

Fireflies - 2017-06-01
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EXT. FOREST - DUSK

A slow river flows. Beside it a darkening forest. The sun sets over the tops of the trees and the forest is shrouded in darkness. Two lights appear - maybe glowing eyes. More lights. Then more - winking into existence. The lights start to move, at first pairs move together but then independently. More and more lights appear. A swarm of lights.

Fireflies swing through the air. We follow one that appears to be rushing somewhere. He arrives at a small clearing. A crowd of fireflies line the branches and leaves of trees forming a wide semi-circle like an amphitheatre. Groups huddle together, waiting for the show.

A blue tailed firefly swoops in from the side of the amphitheatre. It does a loop the loop in the centre.

The crowd coos and applauds.

Another firefly swings in, his brightly lit yellow tail leaves as an afterglow as he flies in the shape of a bullseye and then threads himself through the dead centre.

The crowd of fireflies are even more delighted.

Another firefly, this one with a red tail, zigzags through tracing the outline of an image of a cat in the air.

The audience applauds again.

BERTIE is "waiting in the wings" on a branch to the side. He dances around trying to psyche himself up. He breathes deeply and pumps his arms. Eventually, he grits his mandibles and steps to the side of the branch. His wings swing out and he takes flight.

BERTIE storms to the centre of the amphitheatre.

The crowd wait patiently.

As BERTIE nears the centre he starts his tail glowing. But unlike the others his tail stutters, changing colours, turning on and off, glowing dimly and then giving out occasional bright flashes. He looks back at his tail annoyed. He uses an arm to bash his hind quarters in frustration. But when he turns his head back to the direction he's flying in his face is filled with horror.

With a thwap BERTIE crashes into a branch in front of him and is sprung backwards into a tree trunk.

The crowd looks on awkwardly. A single cricket chirps in the distance.

BERTIE trudges away embarrassed.

EXT. AMPHITHEATRE - NIGHT

MONTAGE: The years pass, BERTIE keeps trying.

1 - BERTIE attempts to do a loop the loop but can't stop and spins out of control off into the distance. We hear a distant crash.

2 - BERTIE tries to paint a light picture with his tail but the results are a blurry mess.

3 - In the middle of the amphitheatre BERTIE's wings strain as he carries a large apple beneath him. He lurches from side to side as the apple starts to slip from his claws. He struggles to hold on but it gets away and falls to the ground hitting a confused mongoose. We hear a slow clap.

EXT. SMALL CLEARING - NIGHT.

BERTIE is practising. He's older now. His wings creak. He sighs heavily then spins into a pirouette. He turns fast on the spot as his tail stutters. From somewhere comes the sound of clapping. BERTIE is caught off guard. He loses his balance and spins across the clearing into a long stringy leaf. His spinning slowly stops as he becomes wound up in the leaf.

BERTIE glowers out through a gap in the spool of leaf he's caught in.

A young firefly, BARRY, watches nervously. He hesitantly keeps clapping, confused as to whether the leaf part is intentional or not. BARRY is short and squat and wears glasses.

BERTIE struggles and squirms out of the leaf.

He marches over to BARRY, looks him up and down, then snarls and marches off.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT.

BERTIE stomps along the forest floor massaging his bruised wings. He kicks an acorn.

It hits the stem of a flower which topples over pouring rain water over BERTIE.

BERTIE shakes it off angrily.

Skitter by skitter BARRY follows BERTIE, hiding behind grass and leaves along the way.

Over his shoulder BERTIE notices BARRY following him. He moves faster.

BARRY has to trot to keep up.

BERTIE spins around and throws his arms out at BARRY in a "what?!" gesture.

BARRY just waits expectantly.

BERTIE shoos BARRY.

BARRY waits expectantly, blinking at BERTIE through his big glasses.

BERTIE looks around. He picks up a stick and throws it for BARRY.

BARRY looks at the stick disappearing then looks back at BERTIE.

BERTIE shrugs in an "yeah, I don't know" kind of way.

BERTIE turns around and keeps walking. BARRY follows.

EXT. TREE TRUNK - NIGHT.

BERTIE is preparing.

BARRY watches, grinning from antenna to antenna.

BERTIE catches sight of him and shakes his head wearily but just turns back to the task in hand. A long branch stretches out before him. He picks up a leaf, places it on the branch and stands on top of it. He leans into the curve of the branch. He doesn't move. He tries to shunt his way forward but doesn't move.

BARRY nods in excitement.

BERTIE gives another shunt and suddenly disappears.

BERTIE slides down the branch at a terrifying pace. He barely hangs on to the leaf he's riding.

BARRY cheers from the top of the branch. Then hops off and starts to fly down.

BERTIE is still sliding. He notices something in front of him.

BARRY is already at the bottom of the branch, waiting and applauding.

BERTIE double takes between the top and the bottom of the branch. He realises BARRY is directly in his path so at the last moment he leaps over him.

BERTIE flies through the air.

In front of him wait the open jaws of a venus fly trap.

BERTIE has to pump his wings frantically to slow himself down. He comes to a stop a millimetre away from the venus fly trap. It's jaws slam shut just in front of him.

BERTIE is visibly shook.

When BERTIE returns to him BARRY is just speechless at how amazing BERTIE was.

BERTIE snaps and turns on BARRY. He snarls and hisses in BARRY's face. His tail glows and sputters in anger.

BARRY jumps in fright. He tumbles backwards and his glasses fly off into the air. As BARRY rolls backwards

his glasses spin through the air

and land on BERTIE's face. BERTIE shakes his head. But just as he's about to take them off he notices his own tail.

Through the blur of the glasses his tail seems to dance and paint incredibly beautiful colours and patterns.

BERTIE snaps the glasses off as he gets an idea.

BERTIE picks BARRY up, puts his glasses back on him, pats him on the head and runs off.

EXT. ON TOP OF A TREE TRUNK - NIGHT.

BERTIE carefully carries a piece of broken glass. He slowly slides it into place between two other pieces. It stays put. He steps back and surveys his work.

In front of him is a complicated contraption. Several pieces of glass are attached to each other to form a circular lens. The lens is beside a multi-faceted crystal which in turn is attached to a harness of vines and grass.

BERTIE steps up and picks up the contraption. He slings it onto his back. He moves about and tests his freedom. It seems okay. Then he concentrates hard and turns on his glowing tail.

The light of his tail shoots through the lens and crystal and lights up the surrounding forest with brilliant, ever changing light. Colours spin like from a disco ball and explode like fireworks.

BERTIE is delighted.

EXT. AMPHITHEATRE - NIGHT

The fireflies are gathered in the amphitheatre.

A firefly is describing geometric shapes in the centre.

At the side BERTIE waits nonchalantly.

A round of applause greets the exit of the firefly in the centre.

BERTIE raises an eyebrow and strides over to his glass contraption. He dons it and turns towards the amphitheatre. He begins his run up. His wings beat and he takes to the air.

BERTIE swings into centre stage and pauses dramatically, raising his arms aloft.

But just before he begins BARRY comes swooping in from the other side and tries to join him "on stage". He comes in too fast though and barrels into BERTIE. BERTIE is knocked off balance and with the weight of the glass contraption on his back he can't control himself and goes spinning into the crowd. A family manage to jump out of the way just in time as he goes crashing into a branch.

The audience shake their heads in dismay.

EXT. TREE STUMP - NIGHT.

BERTIE works wearily reattaching the lens to the crystal.

There's a rustle in the undergrowth.

BERTIE bares his mandibles but doesn't look around.

BARRY appears timidly through the grass. He's unsure what to do so starts to timidly clap.

BERTIE is incensed, spins round and swoops at BARRY, his tail glowing in fury.

BARRY flees into the air.

BERTIE chases after him.

BARRY strains desperately to get away.

They twist and turn through the air.

BERTIE is at first unrelenting in his pursuit but as he flies after BARRY he starts to notice something.

BARRY's tale flutters and stutters just like BERTIE's. It changes colours randomly and is dim with sudden blinding flashes of light.

BERTIE is stopped short. He stares at BARRY.

BARRY spins around. He floats uncertainly in front of BERTIE unsure what's going to happen next.

EXT. AMPHITHEATRE - NIGHT

BERTIE clips the glass contraption into place on top of BARRY.

BARRY looks nervous.

BERTIE nods at him encouragingly.

BARRY looks out from "the wings" at the assembled crowd. He turns back to BERTIE and shakes his head in fear.

BERTIE nods again encouragingly

but without waiting to see a change he pushes BARRY off their branch.

BARRY plummets towards the ground but recovers and swoops into the centre of the amphitheatre.

BARRY pauses lacking conviction.

There's a couple of titters from the back of the crowd.

BARRY takes a deep breath and lights up his tail. The light shines through the glass contraption and the whole forest is filled with dancing lights and colourful explosions.

The crowd are amazed, speechless.

BERTIE waits nervously.

Then the crowd explode into rapturous applause.

BARRY is overcome by their adulation.

BERTIE sits and watches and applauds loudly.

THE END.