

## CRUSTACEAN OSCILLATION

ACT I SCENE 1: A dark stage. A treadmill. The upstage wall has a projection of dark waves representing an underwater environment. Blue lights rise on a treadmill, downstage center, with CLAUDE on it, walking at a steady pace. He is a shrimp, wearing a toque with a maple leaf on it. He speaks in a French – no – French-*Canadian* accent.

CLAUDE: Do you ever feel as though your life is one, long, ever-repeating circle? No. Not a circle. Circles are perfect, and life is imperfect. At least my life is imperfect. My life is one, long, ever-repeating oval. I walk, and I walk, and I ingest and excrete as my body requires but there is no meaning, no purpose.

WOMAN: (v/o) Introducing pollutant number seven.

CLAUDE: Life. Do not talk to me about life.

We are all just flotsam and jetsam carried along on the waves.

*The blue lights fade out, as CLAUDE continues walking.*

SCENE II: A university science lab. Two students in lab coats – JEANNIE and THOMAS are working with equipment – a microphone and an oscilloscope. It's possible they're a bit altered. Also? JEANNIE is the WOMAN from the voiceover in the previous scene.

JEANNIE (wagging a joint at THOMAS) Introducing pollutant number seven. I brought this back from vacation. Dude, it's BC bud – the best. Sooo, much better than the gummies they sell at the shop on the corner.

THOMAS: (taking it, taking a toke) Sweet. And I thought six was im-pressive. Or imp-ressive. Ha! Imps. Are there imps in between soundwaves do you think, or hiding in between spectra of visible light?

JEANNIE: (leaning over the mic) I don't know Thomas. (giggling) Hello, imps. Imps! Imps! Come out, come out wherever you are....

*Her words, represented by patterns on the oscilloscope's display, are also projected on the upstage wall.*

THOMAS: Look! Imps! (He points to the screen. A cursor directs our attention to the starbursts on the wall.)

JEANNIE: I see... stars.

*The images on the screen turn into starbursts and then the entire stage is bathed in white light and then the light goes dark.*

SCENE 3: A blank stage. One by one bulbs illuminate on the upstage wall and then tiny fairy-lights come on one at a time, so there's a web of light forming on the stage. CELESTE, white-clad, impossibly old, walks between the light web and the wall, so that she is veiled by light, bathed in it. ARIAL, younger, dressed in pale blue, joins her.

CELESTE: Are you ready to learn this next recipe, Daughter?

ARIAL: I am, Mother.

CELESTE: (producing a giant ladle from within her sleeve). A dipper full of stars, child, is the basis for every batch. You choose the best and the brightest.

*CELESTE waves her dipper through the air and a few lights go out.*

ARIAL: But doesn't that darken the sky?

CELESTE: Oh, for a while. But stars have a way of regenerating, child, and life must go on.

ARIAL: I'm not sure I understand.

CELESTE: Mix first, understand later.

*The lights fade out.*

ACT II SCENE 1 A seedy bar. A comedian is on stage. He's CLAUDE the Shrimp. Yes, still on the treadmill. Yes, still wearing the maple-leaf toque.

CLAUDE: Two coupled harmonic oscillators walk into a bar, except they would either both walk into the bar or both would not walk into the bar or one would walk into the bar and one wouldn't walk into the bar or the other one would walk into the bar and the other one wouldn't, but since they're coupled they have to go with each other so if you were actually looking at the system at any one point they would either be in the bar or not in the bar at the same time because they're still a coupled system so it's either in or not in but really it's a superposition of both and neither and ... ovals. Do you see...? Everything is ovals.

*Blackout.*

SCENE 2: A grocery store, the soup aisle. JEANNIE and THOMAS are shopping for soup. (Post 'pollutant number seven' they're hungry).

THOMAS: Cream of Celery?

JEANNIE: No.

THOMAS: Minestrone?

JEANNIE: No.

THOMAS: New England Clam Chowder?

JEANNIE: No.

THOMAS: Broccoli Cheddar?

JEANNIE: No.

THOMAS: Shrimp bisque?

JEANNIE: Claude.

THOMAS: Beef Barley?

JEANNIE: No.

THOMAS: Italian Wedding Soup?

JEANNIE: No.

*A little girl walks across the stage and pauses.*

GIRL: Chicken and Stars.

*The little girl continues across the stage.*

THOMAS: Chicken and Stars.

JEANNIE: Chicken and Stars. Yes.

*Blackout.*

SCENE 3: We're back in the twinkle light kitchen with CELESTE and ARIAL.

CELESTE: Always try to balance sweetness and sorrow.

ARIAL: Okay.

CELESTE: When adding in any of the stimulants – creativity, anger, lust – always stir widdershins.

ARIAL: Or you'll have a boil-over.

CELESTE: And don't forget to sprinkle it all with stardust.

ARIAL: But...

CELESTE: We are what we eat, dear.

*Lights fade out.*

SCENE 4: A café. Two students, both in black turtlenecks and jeans, are sipping coffee. CLAIRE, the woman, is wearing a red beret. FELIX, the man is wearing a navy watch cap. They are in a heated conversation.

FELIX: Of course, string theory is rubbish, you know that right. I mean, it's untestable.

CLAIRE: Here we go again. Philosophy and physics are opposites that attract and duplicates that repel both at once.

FELIX: Yes, exactly!

CLAIRE: You know you just contradicted yourself.

FELIX: No, I agreed with you, and you made a contradictory statement.

CLAIRE: Have you read this theory that the Big Bang created a mirror universe where time flows in the opposite direction?

FELIX: It's just a fancy article explaining the concept of equal and opposite reactions.

CLAIRE: I hate this term 'mirror universe' as if everything is reversed. Like it's some weird place where all the bad guys have beards and shrimp can talk or something.

FELIX: Hey, I have a beard. I'm not bad.

CLAIRE: No, sweetie, you're very, very good.

FELIX: Talking shrimp though....

*Lights fade out.*

SCENE 5: We're with CLAUDE again, in his underwater treadmill lair as in the opening of the play, but this time, he's walking backward on the treadmill. And he's wearing a beard.

CLAUDE: No meaning. No purpose. Do you ever feel as though your life is one, long ever-repeating oval?

*Blackout.*

THE END