON JIMMY.

He raises his head, blinking... His vision is blurry.

JIMMY'S POV: The Horseman's head stares straight at him...

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
My Master needs your
cooperation...

JIMMY JONES
(groggy)
Never.

The Headless Horseman produces the glowing gem...

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
You will play your part, whether
you consent to it or not!!

The Horseman lifts his gem in the air... A BLINDING LIGHT...

The ground trembles and cracks. A BASILISK shoots out of a hole -- wrapping its body around Jimmy... crushing him. Choking him.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. TOWN HALL - CRYSTAL ROOM

The Council of the Wise are still embroiled in a heated debate.

SNOW WHITE

Gretel is right... we should have done something.

OLD KING COLE

We are doing something... we're protecting the Tower of Fables.

Suddenly, a FLASH OF LIGHT -- a hologram of the Headless Horseman appears... the glowing gem held tight in his hand. *It is evident that its power is aiding this communication...*

HEADLESS HORSEMAN

Honourable Council... I have been tasked with helping you reach your final decision...

OLD KING COLE

We do not need you!

The Headless Horseman steps aside... to REVEAL Jimmy locked in the deathly embrace of the giant snake...

HEADLESS HORSEMAN

This is what's happening to your men as we speak. If your answer will be in the negative, much worse is to befall them.

ANGLE ON COUNCIL.

Jaws drop. Shocked faces. Terror.

SNOW WHITE

Please stop... STOP!

HEADLESS HORSEMAN

That depends entirely on you...

SNOW WHITE

(to herself)
What have we done?

OLD KING COLE

Look away. We must not weaken... we must not falter.

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
Time is running out!

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. DOOMSTAND - SAME TIME

A LOUD KNOCK!

ICE WARRIOR #5 approaches the closed door. He peers out of the PEEPHOLE. A puzzled look on his face... he looks again:

HIS POV: Sergeant Storm -- a blaze behind his eyes.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. DOOMSTAND - CONTINUOUS

Storm opens the palms of his hands -- Geppetto's gadgets. He punches the small button... BAAM! HE'S ARMED AND READY.

SERGEANT STORM
Time to say hello...

He loads the arrow... aims. Without ceremony -- he FIRES!

The crossbow belches the arrow -- it plants itself into the door... A LOUD BEEPING NOISE...

The door opens... the Ice Warrior steps out... scowls at the arrow, briefly perplexed...

MORE ARROWS hit the door!

The Ice Warrior's eyes widen. IT DAWNS ON HIM! A split-second decision here -- he turns back in terror... hits the ground, scrambling for cover...

BOOOOOOOOOOOO! The din is incredible -- LIKE A SEISMIC BLAST -- A tremendous fireball RIPS THROUGH the castle... A SHOCK WAVE OF DESTRUCTION...

CUT TO:

INT. DOOMSTAND - THRONE ROOM - SAME TIME

ALL SHUDDERS... A THUNDERING ROAR, closing in...

The Basilisk and the Headless Horseman turn to face the main door.

The doors SMASH INWARDS, torn from their hinges by a vortex of fire, debris and shrapnel --

The Headless Horseman is blown off his feet... his head and the glowing gem go flying in different directions.

The snake disappears. Jimmy collapses to the ground...

CUT TO:

INT. DOOMSTAND - MAIN ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

It's raining dust and rubble. The place is a war zone -- a GIANT GAPING HOLE replaces the door...

A sickening silence...

ICE WARRIOR #5 opens his eyes -- he finds himself staring at Storm's crossbow.

ICE WARRIOR #5
(petrified)
Don't shoot. Please... Don't
shoot!

He closes his eyes and waits for oblivion. NOTHING HAPPENS! When he opens them again there is nothing in front of him apart from that giant hole in the facade...

A huge grin tears across his face... Then -- a stone gets dislodged from the ceiling and falls on top of his head! He's out cold!

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. DOOMSTAND - THRONE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Storm stands at the entrance -- what he sees serves only to stoke his anger. He hurtles beside Jimmy... crippled with pain.

JIMMY JONES
You look awful...

SERGEANT STORM
Forgot to fix my hair...

They share a laugh...

SERGEANT STORM (CONT'D)
Let's get out of here...

Storm helps Jimmy to his feet --

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (O.S.)
Not so fast!

ANGLE ON THE HORSEMAN'S HEAD.

Half buried in the wreckage --

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (CONT'D)
Annihilate them!

The Horseman's body CHARGES AT LIGHTNING SPEED out of the shadows! -- Storm turns just in time and meets the enemy head on... A CLASH OF TITANS...

Storm unleashes a blizzard of BLOWS... futile -- the Horseman is indestructible! He doesn't stir, nor budge. But when he does -- it spells trouble for Sergeant Storm...

He sinks his fist in Storm's stomach -- he doubles over. The Horseman grabs him by the neck... squeezing tighter and tighter... Storm gasps for air!

Jimmy can only look on helplessly as his friend is pummeled by the Headless Horseman.

Storm is flung violently against the wall -- the stone cracks on IMPACT!

But Storm will not give in... he staggers to his feet.

SERGEANT STORM
Heard you're tough... but guess
what? I'm tougher.

They circle each other... a macabre dance...

Storm rips his shirt off...

JIMMY JONES
What are you doing?

SERGEANT STORM
I have an idea...

The head, still buried under the debris, barks its final order --

HEADLESS HORSEMAN
FINISH HIM!

The Horseman's body attacks... Storm evades -- turns, kicks the body in the butt, sending it reeling forward...

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (CONT'D)
I SAID, FINISH HIM!

Storm lunges towards the head and covers it with his shirt.

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (CONT'D)
What are you doing? Remove this
at once!

The Horseman is now blind...

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (CONT'D)
I'm warning you. Get your
disgusting paws off me!

The body of the Horseman moves around like a drunken sailor... bumping and crashing into things...

Storm and Jimmy exit the room... supporting each other.

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (CONT'D)
I will have my revenge!

The body steps onto the glowing gem, breaking it into a million pieces...

HEADLESS HORSEMAN (CONT'D)
I hate you. I hate you all!

The body trips and falls hard!

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. DOOMSTAND - CELL - LATER

The door is kicked open --

Storm and Jimmy walk in... beaming smiles appear on the faces of the officers. They are free!

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. DOOMSTAND - LATER

Smoke swirls and twirls...

Storm of the other prisoners emerge from the ruins... helping each other...

JIMMY JONES
How do we get out of here?

SERGEANT STORM
A friend promised to pick us up.

He barely finishes the sentence -- THE ROAR OF A MOTOR...

They look up and there he is -- Geppetto.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: INT. TOWN HALL - CRYSTAL ROOM - SAME TIME

The tension is palpable. Old King Cole rises to his feet...

OLD KING COLE
Are you sure?

SNOW WHITE
You saw what they were doing to him.

A long beat.

PRINCE CHARMING
I guess we are all in agreement.

OLD KING COLE
We will let Utrek go.

The door bursts open... Gretel, breathless, barges in...

GRETEL
They're free. They're free.
Storm freed them all!

A LOUD CHEER...

Old King Cole sinks into his chair... relieved!

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. STORYVILLE AIRFIELD - SAME TIME

The Hawk 200 makes a perfect landing...

DISSOLVE TO:

Storm watches with great satisfaction as all the officers are welcomed by their families.

Gretel hugs Jimmy... long and hard...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LAVATORY - PRESENT DAY

CLAYGAS
And that my friend is who
Sergeant Storm really is.

JUMPER JONES
I didn't know any of this.

Suddenly, the door nearly flies off its hinges... Tucker rushes in, all panicked.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
Sergeant Storm is here. He's
here. What do we do? What do we
do?

The door swings open...

Tucker freezes.

Storm marches in...

SERGEANT STORM
Let's see what you two have
accomplished...

Storm growls as he inspects the whole area...

ANGLE ON TUCKER AND JUMPER.

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
(whispering)
He's going to kill us...

ANGLE ON SERGEANT STORM.

Sergeant Storm stops his inspection... he doesn't like what he sees. He walks towards the boys... fuming.

SERGEANT STORM
You call this clean? I told you
I wanted this place spotless! Do
it all over again...

TUCKER NORTHBROOK
Yes, Sergeant Storm...

Tucker, white as a ghost, starts cleaning like a ten man team...

Jumper keeps staring at Sergeant Storm...

SERGEANT STORM
Who gave you permission to
eyeball me?

Jumper does not answer. Suddenly, he steps forward and wraps his arms around the Sergeant -- hugging him tightly!

JUMPER JONES
Thank you!

SERGEANT STORM
Cadet Jones... what are you
doing? Release me immediately!

Claygas smiles broadly... moves away!

CUT TO:

EXT. STORYVILLE - CEMETERY - NIGHT

We're tight on a tombstone: "JUNIOR and AVA JONES - WE HONOUR THEM BY DOING WHAT IS RIGHT!"

Jumper, drained, slumps into frame.

JUMPER JONES
Sorry I'm late. Sergeant Storm
made us clean the whole Academy
over and over again until he was
pleased. But you won't hear me
complain about him anymore... Do
you know what I just learned
today? Let me tell you...

PULL OUT -- Jumper is busy relating his story, becoming all animated... excited!

THE END

**SECTION L: LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION FROM INDUSTRY
PROFESSIONALS**

IL-KUNSILL MALTI
GHALL-KULTURA
U L-ARTI



Re. Animation Project *Once Upon a Crime* by Jean Pierre Magro

On behalf of the Public Broadcasting Service and the Arts Council (Malta) I have no hesitation in offering my full support to the animation project, *Once Upon a Crime*.

Both the National Broadcasting Station and the Arts Council are keen to see this project continue developing and coming to fruition. On behalf of both entities, I have no reservations stating that it has great potential.

Jean Pierre and his team have proven themselves as leading creatives in previous occasions and I have no doubt that this time round, they will deliver professionally and live up to their excellent reputation.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Albert Marshall', written over a horizontal line.

Albert Marshall
Executive Chair *Arts Council Malta*
Vice Chair *Public Broadcasting Services Ltd*

JEAN PIERRE MAGRO AND *THE TOWER OF FABLES*

When I met Jean Pierre, only a few years ago, I was struck by the fact that he seemed to be a very rare mix of man and child all wrapped in the same beautiful person. I had seldom met anyone who exuded such determination and will power on the goals that he set for himself, either creatively or personally, and yet such vulnerable sensitivity.

As we grew to become creative friends, I discovered that his gifted fascination for stories was the remnant powerful traces from his autistic childhood. I then learned from him to see the strength that lies within all stories to tell us secrets on how to fully embrace the beauty of living one's life.

A boy usually learns that in order to become a man he needs to give up all the naïve beliefs that once fascinated him as a child. He learns to accept that the world is tough and very real, a place where a man needs to fight his way through and prove himself right... It is therefore disconcerting when you meet someone like Jean Pierre who is building his life in the real world as a strong producer and storyteller, making things happen in a very professional and enlightened way, and at the same time retaining the ability to wonder and dream in the wildest ways. The child in him is very much alive and well, happily hidden but free within the man.

The Tower of Fables is one of the most significant projects that the man and the child have come up with. I love all that it stands for.

At the foundation of it lies the strong belief that stories are essential to us all because they are one of the essential signs that we are humans. As evolved beings, we need to constantly question why we are here in the world. Stories are the way we have invented to confront the existential fears of our destiny as human beings. Religions are some of the most deeply rooted expressions of this need for stories and made up answers. But myths, legends

and tales have been here forever for exactly the same purpose. Because we desperately need them to face and transcend reality. If we lose our stories, we cannot share a common understanding of the world, we cannot function as a community, we are lost.

Under the guise of a children story , Tower of Fables addresses the very essence of our human need for sublimation, our craving for more than just the « objective » facts of everyday physical life.

Transcendence and sublimation. This is what we stage when we play and when we tell each other stories. Stories saved young Jean Pierre's life. They save lives all the time, not as an escape from real life but as doorways into other dimensions of being in the world. And when Jean Pierre Magro, through Tower of Fables, tells us about the need to save and protect our tales as our invaluable treasure, this is what he truly means for me.

Michel Reilhac

December 30th, 2013

THANKS FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THE TOWER OF FABLES

Dear Jean Pierre,

Thank you for the opportunity to see so much material from your engaging transmedia program, "The Tower of Fables."

The sheer volume of imagination you have put into this project is quite astonishing. Stories for multiple seasons, a richly detailed and compelling world, a complex and yet accessible back story - all the elements are there for an enduring and successful transmedia program. Maybe empire is the right word.

In fact, world building is what you have envisioned and started to achieve. Storyville - the world of Tower of Fables - is an empire of its own and what you can create in many interlocking platforms with this material will form the basis of an empire the audience enters. The viewer can join from so many directions, yet become oriented - at home - quickly. It is "all of a piece" - that is to say, all the parts and all the entry points lead to a singular world and a singular vision in which the audience can become engaged and immersed. Lost in your world.

One of the aspects of your creation I admire most, from a writer's point of view, is how you have tapped into one of the deepest wells available to any author, fairy tales. Among the most admirable things about the award-winning film "Shakespeare in Love" is the way in which the authors create a mechanism from which they can use all of Shakespeare's work. Clearly that is one of the deepest wells ever created, yet the world's treasure of fairy tales is even broader and more encompassing.

By creating your world of Storyville, your struggle of good and evil, your ability to go into the fairy tales of any and all cultures and time periods, you have literally tapped into the

mother lode, the deepest imaginable well of story material. There is a nearly limitless supply of time-honoured fables and stories from which to draw.

And draw from that canon you have done with an excellent eye for capturing the aspects of the human condition unique to each fairy tale you access. One of the challenges you have met head on is the difficulty of taking the universality of fables and turning it into the specific here-and-now of recognizable characters and situations, which enable everyone to join and understand and enjoy.

I see great things happening with "Tower of Fable" and the transmedia empire it will create. I look forward to seeing this world made available to the children, parents and free-spirited adults of the world; a universe that can be entered from many different access points yet affords each visitor a comprehensive vision.

All the best,

David

SECTION M: TIMELINE OF MEETINGS OF CONFERENCES

Timeline:

- 2010, April 27 – *Hollywood Goes Transmedia*, Los Angeles.

This is the first conference I attended. I was hooked by the possibilities presented by Henry Jenkins. Diane Nelson (President, DC Entertainment), Richard Lemarchand (Lead designer of *Uncharted 2*), John Underkoffler (technical advisor for *Iron Man*, *Hulk*, *Taken* and *Aeon Flux*) were also amongst the guest speakers. The conference was an eye-opener.

- 2010. September 8,9,10 – *Transmedia Next*, London.

I obtained a scholarship from Seize the Media to attend this three day intensive training session. Classes were conducted by Anite Ondine (IP lawyer and producer), Lance Weiler (Story architect and producer) and Profs. Inga Von Staden (Media educator and story designer). I had extensive one to one meetings with Julian Friedman (literary agent), Rebecca Denton (Head of digital Media at Turner Media) and Alison Norrington (PhD scholar and CEO of Story central).

- 2011, January 10 – Start of PhD

I had my first skype call with Dr. Dan North. We discussed in detail the PhD and my creative project. I proposed a creative project about fairytales. The idea was to re-launch fairytales to the hyper linked kid of today.. He also suggested some writers that I should consult. (Jack Zipes, Bruno Bettelheim, and Lev Manovich) I also augmented my research by purchasing a sizeable number of books on transmedia. My first year was mainly to be dedicated to research. I set up three goals for myself: 1. To understand how to create powerful stories that can move from one platform to another. 2. To Network as much as possible. 3. To uncover the premise and theme of my story.

- 2011, February – writing of the basic premise of my narrative.

I have no idea where ideas come from. I do not think I can really answer that. But I'll try. Ideas pop into my head, preceded by the question – What if?

- 2011, April – Applied for *Power to the Pixel Lab*.

It was time to join the fray and test out my idea. I decided to apply for the development Lab organized by Power to the Pixel. The Lab was sponsored by ARTE, BAFTA, BBC, BFI, CANNES FILM FESTIVAL, EAVE, EU MEDIA, Nordisk Film and TV Fond and the UK film fund.

- 2011, April – Christiane Stelberg is hired as lead designer.
- 2011, April/May – brainstorming sessions for the creation of the brand, style and logos.

The visual element is an integral element of the canon. Fonts for *Bioshock* or *Gran Theft Auto* already set the tonality of the IP. SIMPLE. TIMELESS. APPROPRIATE. VERSATILE. MEMORABLE. Those were the keywords used during the brainstorming sessions with the designer.

- 2011, May 24 – Focus group organized.

Even though budgets were tight I organized a small focus group to test the logo. Three versions were shown to a group of kids (ten in all) from which they were to choose one. The ages of the kids ranged from 6-10.

- 2011, June 26 – July 2 - *Power to the Pixel Lab*, Potsdam.

The Pixel Lab 2012 brought together 36 European media professionals working across film, broadcast, online, mobile, gaming, and advertising – 18 of them producers who attended with a cross-media project – for an intensive six-day residential workshop that took place just outside Potsdam. Teaching came from the best cross-media and transmedia practitioners in the world who led a mixture of in-

depth talks, focused project group work, individual 1-2-1 sessions and case study analyses.

Michel Reilhac was my mentor. I had one to one meetings with Nuno Bernardo, Adam Sigel, Lance Weiler, Liz Rosenthal and Timo Vuorensola.

Edda Baumann Von Broen, Producer and CEO of Avanti Media and Livia Bus, CEO of Belanski Films offered co-production deals.

- 2011, July – talks with Dean O’Toole to create a new transmedia company.

I resigned as head of development from Fish Corb Films and opened a new outfit called Immortal Transmedia. The company has offices in both Malta and London. We started building an interesting slate of both animation and live action movies.

- 2011, July – applied for Invex funding in Malta.

The Malta Government committed €150,000 per year to organisations seeking to enhance their professional capacities and portfolio by way of organisational growth, research, business and audience development, technological investment and international partnerships. Selected organisations may benefit from a three year funding period, capped at €25,000 per year and up to a maximum of €75,000 over three years.

- 2011, July/September – building of world and business plans.

Time was needed to hone the creative and business strategies. I had a number of skype calls with Michel Reilhac and Nuno Bernardo to prepare for the second workshop that was to take place in October in tandem with the Power to the Pixel’s annual Cross Media Forum in London.

- 2011, October – 2nd part of the *Power to the Pixel Lab + Cross media forum*, London
The Tower of Fables was pitched to a number of investors. CBBC, and Turner Media. Jeff Gomez from Starlight Runner was also interested in the project.

- 2011, October 17 – meeting with Damon Bryant, head of New Business, Platinum Rye, London.

My business partner, Dean O’Toole, organized a meeting with Platinum Rye to pitch the project and see whether any brands would be interested in financing the development. He suggested Soap Fairy and Mothercare as potential partners.

- 2011, October 17 – Meeting with Rebecca Denton from Turner Media.

I met with Rebecca Denton at Transmedia Next. I called for a meeting and pitched the project to her. Her response was quite favorable.

- 2011, October 18- Meeting with Eddie Cunningham, President of UPIE.

Dean O’Toole and myself presented the project to Universal.

- 2011, October 18 – meeting with Eric Juang from Penguin, London.

Alison Norrington introduced me to Eric Juang. I had the opportunity to formally introduce the project and explain the entire vision for *Tower of Fables*. Mr. Juang was very interested and offered to take the project forward.

- 2011, October 18 – meeting with Nuno Bernardo from Be Active.

Nuno Bernardo had shown interest in the project and we decided to explore any possibilities for collaboration. We ended up working on another project with Nuno Bernardo. We opted to adapt Paul Finch’s award winning book, *Cape Wrath*.

- 2011, October 12 – Invex results are out.

Immortal Transmedia is one of the 6 companies chosen to benefit from this scheme.

- 2011, October 30- November 2– *Storyworld Conference*, San Francisco.

I was invited to pitch my project to the transmedia community. This was a very interesting and challenging part of my research phase. The project garnered a lot of interest from agents and managers.

This was one of the most important gatherings of the global transmedia communities. It brought together the best of the best. From Sean Bailey (President of Walt Disney Motion Pictures) to Jeff Gomez (CEO of Starlight Runner) to Mike Monello (creator of the *Blair Witch Project* and CEO of Campfire) to Ivan Askwith (Head of Digital and Interactive at Lucasfilm) to Tom Kring (creator of *Heroes*) to Chip Brown (Vice President of Harper Collins Publishing House) to Matthew Cullen (CEO of Mirada Studios) to Kathy Franklin (President of Lightstorm Entertainment) to Joe Garlington (Vice President of Disney Imagineering) to Eric Juang (Publishing director at Penguin). This conference gave me the possibility to set a number of one to one meetings with potential investors and co-producers. I also had long discussions with 3Arts Entertainment, an international management company. Kevin Brown, producer of hit game *God of War*, showed great interest in the gaming side of the project.

- 2011, November – email exchanges/skype calls with Proctor and Gamble.
A series of email exchanges and skype calls ensued with Hal Burg. The end result was that they wanted the commitment of a broadcaster before taking any action.
- 2011, November – meeting with Harry Markosia, CEO of Markosia Enterprises, London.
Julian Friedman, literary agent, introduced us to Harry Markosia to discuss the possibilities of creating a graphic nove or a series of graphic novels. The meeting was cordial but the project did not interest the publisher.
- 2011, November – *Torino Film lab*, Torino.
Savina Nerotti, CEO of the Torino Film Lab invited me to pitch my project at their annual event. After the pitch I had a number of one to one meetings with various financiers. Two meetings were particularly interesting. The first was with Fabienne

Tsai, CEO of A Droite de la Lune and Patrice Nezan CEO of Les films du Present.

Both producers wanted to explore the possibilities of co-producing the animated film.

- 2011, December 4 – meeting with Eric Juang from Penguin, London.

Penguin called to have another meeting and see how they can come on board the project. Eric Juang asked for various changes especially when it comes to the targeted age group.

- 2011, December 5 – Meeting with Julian Friendman in London.

We started discussing the possibility of hiring Andy Briggs as a writer for the trilogy.

- 2011, December 5 – Meeting with Alison Norrington and Rebecca Denton from Turner Media.

Turner Media had some different ideas about the target audience but wanted to see the visual style.

- 2012, January – development of the world and writing of the treatments.
- 2012, January – application for Media fund for development of interactive project.
- 2012, February 3 – *Transmedia What?* Malta.

Together with the Malta Media Desk, I organized a one day conference on Transmedia. I invited Michel Reilhac, Alison Norrington, Jeff Gomez, Nuno Bernardo and Dean O'Toole. We targeted professionals and had only place for 80 people. We ended up with over 150 on the day.

- 2012, February 7 – Meeting with tutors (Dr. Dan North and Dr. William Higbee) at Exeter University.

I presented a rough draft of my literature review. We discussed my progress in great detail.

- 2012, February 14 – 18 – exploratory trip to Budapest, Hungary.

Livia Bus from Bielanski Films suggested that we do a trip to Budapest to look at the studios, artists and infrastructures present in Hungary. We visited over 9 studios but both Dean and myself loved the work of Oscar nominated animator, Geza M.Toth.

- 2012, April – meetings with Geza M.Toth come to a conclusion.

Unfortunately we could not agree on the fee.

- 2012, April – Christiane Stelberg is hired to create preliminary visuals.

I applied for the Malta Arts fund to obtain some finances to be able to pay the artist.

- 2012, April 18 – Meeting with Eric Juang at Penguin, London.

After a series of skype calls with Penguin we decided to meet again to try and iron out some issues. New treatments based on their notes were presented.

- 2012, May – June – writing of the screenplays.

I needed time to develop the TV series further and write the screenplays. The idea was to have something more tangible in hand.

- 2012, May 16,17,18,19,20 – *Cannes film Festival*, Cannes.

I attended the festival to showcase Immortal Transmedia and buy the rights to two projects.

- 2012, June 12,13 – *Cross Video Days*, Paris.

This was a conference that gathered producers, content creators and software developers to discuss the challenges of creating interactive narratives.

- 2012, June – meetings with Toni Attard, Artistic Director of the ZiguZajg Festival, Malta.

After lengthy discussions I got commissioned to create a theatre version of my project.

- 2012, July – Hiring of Malcolm Galea, a Maltese playwright with international experience.

Work starts on the writing of the play.

- 2012, September – results for Media Fund application for interactive project.

Unfortunately the project was not even considered because Kevin Brown, our lead designer was American. I presented an official protest as I had asked whether we were eligible and the answer given was a yes.

- 2012, September 14,15,16 – meetings in Berlin.

Edda Baumann Von Broen, Producer and CEO of Avanti Media invited me to Berlin to evaluate possibilities about finding funding in Germany. The most notable meetings were with ZDF and representatives of the Medianboard Berlin-Brandenburg. Zdf showed interest but proposed numerous changes.

- 2012, Oct 17,18,19 – *Storyworld Conference*, Los Angeles.

I was able to attend thanks to the mobility fund of the Malta Arts Council.

I had endless talks with both Penguin and Harper Collins about my project. Mirada studios also showed an interest and thanks to Alison Norrington's prompt networking I was given the possibility to pitch the project to the whole development team.

- 2012, November 16 – 24 - *Ziguzajg Festival*, Malta.

The play, *The Tower of Fables* is produced. Every performance was sold out.

- 2012, November 28 - *Torino Film Lab*, Torino.

For the second year running I was invited by Savina Nerotti to attend the Torino Film Lab.

- 2013, January – Meeting with Eric Juang of Penguin and Turner Media, London.

It is becoming clearer that transmedia can't be boxed, packaged and sold as one product. The requests of both parties are incompatible.

- 2013, March 26,27,28 – *Cartoon 360*, Munich.

Cartoon 360 is a conference/market place for transmedia animations. I was given a scholarship by Creative Europe to attend the three day seminar.

- 2013, April 23 – Invited by the Polish Media Desk to speak about transmedia and the *Innovation Lab*, Warsaw.

In Warsaw I had a one to one meeting with Joanna Zielinska, Producer for Platige.

- 2013, April 30 – Invited to *Hyper Island* to create a workshop for media students, Stockholm.
- 2013, May 1st – Pre-production on *We are Monster* starts.

As an independent producer I had to do other work to generate capital while I keep developing *Tower of Fables*.

- 2013, June 31 – shooting ends on *We are Monster*.
- 2013, July 3 – I start writing the critical analysis of the PhD.
- 2013, September – David Howard agrees to join the project.

David Howard agrees to join the project as head writer.

- 2013, September 17, 18, 19, 20 - *Cartoon Forum*, Toulouse.

I was invited as an observer to this event. Cartoon Forum brings together over 800 producers from all over the world.

- 2013, November 26,27,28 – *Cartoon Finance*, Belfast.

Cartoon Finance is a seminar on new financing models for animated series. Based on case studies and experts' advice, Cartoon Finance looked into today's fundraising and revenue streams for animated series, including new opportunities such as the UK tax credit, crowdfunding, gaming companies and hedge funds.