The Phoenix and the Fighting Pandas of Yunnan Province

Written & Directed by Jenny de Reuck

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Presented by Murdoch University Children's Performance Group in Collaboration with the Temple of Fine Arts International, Malaysia
"The Phoenix and the Fighting Pandas of Yunnan Province"

By

Jenny de Reuck

Malaysian Tour Cast

The Australian Animals
Captain Quokka, a Reformed Pie Rat, Master of the Rainbow Lorikeet  John K
Kangaroo, Heroic Protector of Endangered Creatures Everywhere  John II
Emu, his Scatterbrained Assistant  Melissa
Wombat, a Cool Surfin Dude  Jason

The Pie Rats
Buccaneer Bluebeard, Captain of the Black Albatross  Andrew
Pie Rat Peking, his First Mate  Joey
Pie Rat Pong, Chef on the Black Albatross  Salmiyah
Pie Rat Dim Sum, a Lowly Deckhand  Murali

The Chinese Animals
The Imperial Mandarin, an Evil Sun Bear  Joel
Tang, his Henchwoman, an Asian Tiger  Kate
Manchu, a Monkey, her Ambivalent Assistant  Claire
Sima, a Confucian Black Bear  Stephen
Fenghuang, an Ancient Bird with a Hidden Identity  Katrina
Guan Yu, a Grasshopper, Inscrutable Servant to Fenghuang  Scott
Yinglong, the Rain Dragon, a Creature of Mythology  Salmiyah/Sarah

The Sea Creature
Sanya, an Endangered Mother Sea Turtle, with Anxiety Issues  Aleesha

The Fighting Pandas of Yunnan Province
Lady Severa Ti, Trainer Extraordinaire  Valentina
Tai Pan Do, a powerful Warrior Panda  Uzi
Pilates, a graceful Warrior Panda  Kylie
Tai Chi, a diplomatic Warrior Panda  Hannah
Kung Fu, an Impulsive Warrior Panda  Kim
A Rabbit Retainer  Sarah

The Von Duck Family Singers
Mother Duck, a Choir Mistress  Meg
Won Ton, an aspiring Beijing Opera Singer  Leigh-Ann
Foo Yong, her younger sister, a talented Soprano  Serena
Omelette, their Star-Struck youngest Sibling  Helen
The Phoenix and the Fighting Pandas of Yunnan Province

A Play in Two Acts

by

Jenny de Reuck

Malaysian Tour Version

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Kangaroo, Heroic Protector of Endangered Creatures Everywhere
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Scenes

Scene 1: Temple of Fine Arts
Scene 2: The Ante Chamber of the Palace of the Imperial Mandarin
Scene 3: The Beach on the Island of Hainan
Scene 4: The Deck of the Black Albatross
Scene 5: The Beach on the Island of Hainan
Scene 6: The Courtyard Home of Sima, the Scholar
Scene 7: Near the Courtyard home of Sima the Scholar
Scene 8: The Great Wall of China
Scene 9: At the Gate to the Courtyard Home of Sima the Scholar.
Scene 10: Somewhere on the Beach of the Island of Hainan
Scene 11: Back at the Ante Chamber of the Palace of the Imperial Mandarin
Scene 12: The Great Council in the Courtyard of the Home of Sima the Scholar
Scene 13: Bluebeard’s Cabin on the “Black Albatross”
Scene 14: A Cliff on the Island of Hainan
Scene 15: The Courtyard of the Home of Sima the Scholar
Scene 16: Back at the Great Wall of China
Scene 17: Outside the Courtyard Home of Sima the Scholar.
Scene 18: The Ante Chamber of the Palace of the Imperial Mandarin
Scene 19: A Cove on the Island of Hainan
Scene 20: The Island of Hainan

Set Pieces

1. The exterior wall of a Courtyard House (a reversible screen)
2. The interior of the Courtyard House (a reversible screen)
3. The Great Wall of China
4. The mountains of Yunnan (on screens flown in)
5. Bamboo stands/gnarled trees on standing screens.
6. A Tsunami Wave (on a standing screen)
7. A Pirate Ship with Sails (on a standing screen)
8. A sedan Chair
Act 1

Scene 1: Temple of Fine Arts

As the audience enters they are shown to their seats by the crew of the “Rainbow Lorikeet”, Kangaroo, Wombat, and Emu. They are under instruction from their leader, the reformed Captain Quokka, to keep a lookout for the endangered Leatherback Turtle who will be arriving any moment to bury her eggs – the precious next generation of her species - and whom they are under orders to protect. There should be some repartee among them – and with the children – as the audience comes in and they should then seat themselves in the audience at various points.


Emu: (Looking around her doubtfully) If you believe the publicity! Where are the palm trees? The rolling breakers? The sandy beaches? Looks more like a theatre to me!

Wombat: Chill, Emu, anything’s possible here. What a cool place. I’m heading to the beach for a surf as soon as this show’s over. (He puts on a pair of sunnies and demonstrates his ‘skills’ on an imaginary surfboard)

Kangaroo: That’s if Captain Quokka –

Emu: - he’s our leader, the Captain of the Rainbow Lorikeet, anchored just over there in the bay.

Kangaroo: (Blows his whistle) As I was saying … if he lets you off your duties on board this evening.

Wombat: He’s really cool. He won’t stop me from catching a wave!

Emu: No, you’re right! He’s the best Captain we could wish for! Sails the Seven Seas looking for creatures in distress.

Wombat: And as soon as a message reaches us on the wind –

Emu: - or by SMS. That stands for “Seagull Message Sender” –

Wombat: We take out our compasses, set the sails of the Rainbow Lorikeet, and head straight towards them to offer our assistance.

Emu: (Dreamily) Such a hero!
Kangaroo: (He should have a whistle that he can use strategically to get the children and his crew into line and into their seats.) That’s enough chatter, you two! I think there’s someone coming. To your stations, Warriors of the Rainbow Lorikeet!

Emu: (Peering over his shoulder) Is it her d’you think?

Kangaroo: Settle down everyone. (Blows his whistle) We’ve got to be very quiet. We don’t want to frighten her away. (Peering - through binoculars - off out towards the doorway) Yes, I think it’s her.

Wombat: (To the audience) Captain Quokka sighted her as we came in to the bay.

Emu: Oh, she’s coming up the beach! She’s on her way! It’s so exciting. (To the children) We’re waiting for Sanya, the Sea Turtle. She comes here every year to bury her eggs. (Looking around her) This island is her nursery -

Wombat: And it’s, like, our job to protect her and her babies from, like, anything uncool happening.

Music FX Chariots of Fire

Emu: We’re on the lookout for Danger – wherever it is!

They will perform their ‘warrior’ chant/routine at this point. It is repeated whenever they need to rally their spirits as a group.

Kangaroo: (Near the door. Blowing his whistle). I think that’s her now! Quiet everyone.

LFX dim in the auditorium. Music FX indicates the start of the show. The Blacks open partially to reveal the interior with the Imperial Mandarin and Buccaneer Bluebeard in conversation. At first only Wombat notices but everyone should be drawn to the scene unfolding on stage.

Wombat: Hang on! There’s something going on over there. Look, everyone!

Scene 2: The Palace Chamber of the Imperial Mandarin

The blacks are pulled back to reveal a splendid palace interior lit by red lanterns. The Imperial Mandarin, with his two henchwomen, Tang the Tiger and Manchu the Monkey, stands CS.

SFX GONG

Manchu: We have a visitor, Oh Mighty Mandarin!
Mandarin: It is one whom I have long awaited. He has returned.

Tang: Yes, Oh Mighty One! The Rat is back. *She can barely contain herself at the prospect of demolishing him.*

Manchu: *Ingratiatingly* Yes, back from his mission, my Lord. Buccaneer Bluebeard, the most fearsome Pie Rat that has ever sailed the seas.

Tang: *Growls* As I was saying … the Rat is back.

Mandarin: *Patting her* Now, now, my little one. Be patient. You’ll have your reward – when I have finished with him! But not yet… not just yet! *He drifts into a reverie contemplating this moment in the future*

Manchu: Shall I show him in to your presence, Oh Mighty One?

Mandarin: *Pulling himself back to the present* Yes, yes. Show him in. Let us see if this Bluebeard, this Pie Rat, has what I’ve asked for.

Tang: No-one has found her, Master. Not in thousands of years. There’s little hope that Buccaneer Bluebeard will succeed where others – so much better than him – have failed!

Manchu: *Pulling a comical expression – she is ‘comedy’ to Tang’s ‘tragedy’ in this relationship* Well, then we’re all lost. *She indicates their destruction with a gesture* The Emperor will not be put off any longer. We’re doomed!

Tang: *Growls* I will not listen to your weasel words, Manchu. Take them back!

Mandarin: Silence, both of you! I await Bluebeard the Pie Rat. Send him in!

Bluebeard enters from SR and bows before the Mandarin. He should be piratically costumed and is probably a nastier version of Johnny Depp’s character in “Pirates of the Caribbean”. He is a mixture of cunning rat-like and impressive heroic qualities, but is ultimately self-serving and deceptive, suiting all action to his own agenda.

Mandarin: *Looking at him in alarm* It is just as I feared. You return empty-handed.

Bluebeard: For now, your lordship.

Mandarin: Then we are undone! His Imperial Majesty will banish us forever.

Bluebeard: Not so fast! I bring you good news!

Mandarin: *Eagerly* You have found her? The Firebird?
Throughout this exchange, Tang and Manchu will react, in character, highlighting their annoyance/displeasure at what appears to be the ‘achievement’ of Bluebeard. They are deeply mistrustful of him and protective of their Master’s – and consequently – their own – interests.

Bluebeard:  (Laughing evilly) We have, Sire, and we promise to deliver her to you before the winter winds freeze our sails and send us south to sunnier seas.

Mandarin:  (Rhapsodically, aside) The Firebird. That Mythical Creature – who would have thought this Bluebeard and his troop of filthy seafarers would succeed where all others have failed. (Rounding on him) But what evidence have you to present to me that this is indeed true? Why should I believe you, you cunning creature?

Tang:  (Squaring up to Bluebeard, menacingly) You, say you have found the Firebird where others have failed? It’s not believable!

Manchu:  (Urgently) Don’t trust him, Master! Don’t believe a word he says.

Mandarin:  (Persuaded by their arguments. Deeply suspicious) Indeed, why should I?

Bluebeard:  Because of this, your Lordship. (He pulls from his coat pocket a glorious feather. It should gleam in the light and suggest a splendour of mythic proportions)

Mandarin:  (Gasping) That’s it! The feather of the Phoenix! (In stunned amazement) She lives still!

Tang and Manchu can scarcely believe what they’re seeing. Manchu is amazed. Tang suspicious.

Bluebeard:  We have tracked her to an island off the coast – Hainandoa – home of the Great Sea Turtle. But we’re running out of gold and if we’re to complete this mission …

Mandarin:  Tang, bring me my gold!

Tang fetches a clinking sack of ‘gold’ coins and hands it, kneeling, to her Master.

Bluebeard:  Nothing I like more than that sound, your Lordship! (Takes out a piece and tests it by biting it)

Mandarin:  (Hands Bluebeard a bag of gold). Bring me the bird and you’ll have your reward. The Emperor’s pleasure is at stake – not to mention our heads. There’s more gold if you and your villainous crew return with the Firebird. Much more. (Aside) Little does he know, this treasure is for me and me only! With the Firebird’s powers under my control, I shall live – and govern – for eternity.
Bluebeard:  *(Bowling low)* The “Black Albatross” and her crew of Pie Rats *(looks arrogantly at Tang as he speaks, aware of her contempt for him)* are at your disposal. *(With a flourish of his sword)* We’ll be off on the tide for the Island of Hainan and shall not return until we have captured the Firebird —

Mandarin:  Before the winter, then. I can’t keep the Emperor waiting any longer. His patience is running out already.

*SFX Gong*

Bluebeard:  We shall be back – with our prize, the Firebird – before the North Wind has had time to gather strength. *(Aside)* Little does he know, I am fully aware of the value of this prize. He will pay – and pay dearly for it! *(Laughs evilly).*

*He bows with a flourish as the curtains close on the scene.*

*MUSIC FX*

*LFX down on interior scene, up on the apron.*

**Scene 3: The beach on the Island of Hainan**

*(In front of the blacks.)*

*SFX seagulls, crying, waves crashing on shore, wind blowing. LFX on part of the apron reads for water/sea, the other half is the deck of the boat.*

Kangaroo:  This doesn’t look good!

Emu:  I didn’t like the look of that Evil Mandarin – or his courtiers. *(Shudders)* Really scary!

Kangaroo:  And, that was Buccaneer Bluebeard, the Pie Rat, with him. Captain Quokka’s old enemy –

Wombat:  Scourge of the South China Seas

Kangaroo:  - and, if I heard correctly, he’s on his way, here, to the Island of Hainan.

Emu:  In search of the Firebird! I’ve never heard of it. What is it?

Wombat:  Like, I have NO idea!

Kangaroo:  Well, I do, but there’s no time to explain it now. Buccaneer Bluebeard is heading for Hainan and we all know what that means!
Emu: He’s the most horrible Pie Rat. We must tell Captain Quokka immediately! If Buccaneer Bluebeard’s on his way here, we’re all in great danger.

Wombat: Too right, Emu. We must tell him what we’ve overheard.

Kangaroo: *(Blows his whistle)* To the Rainbow Lorikeet! Quick, follow me.

_He hops off followed by Wombat._

Emu: *(To the audience)* Wait here – we’ll be back! *(She heads off but scurries back with an afterthought)* And keep an eye out for Sanya the Sea Turtle, will you? She can’t be far off now. *(Conflicted)* We should be here to protect her! This is too awful!

Wombat: C’mon Emu – we’ve got to tell Captain Quokka.

Kangaroo: Hurry, the Black Albatross is heading this way!

_She exits in a flustered state, knowing she’s failing in her duty._

_Scene 4: The Deck of the Black Albatross_

_On the deck of the “Black Albatross”. Set includes the helm, a barrel, some rope and the mast with sails furled. A ladder leads down to the stage from the balcony SL. The Jolly Roger flies above the action. MFX Theme for the Pie Rats establishes the ambience._

_Sanya the Sea Turtle enters slowly through the left (SR) of the auditorium, clutching a basket of eggs. She is anxious and stressed because time is running out – she must find a safe, sandy spot in which to bury her eggs before the vicious Pie Rats see her. They have dropped anchor in a bay off the coast of Hainandao and are awaiting the return of Buccaneer Bluebeard from the mainland before plotting their next move._

Sanya: Oh dear, oh dear. Whatever am I to do? It’s taken me absolutely ages to get here across the beach and past all these chairs - which were not what I expected, I can tell you – and if I don’t find a safe place for my eggs soon, it will all have been for nothing. And it’s such an effort!

_The Pie Rats, led by Peking enter, with Dim Sum last, tangled in his ropes._

Pie Rat Peking: *(Using a telescope)* He’s on his way from the mainland, me hearties. Get ready to pipe him aboard. *(Hands the telescope to Pie Rat Ping)* Keep a look out, Pie Rats Ping, and tell me when our villainous master, Buccaneer Bluebeard’s boat - arrghh - pulls up alongside.
Pie Rat Pong will lift a large bowl and wooden spoon from the top of the barrel, prop the cookbook on the surface and begin to read her recipe du jour while Dim Sum slaves away.

Sanya: Oh dear. I don’t like the look of them. Just when I thought I’d found the perfect spot, too. I’ll just sit here with you till they’ve gone. Please don’t let them know I’m here. Promise?

She sits in the audience towards the back of the theatre, carefully clutching her eggs.

Pie Rat Pong: (To Dim Sum) That’s it, then! I know exactly what it will be. And it won’t take long. (Thinking about this) I wonder if he’ll like it if I drizzle some fish oil onto it? (To herself) Mmmm?

Pie Rat Peking: (Leaning down over the balcony to speak) You won’t have time to ‘drizzle’ anything, Pie Rat Pong. He’ll be ready for his dinner and it had better be waiting for him. You know how angry he gets (they all shudder at the thought) if his pie isn’t done.

Pie Dim Sum: Especially when he’s been gone so long! What’s on the menu tonight?

Pie Rat Pong: (Reading from a large Cook Book, her chef’s cap slightly askew, with flour on her nose) It’s Crab Custard pie—

Pie Rat Peking: Yum. His Favourite! Arrghh. And mine!

Pie Rat Pong: - and I have all the ingredients in Jamie Oliver’s recipe except—

Pie Rat Dim Sum: You’re missing ingredients!

Pie Rat Peking: Don’t tell me you’ve forgotten something!

Pie Rat Pong: Only the eggs! I have everything else! It says here, take 50 eggs—

Pie Rat Peking: (Somewhat taken aback) That’s a lot of eggs!

Pie Rat Pong: - and scramble them. Now where will I find 50 eggs?

When the eggs are mentioned, Sanya reacts in alarm. Hopefully the children don’t give her away.

Pie Rat Peking: I don’t believe this! How could you forget them?

Pie Rat Pong: (Defensively.) I have everything else.
Pie Rat Dim Sum: He’s here! Our Master is here! Buccaneer Bluebeard’s coming aboard.

*General mayhem ensues as they all try to outdo each other getting ready for the triumphant entry of Buccaneer Bluebeard.*

Pie Rat Dim Sum: Quick, grab the helm and bring ‘er about.

*Pie Rat Pong does so with some jostling for control by Pie Rat Peking.*

*Music FX Theme for Bluebeard as he enters*

Bluebeard: Arrgh. Ahoy, there me hearties! Arrgh.

Dim Sum: What have you brought us? I’ll bet he’s brought us lollies. What’s in the bag, Captain Bluebeard?

Pie Rat Peking: That’s enough, Dim Sum. *(Ingratiatingly)* Your mission, Master? It was successful!

Bluebeard: Arrghh. Indeed it was, my lass. Indeed it was. *(He holds aloft the bag of gold and they all gather eagerly round him.)* We have a commission from the Great Imperial Mandarin himself -

Pie Rat Pong: - a mission. You mean we’re off again?

Pie Rat Dim Sum: *(Hopefuly)* To pillage and plunder?

Pie Rat Pong: *(Relishing this)* To plunder and pollute?

Bluebeard: Arrghhh me hearties, you shall have all the plunder you desire. Arrghhh, and we shall pollute and pillage to our heart’s content. Never you fear. But, we have no time to lose! Lower the sails, man the lookout! We’ll head for a bay on the other side of this Island. Arrghhh. I’ll tell you my plan to catch the Firebird, that splendid Creature of Chinese Mythology. She’ll make us our fortunes, mark my words, arrghh, and we’ll live ever after like kings. Arrghhh.. How’s my dinner, coming along, Pie Rat Pong. I’m starving.

*Music and SFX indicate the scene change. LFX down on the apron as the Pie Rats set sail. As the lights go down on the scene, Pie Rats Peking and Pong confer.*

Pie Rat Peking: This is all your fault. Where are we going to find 50 eggs for your Crab custard pie now? You should have stocked up on the mainland!
Pie Rat Pong: All is not lost! Look around you, Pie Rat Peking. There’ll be eggs aplenty here.

Pie Rat Peking: Here? You’re dreaming! There’s not an egg in sight!

Pie Rat Pong: Ah, but you should know this. Hainan is famous for its turtles. They come here to nest. Mmmnnn (looking at the Cook Book) there’s also a great recipe here for turtle soup. (Sniggers) All sorts of delicious possibilities.

Pie Rat Peking: Jamie Oliver’s so imaginative. That looks scrumptious! (Drawn in) Yum. Crab custard pie. Turtle Soup. De-licious!

*LFX. SFX Storm*

Pie Rat Pong: Quick, let’s get below deck. There’s a storm brewing!

*They should rush out of the rain with ‘girlie’ squeaks about their hair getting wet. This is deliberately at odds with their piratical presence.

LFX down on the Apron. Blackout.

**Scene 5: The Beach on the Island of Hainan**

*Spot on Sanya, who rises up in the auditorium, horrified.*

Sanya: Did you hear that? Did you? That was horrible. My precious babies. They want to turn them into (she can scarcely speak)Crab Custard Pie!

Whatever shall I do?

*LFX up on the balcony SL reveals Fenghuang, the Phoenix. She is a mere shadow of her once glorious self and has, in fact, forgotten who she really is. Only a tail feather suggests who she might be. For now she presents as a scruffy, ancient relic of a bird.*

Fenghuang: Well, don’t stand there for a start! You’re as large as life and a sitting duck, so to speak, for a Pie Rat! You and your babies. Now where’s that useless servant of mine? Guan Yu! Guan Yu! Have you found those tourists yet?

*Guan Yu, a grasshopper, servant to the Fenghuang, enters on the apron SL. He has served the Phoenix for eternity and remains fiercely loyal to her despite her rather sharp manner*

Guan Yu: You called, Mistress?

Fenghuang: Yes, I did, Guan Yu. Have you seen those odd-looking visitors who were here a while ago?
Guan Yu: The animals from the Rainbow Lorikeet, Mistress?

Fenghuang: *(Impatiently)* Yes, yes. That’s them. They’re from the Great Southern Land, I believe, and if memory serves me – and it doesn’t these days - they’re on a mission to protect creatures like that young Sea Turtle over there from harm.

Sanya: Oh, how noble of them!

Fenghuang: Now where have they got to?!

Sanya: They’ve come all this way just to protect me? But do they know what I’m up against?

Fenghuang: *(Drily)* Probably not, but we’ll soon set that right. Now, tell me Little Grasshopper, where are they?

Guan Yu: They are drinking tea with Sima, the Scholar, oh noble mistress.

Fenghuang: Of course, they are! I should have thought of that! *(To Sanya)* No visitor to the Island of Hainan escapes Sima’s notice! Or his hospitality. A cup of tea for our visitor, Guan Yu. Get along then!

Guan Yu: As you wish, Madam. *(He bows to Fenghuang and turns to Sanya)*

Sanya: Oh, but I don’t want to bother him.

Fenghuang: Nonsense. You’re not a bother. Show her the way, Guan Yu! Now where have I put them *(She rummages in the pockets of her shabby coat for her spectacles which should be obviously perched on her head beneath her stunted ‘plume’.)*

Guan Yu: This way Madam *(he signals to Sanya who has made her way slowly toward the stage)* Follow me and I’ll take you to them – they are in the great Confucian Bear’s Courtyard. If I’m not mistaken, the tea ceremony has just begun.

Fenghuang: *(Calling to them from her position on the balcony)* I’ll follow you down in a moment. Just have to find my spectacles. I always need them when I’m with the Scholar. Now where have I put them?

*LFX down on the balcony*

*Music FX and SFX birds, cups clinking, indicate the tranquil courtyard scene to follow.*

Sanya: You are both very kind. I would love a cup of tea after all I’ve been through this afternoon – not to mention swimming all this way. It’s been quite an ordeal I can tell you..

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Guan Yu: Let me help you with that. Behold, The Courtyard Home of Sima, the Confucian Black Bear.

Guan Yu relieves her of her basket and they exit together SR and re-enter the scene from SL a little later.

Scene 6: The Courtyard Home of Sima, the Scholar

Music FX plays the theme for the Chinese context. The blacks open to reveal the Courtyard. There may be bamboo stalks peeping up over the wall, and a cherry blossom tree could frame the set. It should be lit(LFX) as for daytime, but signal a space away from the beach.

This is the exterior scene. The scrim is positioned behind the walls of the courtyard house exterior. The puppet Phoenix is hung on a bar behind it. The Great Wall is masked by the scrim.

Sima the Scholar stands musing before a silent dragon-themed wind chime. He shakes his head before moving a little DSR and then taking his seat as the others enter from the doorway.

Sima: Still so silent, my little friend? I wonder if you will ever stir again?

Captain Quokka, Kangaroo, Wombat and Emu enter in intense conversation as Sima, moving CS in their wake, presides over his low table with the tea things positioned on it.

Quokka: This is very worrying, my friends. I had no idea Buccaneer Bluebeard was in the South China Sea. Are you sure it was him?

Kangaroo: I’d know him anywhere, Captain Quokka! It could be no-one else.

Emu: And the Imperial Mandarin! Tell them about him, Kangaroo. Tell him.

Wombat: Chill, Emu. We’re doing that? (Speaks with a rising inflection.)

Sima: (Looking up from his tea things) What is this I hear about the Imperial Mandarin?

Emu: He gave me the creeps, Sima. The nasty way he spoke! And those two courtiers of his –

Sima: Tang, the Tiger?
Wombat: Yeah! And a Monkey. There was this other dude – *(he mimics her movements)*

Sima: Ah, yes. Manchu, the Monkey. Tang and Manchu. They are very bad news.

Quokka: What do you make of this, Sima – Buccaneer Bluebeard, commissioned by the Imperial Mandarin to find the ‘Firebird’.

Sima: I must give this some thought, Captain Quokka. Would you like a cup of tea? It’s China’s finest blend!

_Guan Yu and Sanya enter, SR_

_The others are kneeling at a low table with Sima, CS, about to partake of the tea ceremony._

Guan Yu: She has arrived, Sima. Our visitor from afar. *(He ushers Sanya forward.)* I have the next generation safely in this basket you’ll be pleased to know. *(He smiles at Sanya as he speaks)*

Sima: *(Standing up – possibly with difficulty)* Welcome, my dear. You are very welcome. You must be thirsty after your long trip. A cup of tea? You must meet our friends from the Great Southern Land. He indicates his other guests.

_Guan Yu, the Servant, will perform most of the tasks, handing round the cups and refilling them as needed._

Captain Quokka: Delighted to meet you, Madam. *(Bows, politely to her)* Captain Quokka, and the crew of the Rainbow Lorikeet, at your service. Though apparently my crew have failed in their duty to you!

Emu: *(Gently cradling the basket of eggs)*. Oh, your precious babies. They’re safe! I am so glad.

Wombat: Well, it’s no thanks to us! We left before you got there. That was so not cool!

Kangaroo: We’d just heard something awful, you see, and had to get to the news to Captain Quokka.

Emu: It’s about Buccaneer Bluebeard –
Sanya:  
(Shrieks) You heard that too? He’s here, Buccaneer Bluebeard, he’s on the island already and he and his horrible Pie Rats are planning to use my eggs – my babies – in a Jamie Oliver recipe for … for… (bursting into tears) Crab custard pie!

Wombat:  
(Revolted by the image) That’s disgusting!

Sanya:  
You heard them, didn’t you, Guan Yu?

Guan Yu:  
Indeed, as did my Mistress, Fenghuang. She it was who asked me to bring you here where it is safe.

Sanya:  
(Growing a little more emotional) And they even mentioned a recipe – I can barely speak it – for “Turtle Soup”. They want to turn me into “Turtle Soup”!

Everyone is discomforted by this but determined to support the distressed Sea Turtle.

Emu:  
(Soothingly) We simply won’t let them, Sanya. We, of the Rainbow Lorikeet, will not let any harm come to you – or your babies.

Kangaroo:  
You’re safe here with us. Word of a Warrior.

Wombat:  
What they want to do is just so not cool!

Captain Quokka:  
This is bad news, Sima. Buccaneer Bluebeard has moved very swiftly, if he’s already on Hainan.

Sima:  
Indeed, it is not good news. But let us not lose sight of our little ceremony. Guan Yu, if you will be so kind, Little Grasshopper, we shall consider, over our teacups, what is to be done.

As they take up their positions round the table and Guan Yu fills their cups, Sima stands a little apart.

Sima:  
(Aside) This is the work of my old enemy, the Imperial Mandarin, I feel it. Why does he want the Firebird and what makes him think she lives here on Hainan? She has not been seen in these parts for centuries. This puzzles me…

Fenghuang bustles in at this point.

Fenghuang:  
Guan Yu. You can pour a cup of tea for your old mistress too.

Sima:  
Welcome, my friend. You are just in time for our ceremony. Please join me and my friends from the Great Southern Land. I fear we find ourselves in difficult times.
Everyone acknowledges Fenghuang as she sits down with them.

Captain Quokka: There is evil abroad on the Island – Buccaneer Bluebeard has landed on a mission for the Imperial Mandarin.

Fenghuang: So I have heard. He seeks the Firebird for the Emperor, but she has long since vanished from Hainan.

As this conversation continues, the Phoenix should be discerned, gleaming spectacularly, behind the scrim. Music FX for the Phoenix – rousing and dramatic.

Kangaroo: Yet Buccaneer Bluebeard had evidence that she was here – you saw it, didn’t you, Emu? Wombat?

Emu: Yes, we did

Wombat: Too right. It was so cool!

Kangaroo: The most glorious feather!

Emu: It gleamed in the darkness – its splendour lit up the room!

Sima: This is something only the Firebird’s feathers could do. But I know every inch of this land - she’s nowhere on this Island!

Fenghuang: No, she’s gone from here ... she left. She’s long gone.

The Phoenix fades from view behind them. Guan Yu looks at his Mistress but says nothing. She carefully pulls her coat round her to ensure that her one remaining feather – as beautiful as the one the Australian animals had seen at the Court of the Imperial Mandarin – remains hidden.

Sanya: But Bluebeard and his horrible pie rat crew are here and even if they can’t find the Firebird, they will need to eat and the recipes they talked about (she starts to become emotional again) – will mean the end of me, my babies and all my kind!

Sima: We shall need reinforcements – with all due respect, Captain Quokkka, we cannot do this alone. They are a fighting force to be reckoned with.

He pulls out a scroll and consults it. Fenghuang places her glasses on the tip of her nose and leans over him to read.

Fenghuang: I knew I’d need these. Are you thinking what I’m thinking?
Sima: I am indeed, oh Wise One. If we are to defeat Buccaneer Bluebeard and his Band of Brigands, we shall need to summon the Fighting Pandas of Yunnan Province to help us!

*Music FX theme for the Pandas begins as the set flies and the Great Wall of China is revealed. The others freeze.*

The Pandas perform a routine to the faint sounds of their theme music as a foretaste of their prowess which is developed in the next scene.

Captain Quokka: *(Amazed)* The legendary Fighting Pandas? Do you think they would help us?

Sima: I have no doubt they would. But how do we contact them? They’re on the mainland, far from Hainandao, we’d never get a message to them in time!

Wombat: Like, send them a text!

*Everyone looks at him in disbelief.*

Sima: It’s not that simple! Where the Pandas practice, there are no iPhones. There are no mobiles, no email connections. They live by their wits and their physical strength.

Fenghuang: To reach them, we must rely on ourselves -- and the Elements!

Sima: Indeed. *(Gesturing to his Dragon Wind Chime)* And that wind chime has not stirred to the movement of the Elements in hundreds of years.

Wombat: We’re doomed then, dudes.

Emu: How can we reach the mainland, and the Pandas, when Bluebeard commands the seas?

Kangaroo: And can call on all the Pie Rats of the South China Seas if he needs the numbers!

Captain Quokka: It’s a challenge, friends! I love a challenge! Surely we of the Rainbow Lorikeet can find a way! If we all work together on this, we’ll come up with a plan. All we need is to consider the possibilities.

Sima: That’s the spirit, Captain Quokka. Fenghuang, my fellow guests, let us retire indoors to “consider the possibilities”.

They follow Sima through the Courtyard door as the Blacks close, leaving Guang Yu alone on the apron, holding a teapot.
Guang Yu: My Mistress mentioned the “Elements” - did you hear that? I wonder whether it is time for them to be summoned? I mean the South Wind and the great Rain Dragon, Yinglong, whose breath is as the clouds.

*SFX Thunder and lightning. Rain begins to fall.*

Yinglong (a stick-puppet Dragon, with a billowing tail, flowing back from her head) appears on the balcony SR. Music FX establishes her theme which plays when she is about to enter. It should convey the elemental qualities of thunder, lightning and rain. It is ‘dark’ and ominous, weighty. Her movements should be fluid, yet simultaneously controlled. She is an ethereal essence of the Element she represents.

Guang Yu: *(Opening an umbrella.*) I spoke too soon! They have heard us already! *(Grinning at the audience)* Lovely weather – for ducks!

*He laughs as he hops off-stage, kicking his heels together, as the rain ushers in the Von Duck Family.*

**Scene 7: Near the Courtyard home of Sima the Scholar**

The Von Duck Family enter SR in duck formation. Their costumes should suggest Chinese Opera singers (see “Farewell my Concubine”) with appropriate make-up, and beaks on their heads, to signal their ‘duck-ness’ They should all have parasols in this scene to protect them from the rain and their entry should take the form of a song and dance routine to their theme tune. Do they try to one-up each other?

Mother Duck: Now girls, that’s not the way to behave! We’re a choir, remember, and our goal is harmony! *(Smiling benignly at her ducklings)* Three part harmony.

Won Ton: *(In some frustration, looking at her sisters).* It would be a lot easier if I didn’t have to rely on you two for the tune!

Foo Yong: That’s typical of you, Won Ton! You’re so rude!

Omelette: Quack. *And* you didn’t even make the cut of “Ducks Got Talent” either!

Won Ton: That’s because I’m a *serious* singer – those judges wouldn’t recognize talent if it hit ‘High C’ in front of them!

Foo Yong: Which you did!

Omelette: Quack! And they hated it!

Won Ton: See if I care! I don’t need the approval of those… those …
Mother Duck: (Interrupting he before she disgraces herself) Now, now, Won Ton. No need for that tone, dear. You don’t have to prove anything to us.

Foo Yong: We know you only too well!

Omelette: Quack! Oh, to be on “Ducks Got Talent”. It would be a dream come true for me. (She begins a brief contemporary riff)

Won Ton: You can race Foo Yong to the bottom if you want to, Omelette (Sniffing). But I’ve made a decision. I’m taking my talent where it will be appreciated!

Foo Yong: And where would that be, may I ask?

Won Ton: (With a toss of her head) To the Beijing Opera!

Omelette: Quack?

Won Ton: I will become – an opera singer.

(She begins a little song and movement sequence with her parasol to prove her credentials).

Mother Duck: (Always a pragmatist. Adjusting her parasol and not looking at her daughter) That’s very nice, dear, but you know how difficult it is to be accepted there! It’s like a WAAPA audition, darling.

Foo Yong: That’s fine for you, Won Ton. I’m happy just to perform in Mum’s Choir. I don’t need the limelight as you do. I’m not planning to leave — Hainan’s perfectly fine for me!.

Omelette: Well, it isn’t for me. This is not where I’ll spend the rest of my life. Can’t you feel it, sisters — the call of the wild! Not the boring Beijing Opera, Won Ton, but something else — something I cannot resist!

Mother Duck: I’m afraid for the moment you’ll just have to. We have an appointment to perform in Sima the Scholar’s courtyard for some visitors from the Great Southern Land –

Won Ton: - from Australia, do you mean?

Omelette: Quack?
Foo Yong: Yes, it’s Captain Quokka, they say, Master of the *Rainbow Lorikeet*, and his crew.

Omelette: Ooh, how exciting! I’ve never met an Australian before. I wonder what they’re like?

Mother Duck: Well, unless we hurry up we won’t get to meet them. Come along girls, ‘duck formation!’ and let’s practise our singing as we go.

Won Ton: To Sima the Scholar we go!

*SFX thunder, lightning and rain. Yinglong appears again on the apron, SL as the LFX dim.*

Foo Yong: Ooh, perfect weather for ducks!

Won Ton: It’s really coming down very hard, though! I’m not sure I like this.

*Duck Music FX. They waddle off fairly hurriedly SR as the rain descends singing and dancing as they go.*

Omelette: *(Sees Yinglong and is a little startled But the Rain Dragon is oblivious of her. Wait for meeee! *(She rushes off after her dancing/singing siblings) Mu – um! Wait for meeee!*

**Scene 8: The Great Wall of China**

*This is the big ‘reveal’. As Yinglong moves across the stage diagonally, the blacks open and we are near the Great Wall of China. Flags and/or pennants should be visible from the turrets on each end of the wall. They will provide the colour in the scene except for Yinglong the Dragon and Lady Severa-Ti’s sedan chair. Apart from the LFX the scene is in black and white – the pandas costumes and make-up reflecting these stark contrasts. The mists rise up (FX dry ice) to the mountains (which we see on the panels) and curl around the trees. These are positioned in the landscape to create the detail that evokes Mainland China from another time and place. The LFX should establish the other-worldly quality of the Pandas’ training ground. Up in the distance we see the little temple, gleaming in the moonlight.*

*Rain Dragon theme plays as she moves the stick-puppet across the stage, through the mists, and exits USR*

*As the scene unfolds, Yinglong’s Music Theme should morph into the Panda theme.*

*Tai Pando and Kung Fu appear on the battlements of the Great Wall and, in character, move across its length.*

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*Pilates and Tai Chi emerge into the action from SL and SR*

*They will perform more fully the routine they briefly ‘show-cased’ in Scene 5 as the scene takes shape under the watchful eye of the Master.*

*As the routine ends the Pandas all strike the same pose – a martial arts stance - ready for action.*

Tai Pando: *(To Kung Fu)* With a little more work, we should have that move perfected, Kung Fu. We need to if we’re going to demonstrate it to our new trainer.

Kung Fu: *(Relaxing her position)* It’s not quite right yet. It needs more energy. *(She almost takes out Pilates as she demonstrates what she means.)*

Pilates: *(Attacking.)* Watch what you’re doing, Kung Fu!

Tai Chi: That was very risky! She’s programmed to react --

Tai Pando: To take out anyone who stands in her way!

Pilates: And that could even mean you, my Sister. *(Turning semi-playfully to the others, with a suitable gesture to which they all react, by avoiding, physically)* Or you! Or you!

Kung Fu: *(Laughing).* Let me see you try, then!

*They start to circle each other, warily, but more in play than with any serious intent.*

*SFX Gong. The Pandas react, instantly, alert to what’s happening.*

Tai Pando: There’s someone coming!

*SFX Cavalcade. The sound of voices and horses’ hooves.*

Tai Chi: You’re right, Tai Pando! *(Urgently)* To your posts everyone.

Tai Pando: *(Peering offstage)* Is it her do you think? Our new trainer?

Pilates: The legendary Warrior? But she’s not due here for weeks!

Kung Fu: *(Peering offstage)* I think it’s her. *(Breathlessly)* The Lady Severa-Ti!

Tai Chi: This is SOOO exciting!
Tai Pando: Quiet! Do you want to embarrass us all! Pandas – prepare!

They will all – in position – perform the ‘Pandas Prepare’ routine which should be mock heroic. And brief.

Music Theme for Lady Severa-Ti who will enter in a sedan chair carried by two of the stage crew who will be in character, as Rabbits, with head-dresses and/or face-paint. She wears traditional Chinese dress but will soon reveal her exceptional prowess when she begins her task as trainer of the Pandas.

The sedan chair is positioned CS and Lady Severa-Ti steps out. The Rabbit

Lady Severa-Ti: (Expansively) What country, friend, is this?

Tai Pando: This is Yunnan, Lady. And you are welcome!

Lady Severa-Ti: (Musing) What shall I do in Yunnan? My studio is in Beijing? (Taking off her hat and cloak, handing them to a Rabbit,) It’s been a long journey. So many mountains! I’m exhausted.

The Rabbits will exchange glances as they’re the ones who have carried her up and down the mountains to this destination.

Pilates: (Kneels in supplication before the Master Trainer) We have waited long for this moment!

Severa-Ti will acknowledge these flattering words with a tilt of her head in each supplicant’s direction.

Tai Chi: (Kneeling likewise) You grace us with your presence here.

Kung Fu: (Suspiciously, calling it as it is) You can’t be her! The Trainer Extraordinaire that we were expecting! You don’t look like a warrior! Who are you?

Lady Severa-Ti: Do not be fooled by appearances, my child! Watch … and learn. I –am – Severa-Ti – the world’s – foremost trainer – of martial arts. No-one – defeats me – in battle!

She accentuates each of the moves with a word as she launches into the routine that distinguishes her. While she does this Sun Tzu rises slowly and moves across the wall to CS observing her. His arms crossed inside his sleeves, intent on the action. The other Pandas gather round at her ‘shock and awe’ tactics.

As she finishes, they kneel before her.
Tai Pando: (Clapping his hands at her prowess) It’s good to see that you haven’t changed, my old friend. Welcome!

Lady Severa-Ti: (Moving towards where he is) Tai Pando, my old friend! It’s been a while. But we meet again at last! (Gestures towards the group) These are your troops? (Looks at Kung Fu who should be a bit abashed) They seem very green to me!

Tai Pando: Yes, they have lots to learn.. We have much to discuss.

Lady Severa-Ti: And I have questions, Tai Pando! The message on the wind was not clear. There is trouble in Yunnan?

Tai Pan Do: Yes, Lady. There is something not quite right in Yunnan.

Pilates: But what it is remains a mystery!

Tai Chi: We, nevertheless, are prepared for battle!

Kung Fu: No matter what the danger! Or where it comes from!

Severa-Ti: (Musing, looking them up and down) They’re eager, Sun Tzu, I can see that! But we must know the enemy we face if we are to do battle. (To the crew) Rabbits, remove my chair. Pandas, prepare for your training. I will retire to my quarters and then return for Lesson 1 – there is much work to be done!

Tai Pando: Your servant, Lady..

Severa-Ti: I’ll be back, Pandas. Be sure to be ready!

She heads up to the wall as her Rabbit Servants exit and the Pandas gather DSC.

Theme music for Pandas.

Tai Pan Do: Pandas, Prepare!

They execute their routine with great intensity as their theme plays.

LFX Fade to Black as the Curtains close.

Scene 9: At the Gate to the Courtyard Home of Sima the Scholar.

Von Duck Choir enters on the apron, SR (in character and in Duck formation). They still have their umbrellas up and may use them like carriage wheels for this scene.

MFX theme tune for Ducks.
Mother Duck: Keep up with me, girls, we’re not far from Sima’s Courtyard house, now. *(Dramatically, her hands to her temples)* I sense the perfect feng-shui of the Scholar’s realm.

Foo Yong: *(Adopting the same pose)* Yes, we must be close by – this feels right!

Won Ton: I can’t wait to meet Captain Quokka! I wonder what he looks like?

Omelette: *I wonder if he and his crew will like our performance!*

*Guan Yu enters SL and bows to them.*

Omelette: *(Skipping over to him)* Hello, Guan Yu! We’re so excited to be here!

Mother Duck: *(Announcing her group)* The “Von Duck Family Singers”! We’re here at the invitation of Sima the Scholar. *(She waves the scroll that indicates the invitation.)*

Guan Yu: *(Bowing before her)* Most illustrious Choir Mistress. My Mistress and Sima the Scholar are expecting you. There is to be a Great Council Meeting!


Guan Yu: I don’t want to alarm you, Madam, but *(confidentially)* we believe Buccaneer Bluebeard is here –

Ducklings: *(Horrified)* Buccaneer Bluebeard, the Pie Rat!

Guan Yu: - and Sima the Scholar has called a Meeting of the Great Council.

Mother Duck: *(Nodding her approval)* He’s so very wise.

Guan Yu: But first, there is something we must do.

Won Ton: *(In despair)* We’re postponing the performance! I knew it!

Omelette: But we’ve rehearsed the routine. We’re ready for the show!

Guan Yu: Alas, little duckling. It is unavoidable!

*Pie Rat Pong and Pie Rat Peking peep round the curtains SL. They should have a basket for the ‘eggs’ they’re after – exactly like the one Sanya is carrying – and a large kitchen knife for their nasty agenda.*

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Omelette: (Warning them) Quack! (She drops her parasol)

She has seen Pie Rat Pong and Pie Rat Peking ‘scoping’ the territory for the missing ingredients. Everyone except Tangerine is oblivious of their presence.

GuanYu: Indeed I have no doubt little ducklings. But (gestures to the audience) they need a break!

Dawning on them. The Ducks turn to the audience and all proclaim together.

All: It’s Interval!

Pie Rat Pong: What rotten bad luck, Pie Rat Peking!

Pie Rat Peking: Yes. Just when we’d found the replacement for your missing ingredients!

Guan Yu: It’s interval, everyone! We’ll be back in Act 2 to find out how everything works out!

Pie Rat Pong: Talk about timing! (Glaring at the audience) Couldn’t they have waited?

They withdraw, muttering darkly SL

The Ducks and Guan Yu exit SR with OMelette ‘quacking’ urgently— but unheeded - at them as the LFX fades to black and LFX up in the auditorium.

Preset.

MFX closure of Act 1
Act 2

Scene 10: Somewhere on the Beach of the Island of Hainan

Pie Rat Theme establishes the scene.

The Pie Rats, Peking, Pong and Dim Sum enter SL – dressed as duck hunters - equipped to catch the Von Ducks they sighted at the end of Act 1. They may be carrying a screen of bamboo behind which they'll kneel to disguise their presence. This is furtive stuff – knockabout comedy – so the timing (of the lines and the action) will determine its success. Peking, Pong and Ping carry wooden shotguns; Dim Sum, a large net.

Stage business as they search for their quarry and then bump into each other, tumbling to the ground.

SFX Swamp sounds. Frogs croaking. Dragon flies buzzing.

SFX Ducks quacking as they take flight

Peking: \textit{(Exasperated)} Now look what you’ve done. They’ve flown off! We’ve lost them – and all chances of getting Buccaneer Bluebeard’s dinner for him tonight!

Pong: \textit{(Equally annoyed)} Yes. Just when we had them in our sights, too! A whole flock of them. Imagine how many eggs we’d have scored.

Peking: \textit{(Rounding on Ping and Dim Sum)} What sort of Duck Hunters are you? Like a herd of elephants! Have you no idea how to follow your quarry?

Pong: \textit{(Pointing at the hapless Dim Sum who is entangled in her net)} It wasn’t me! It was Him!

Dim Sum: \textit{(Indignantly)} No it wasn’t!

Pong: Yes it was!

Dim Sum: No it wasn’t!

Pong: Yes it was!

Dim Sum: Wasn’t!

Pong: Was!

Dim Sum: Wasn’t!

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Pong: Was!

Dim Sum: Wasn’t!

Pong: Was!

Peking: That’s quite enough. Quiet, both of you! This is getting us nowhere! You have a Crab Custard Pie to prepare, remember!

Pong: *(Suddenly dawning on her)* He’ll make us walk the plank, won’t he?

Dim Sum: He’ll keel-haul us, won’t he? *(Clutches at Ping for reassurance)*

Pong: Of course he won’t! Not when he tastes my Crab Custard Pie.

Peking: *(Forgetting herself, ecstatically)* Oh yes, my favourite!

*SFX Duck quacking and Omelette peeps round the curtain SL looking for her parasol.*

Peking: *(Immediately alert)* Quiet. There’s someone over there!

Dim Sum: *(From behind the screen)* The quarry? Is that our quarry?

*Omelette sees her parasol and waddles over to collect it.*

Pong: *(Missing the point – fixating on her frock)* Ooh! She’s so pretty!

Dim Sum: It’s a – DUCK!

*Omelette turns and sees them and then with a frightened ‘Quack’ rushes off SL.*

*Stage business as the Duck-Hunters try to line themselves up in hierarchical order to pursue her.*

Peking: After her, you useless Pie Rats. She’s getting away!

*They all follow him off, shotguns askew, SL.*

*Pie Rats theme music FX completes the scene.*

**Scene 11: Back at the Ante Chamber of the Palace of the Imperial Mandarin**

*SFX GONG*

*Music FX Theme for the Mandarin. LFX rich interior candle-light*
The curtains open to reveal the Mandarin’s antechamber as for Scene 2. A sumptuous chair is positioned CS with a small writing table positioned next to it SL. Several gilded scrolls, some open to exhibit their letters, are placed on the table.

Manchu the Monkey has jumped up on the chair. She is quizzily reading the scrolls. The Mandarin strides in SR, followed closely by Tang.

Mandarin: What are you doing there, Manchu? (Taking a swipe at Manchu who leaps to safety, out of his reach) You’ve no right to touch my scrolls! Be careful. Be very careful.

He picks up a scroll with a magnificent illustration of the Phoenix on it. Sits in the chair CS.

Manchu: (Supplicating) I was just looking at that one, Master. It’s such a beautiful picture of her!

Mandarin: The legendary Phoenix! The bird that dies only to rise from the ashes again. Such power, Tang. (Getting a bit carried away) Power over life and death! I must have her – (looks furtively at his henchwoman, not meaning to give himself away) I mean, the Emperor must have her. He has decreed it!

Tang: (Growls) And, if we’re to believe that scurvy Pie Rat, Bluebeard, she’s still alive -

Manchu: (Looking for fleas in the Mandarin’s hair) - and can be found on the Island of Hainan. (Innocently) Will he really return with her, though, oh Mighty One?

Tang: Yes, oh Mighty Mandarin. Why should we believe him?

Mandarin: Because he showed us this (reveals the feather) and, like all Buccaneers, he needs the gold! And because, my pretty ones, I have taken steps – heh heh heh – to ensure that he does.

Manchu: (Chattering excitedly) You have a plan! A cunning plan!

Mandarin: Indeed I have! And it involves the two of you!

Tang: (Intensely) A mission, Master. You have a mission for us!

Mandarin: Yes, Tang! I charge you and Manchu to follow Bluebeard and the crew of the Black Albatross. You will keep me informed of his every move and report back to me the moment he finds her – the legendary Phoenix!
Manchu: A cunning plan! We shall be your spies. And we’ll send word on the wind of all we observe!

Tang: This is good, Master. We shall do as you request – what a mission for us to embark on - follow this Pie Rat and ensure that he sends you the bird.

Mandarin: (Meaningfully) You will, I trust, also ensure, that he never collects the gold?

Manchu: (Missing the point) But if he finds her, the Phoenix, and brings her to you. Shouldn’t you give him the gold?

*The Mandarin glares at her – he can hardly believe what she’s saying.*

Tang: (Looking at the Mandarin) I understand you perfectly. Buccaneer Bluebeard and the Pie Rats will never set foot in the Imperial Palace again.

*She bows low before her Master, smiling to herself. Manchu bows too though she’s not entirely happy about the shape the action is taking.*

Mandarin: To Hainan, my little ones. I shall listen to your reports on the sharp South Wind. Do not fail me!

Tang: We shall not Master. *(She lopes off SL followed by Manchu)*

Manchu: Your servant, oh Mighty One.

*SFX GONG*

*The Mandarin sits in his chair, holding the precious feather. He picks up the scroll with the picture of the Phoenix, looking at it intently.*

Mandarin: The power of the Phoenix must – no, WILL - be mine!

*Music FX theme for the Evil Mandarin. The curtains close as the LFX come up on the apron.*

**Scene 12: The Great Council in the Courtyard of the Home of Sima the Scholar**

*The screens depicting Mount Wuzhi are flown in behind the set.*

Guan Yu enters SL carrying several scrolls. He is in a bit of a state because of the hurried nature of the gathering. He should carry an inkpot and a calligraphy pen as well as a red paper lantern.

*Music FX establishes the mood – Sima’s theme?*
Guan Yu: So many instructions! The ‘The Von Duck Family Entertainment’ – at Fenghuang’s request – has been postponed. They are drinking tea in the Courtyard after their journey here. And I managed to get to the library as well. *(To the audience)* Sima, the Scholar asked me to gather all the information I could for the Great Council Meeting and look how much I’ve found. *(Indicates his scrolls)* Wikipaedial! *(Winks)* Just in time, too, because it looks like the Meeting has started.

*The curtains open to reveal the Australian animals, Sima, Fenghuang and Sanya gathered for the Great Council Meeting. Guan Yu stands a little to one side, holding the red paper lantern and the mound of scrolls in his arms, balancing the ink and pen.*

Sima: Friends. Now that we have “considered our options” it is clear that we must act and act fast if we are to defeat Bluebeard and his wicked band of brigands, the Pic Rats.

Sanya: I can’t bear to think of them, Sima. I can never feel safe, knowing what they plan for me and my babies. It’s too dreadful. *(Clutches her eggs to her).*

Sima: None of us will be safe as long as Buccaneer Bluebeard sails the South China Seas.

Guan Yu: And we know he is here already, Master. Time is running out.

Sima: It is agreed, then? We must get word to the Fighting Pandas of Yunnan Province

Captain Quokka: We, of the Rainbow Lorikeet, will do whatever it takes, Sima, to assist you.

Kangaroo: Word of a Warrior.

Emu: Word of a Warrior.

Wombat: Like, Word of a Warrior, dude.

*They perform their combined ‘Warrior’ gesture.*

Fenghuang: It is agreed, we must get word to the Fighting Pandas, but our problem is how? How are we to do this?

Sima: Indeed, it is a puzzle. But a puzzle we shall solve. Guan Yu, bring me my scrolls.

Guan Yu staggering slightly under their ‘weight’ takes them to Sima.
Guan Yu: The ink and pen, Master, as you requested. And the paper lantern.

Sima: Thank you Guan Yu. *(Reading)* Fenghuang, my old friend, your words reminded me of something. These ancient books tell of the power of the Elements to help us in times of need.

Sanya: And this is a time of great need!

Fenghuang: Earth, Fire, Water and Wind – the Noble Elements!

Sima: And, to carry our message, we need to harness the power of the South Wind! No less.

Captain Quokka: But how can she help us? We all know that the Elements have long since withdrawn themselves from animals’ affairs.

Sima: Yes, my friends. The South Wind among them. It is many, many years since the sound of that wind chime has echoed around this Courtyard.

Emu: *(Looking at Sanya)* She has seen too much sadness, too much destruction. Why would she help us?

Sima: I may have the answer, my child. It is written in this ancient scroll that in a time of great need, the South Wind will return.

Kangaroo: I still don’t quite get it. Sure, it’s a time of great need. But how would the South Wind help us?

Wombat: Like, yeah. How could she?

Fenghuang: *(Looking at her old friend)* The puzzle is solved. I think Sima can answer your questions, my young warriors, can’t you, oh Wise Confucian Scholar?

Sima: This ancient book speaks of a ‘tribute’ that the Elements will receive from anyone who wants them to return and assist them in their hour of need.

Wombat: Which is, like, now.

Sima: They will, it says here, listen to our call and return to our world – *(he pauses, dramatically)*

Captain Quokka: - whatever it takes, Sima!

Sima: - *if we provide them with the Three Greatest Gifts of Chinese civilization.*
The others are aghast at the enormity of it. Except for Fenghuang and Guan Yu.

Sanya: That seems a really big call!

Wombat: Too right!

Emu: Where would we start, Sima?

Kangaroo: (Removing a gold chain from his neck) Well, if it’s gold you want, here’s my necklace. It was my mother’s – all I have left from her. But she’d want me to do this. I know.

Emu: (Getting the idea) You can have my silver anklet, too, Sima. (She removes it) I’ve had it since I was a chick, but if it will help summon the Great South Wind, here it is.

Wombat: (Struggling to take off a ring). Got this in Margaret River – might be silver. Probably just tin, but, like, it’s cool, man. You can have it,

He hands it to Sima who accepts their offerings with an incline of his head.

Sima: (Smiling) Thank you my children. I, too, have something to contribute. (He pulls a jewel from the sleeve of his coat) This emerald which my father gave me when I passed my examinations will make up our offering to the great South Wind. Gold and silver and (coughs) ‘tin’ … precious jewels – the three greatest gifts of Chinese, or any, civilization.

Sima, with the aid of Guan Yu and Sanya, who hold the ink well and the parchment for him, begins writing the message on the red lantern to be sent to the Pandas.

Captain Quokka: But how will we get them – and our message - to the Great South Wind? Who knows where she lives?

Sima: These ancient books tell us – she lives at the edge of the world, between earth and sky.

Kangaroo: We can’t get there, then, in the Rainbow Lorikeet.

Sima: No, my boy. The way to the Wind is not across Water. It is a dark and difficult road – to the top of Mount Wuzhi!

Captain Quokka: Then, the Warriors of the Rainbow Lorikeet will make the ascent!

They begin to strike their pose, ready for their routine.
Sima: Your courage is not in doubt. Nor your willingness to face great danger. But, think carefully, before you act. Who will protect us here in your absence, my friend? *(Looking at Sanya, meaningfully)* We need you here, I fear.

Fenghuang: *(Summoning reserves of strength. She has followed the discussion intensely, but should also be showing signs of increasing weakness.)* Now it is my turn to speak. *(Standing before them)* I have lived longer than any of you and can even recall a time when the Great South Wind blew amongst us. This journey is mine, my friends.

Captain Quokka: *(Startled, but ever polite)* Madam, we simply cannot allow this!

Fenghuang: *(Smiling)* You will have to, my friend. I know where she lives *(recollecting a distant time in her life)*. I have even been there, long, long ago. I know the way to her shrine on the top of Mount Wuzhi. I see it before me as if it were yesterday.

Guan Yu: Your time has come, I think, Mistress. The beginning of the end?

Fenghuang: Or the end of the beginning. Hand me the treasure, Sima, and the message for the Fighting Pandas. I shall go alone!

*She seems to be fading even as she speaks and everyone looks anxiously at her.*

Guan Yu: Perhaps not quite alone, oh mighty Mistress. Guan Yu will accompany you, with your permission! I am not needed here as they are. But you may have need of me, your humble servant, on the Mountain of Wuzhishan!

Sima: Brave words, little Grasshopper. You shall go with your mistress.

Fenghuang: Well, what are we waiting for? The gifts, and the lantern, oh Wise Confucian Scholar. We shall be back when the great South Wind has received these – and is carrying our message to the Fighting Pandas of Yunnan Province.

*They move together USC, towards the mountain, Guan Yu supporting his mistress, Fenghuang. Her beautiful feather should be visible beneath her cloak.* The others part to watch them go.

*SFX faint sound of the wind. Music FX captures the solemnity of the scene.*

Yinglong appears USR and moves across our vision from SR to SL.

*LFX fade on stage. Fenghuang and Guan Yu are visible US*

*The other characters all freeze as Sima speaks in a spotlight DSC*

Sima: May success follow the ancient bird and her young servant. We are doomed otherwise! My old enemy, the Imperial Mandarin, has moved very quickly and
we must defend ourselves against his mercenaries, Buccaneer Bluebeard and his Pie Rat Crew. But why does he seek the Firebird? And why does he think she is here? This puzzles me ...

*LFX spot out. Curtains close.*

*SFX roar (of Tang) and chattering (of Manchu). As the scene finishes*

**Scene 13: Bluebeard’s Cabin on the “Black Albatross”**

*Set in front of the blacks. As the lights come up, Bluebeard is seen sitting on a chair near the barrel, ready for his dinner. He will have a large white serviette stuffed into his poet shirt, to catch spillage. His crew will be very anxious as their meal is short of the required ingredients.*

*To set the scene the Pie Rats could sing a brief sea shanty. Alternatively, they could set the chair, the lantern/candle/lamp as the theme music for Bluebeard plays. They will scuttle out as he takes his seat and readies himself for this unpromising meal. All except Dim Sum.*

Bluebeard: *(Banging the table/barrel)* How much longer must I wait for my dinner, Pie Rat Pong?

*Dim Sum, who begins the scene by sweeping around Bluebeard’s chair will have dropped to the floor at his voice and be literally groveling at his feet.*

Dim Sum: *(Scurrying up to him and setting his plate and fork in front of him)* It’ll be here any minute, Buccaneer Bluebeard, Sir. Some more lemonade?

Bluebeard: Don’t mind if I do. This Buccaneering business is thirsty work. Arrgh. *(Takes a long slurp from his tankard).*

Dim Sum: Yes, it is, Buccaneer Bluebeard. *(Soothingly)* Your dinner won’t be long, now.

Bluebeard: It had better not be. A starving Buccaneer is a dangerous Buccaneer, I can tell you!

Dim Sum: *(Wide-eyed)* Will you make her walk the plank, Sir?

Bluebeard: *(Rising up in his developing rage)* I’ll make her walk the plank! I’ll keel-haul her! I’ll send her to the bottom of the ocean, to Davey Jones’ Locker. I’ll destroy her!

Dim Sum: That’s a ‘yes’, then?
Bluebeard: Where’s my dinner? All I ask of that hopeless Pong is my dinner, served when I want it! And that’s now! Arrghh.

*Peking appears slightly flustered, a feather floating from her hand, SL*

Peking: There’s been a slight delay, I’m afraid, Captain Bluebeard. Your dinner has escaped.

*She looks meaningfully at Dim Sum and indicates with a head gesture where it has got to.*

*Dim Sum remains kneeling, oblivious to the First Mate’s implication*


Pong: (*Appearing from SL, her face smudged with flour, her chef’s cap askew, her apron adrift*) I’d just turned to check my recipe for “Duck Pie” when I’m afraid, Buccaneer Bluebeard, your dinner flew off. And there she is!

*They all look up to the other side of the auditorium where Omelette is visible in the light.*

Omelette: Quack! I’m going to tell on you! Mu-um! Mu-um!

*She rushes off, rapidly, feathers dropping as she goes. Dim Sum, in damage control, heads offstage SL to fetch the pie crust.*

Bluebeard: I don’t believe it! Arrghh. You’ve lost my dinner!

Pong: (*Improvising*) Not all of it, Buccaneer Bluebeard, Sir. There’s always the pie crust. You know how you like pie crust.

Dim Sum: (*Bearing aloft the conventional CT pie with dry ice pouring from its surface*) Your dinner, Master. It is ready.

Bluebeard: (*Sitting down hungrily*) The only one of you useless crew I can rely on. Dim Sum.

Peking: (*Annoyed*) I beg your pardon, Master.

Pong: Oi. That’s a bit harsh! I baked that pie you’re eating. What’s it like then?

Bluebeard: Arrghh.

Peking: (*Trying to mollify him*) Some more lemonade, Master?

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Dim Sum:  (Snatching the flagon from her) Let me pour it, Ping. You’re unreliable!

Music FX for Mandarin signals presence of the henchwomen. They all freeze as LFX up on balcony SL. Lights down on apron.

Scene 14:  A Cliff on the Island of Hainan

SFX Roar (Tang) and Chatter (Manchu)
Manchu and Tang appear, on the balcony SL, looking down on the action.

Manchu:  There they are, Tang. That’s the Black Albatross right there!

Tang:  I can see them, Manchu. Buccaneer Bluebeard and his crew of dirty Pie Rats. (Sneers) I have them in my sights.

Manchu:  As our Master the Imperial Mandarin commanded!

Tang:  We will observe his every move, in search of the Firebird!

Manchu:  His every move –

Tang:  As our Master commands – so shall we obey!

Manchu:  We shall obey.

Tang:  He will never succeed.

Manchu:  He will never succeed!

Tang:  Must you repeat everything I say?

Manchu:  Everything you say!

Tang:  (Roars) That’s enough. Follow me. We have a Firebird to find. An island to explore.

Manchu:  An island to explore.

Tang:  (Exasperated) Oh, be quiet.

Music theme for the Mandarin takes the scene to closure. LFX down on the balcony. LFX Fade on the apron.
Scene 15: The Courtyard of the Home of Sima the Scholar

The Curtains open to reveal Emu and Sanya sitting at the tea table. Quokka, Wombat and Kangaroo are in warrior mode, wearing headbands, perhaps, and carrying ‘weapons’. They’re all waiting for a sign that their message has been picked up by the great South Wind. So far they have heard and seen nothing. LFX exterior. Night.

Music FX establishes Sima’s context. SFX crickets, night sounds.

Emu: (To Kangaroo) Can you see them, Kangaroo? They should be back by now. It’s been ages since they left.

Kangaroo: (Turning back from the doorway) No, Emu. Nothing. It’s gone all quiet out there.

Captain Quokka: Keep a lookout, Kangaroo. Remember, our task is to protect the animals of this island.

Sanya: I hate being so helpless. If it wasn’t for me, you’d have gone instead of her. (Begins to sob) I feel so awful!

Wombat: Chill, Sanya. They’ll be fine. Word of a Warrior. (He hands her a large spotted handkerchief)

Sanya: (Sniffing a bit and wiping her eyes) You’re all so very kind!

Emu: Cheer up, Sanya. We mustn’t lose hope!

Captain Quokka: (Cheerfully optimistic) They’ll be back. I’m sure of that. And our message will have got through.

Emu: There was something about them, Fenghuang and Guan Yu. I can’t quite put me finger on what it was. But it made me think that if anyone was going to get our message to the Pandas, they would!

Sanya: (Drying her eyes) So noble. So very noble.

LFX thunder and lightning. SFX up on balcony SR. On the balcony SR Yinglong can be seen. She moves from SR off-stage, to her music, as Sima speaks.

Sima enters through the circular doorway and stands framed by it.

Sima: The Elements are stirring. Yinglong is abroad. I sense something powerful in the air!

SFX Wind Chime

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Emu: Listen, it’s the wind chime! She’s heard us!

Kangaroo: You’re right (Licking a finger and ‘testing’ the direction) It’s definitely coming from the South

Wombat: Co-ool! It’s the South Wind, man.

Captain Quokka: I think you’re right, Warriors! (Reinforcing Kangaroo). That’s definitely a southerly.

Sima: After so many years. Can this be true?

*SFX The wind chime plays more intensely.*

*SFX Thunder lightning and wind begin to build to a crescendo.*

Sanya: Oh, look! There’s something out there! Look everyone.

*They all turn, and as they watch, red lanterns, appear, floating in the air. They will appear to float over the audience and off the stage as the animals speak.*

Sima: Oh, brave little grasshopper. Oh, Fenghuang, old friend. You have succeeded.

Emu: Our message! It’s on its way! The South Wind has heard us

Wombat: *(Looking up)* That is so cool.

Captain Quokka: That’s amazing! She’s done it! She and that little insect of hers have saved the day!

Kangaroo: *(He’s been keeping a lookout)* And here they come now! The heroes return!

Guan Yu stumbles in with Fenghuang leaning on him. As they enter CS she collapses and falls revealing the feather she has kept secret from them. They all gather round her anxiously.

Sanya: *(Horrified)* What have we done to her! Oh, Fenghuang I’m so sorry. *(To the others)* We’ve killed her!

Guan Yu: No, my child. It is not yet time.

Sima: Can it be? All these years and I haven’t known it?
Fenghuang: (In a weak voice) Let me speak. Know this, Sima. Our gifts were rejected!

Emu: But the wind, the Great South Wind, is carrying our message to the Pandas. Look, there it goes!

Fenghuang: Indeed she is. But the three greatest gifts of Chinese civilization are not, as we so foolishly thought, gold, silver and jewels.

_Guan Yu hands Kangaroo his chain, Emu her anklet and Wombat his ring._

Sima: I am shamed. How could I have thought this was what she wanted.

Guan Yu: Your emerald, Master.

Fenghuang: (She is getting a little stronger as she speaks, supported by Captain Quokka) The three greatest gifts of Chinese Civilization we carried with us and these she accepted.

Guan Yu: The gift of paper allows passing thoughts to be captured and handed down through the ages.

Fenghuang: The pen we carried allowed her to transcribe these thoughts – the gift of writing.

Sima: (With the dawning realization) And the final gift, the gift of courage - the Courage of the Chinese people - she saw in you, Guan Yu and you, Fenghuang. Oh, my friends, how will we ever thank you?

Fenghuang: It is not finished yet. There is a battle to prepare for.

Sima: But we will have with us, thanks to you and Guan Yu – and the Great South Wind –

All: The Fighting Pandas of Yunnan Province.

_They freeze. The curtains close._

_Music FX Panda theme should bring the scene to a close._

_LFX up on the balcony. Tang and Manchu, still on their cliff, will observe this from the balcony SL_

Tang: How very interesting. Who would have thought that ancient creature was the mythical Firebird!

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Manchu: Buccaneer Bluebeard was right! She IS here on Hainan.

Tang: Not for long. Bluebeard is on her trail and we – we, my chattering friend – are not far behind. Our Master’s wish (roars) is about to be fulfilled. Follow me.

*She stalks off back stage.*

Manchu: Coming, Tang. Coming! *(To the audience)* She’s always so ‘aggro’!

*Exits back stage. Or possibly down a rope into the auditorium and out the door.*

Scene 16: Back at the Great Wall of China

*The mists coil once again around the screens that depict the mountains and the trees. LFX night. Lamps are lit on the battlements. The flags/pennants are clearly visible, possibly in silhouette.*

*Music Fx Panda theme suggests the context.*

Tai Pando Kung Fu are up on the wall, on the lookout. They should march from one end to the other as the scene is established.

*USL. Yinglong appears. She will move diagonally across the stage while they speak and disappear into the wings DSR.*

Tai Pando: What’s that! Who goes there?

Kung Fu: It’s only me, Tai Pando. Kung Fu! You’re very jumpy tonight!

Tai Pando: There’s something not quite right, Kung Fu. I’ve sensed it for days – and now I’m sure of it. *(Turning with a start)* What’s that?

Yinglong begins her movement – her theme music plays.

Kung Fu: That’s Yinglong, the Rain Dragon! The Elements are shifting! I can feel it!

Tai Pando: So can I! But there’s something else. I sense danger, Kung Fu.

Kung Fu: The only danger we face is from Lady Severa-Ti. Speaking of her – here she comes. To our posts.

*She dashes to her position on the lookout as Lady Severa-Ti enters from USR with Pilates and Tai Chi in attendance.*
Severa-Ti: Anything to report, Tai Pando?

Tai Pando: No, Lady. Just the presence of Yinglong.

Kung Fu: Yinglong the Rain Dragon has appeared every night this week. And Tai Pando is concerned.

Tai Pando: Yes I am. There is something strange about it. The Elements must be disturbed.

Severa-Ti: The Rain Dragon has appeared. Again?

Kung Fu: Yes, Lady. This is the third night we’ve seen her.

Severa-Ti: *(With great seriousness)* This is not a good sign. What brings her to the Great Wall, so far from the Imperial Palace.

Tai Pando: It is strange… very strange.

Pilates: But I thought she was our friend. Her breath creates the clouds.

Tai Chi: And they bring the rain!

Tai Pando: And yet, there’s something not quite right about this. Three nights in a row!

Severa-Ti: *(Alert, listening)* I have heard voices on the wind, but they have been very faint. I can’t hear what they’re saying. They whisper of ‘change’.

Tai Pando: There are rumours of change at the Imperial Palace. The Imperial Mandarin, I hear, is growing more and more powerful.

Kung Fu: Oh, that Evil Creature, the Sun Bear.

Tai Chi: So arrogant! So cruel!

Pilates: Perhaps that’s why the Rain Dragon’s so restless. There’s mischief afoot at the Imperial Palace.

Severa-Ti: If the Imperial Mandarin is involved you can be sure there’s something wrong.

Tai Pando: You know him, Lady?
Severa-Ti: We’re old enemies, I’m afraid. *(Through clenched teeth)* The Sun Bear has much to answer for! He stole something very precious from me.

Pilates: A favourite jewel, perhaps?

Severa-Ti: Don’t be so silly. What are jewels to me? No, she was my favourite, my pet. So loyal, so sweet – so unlike any other creature in my life. *(Losing it just a little)* I loved that little Monkey.

Tai Chi: And he stole her from you? How mean!

Severa-Ti: I swore I’d get my revenge one day. And I shall.

Kung Fu: But, Lady, surely you won’t challenge the Imperial Mandarin. They say he is more powerful even than the Emperor!

Severa-Ti: Well, they are wrong, my child. Severa-Ti has trained day and night for years in preparation for that confrontation. I am a Trainer, Extraordinaire, and we’ve wasted enough time in idle chatter!

Tai Pando: Agreed, my Lady.

Severa-Ti: If the signs aren’t good, and they certainly seem that way, all the more reason to run through the program I’ve taught you. We could face danger at any moment from any point of the compass and we’ll have to defend the Empire. Pandas! Prepare!

*The Pandas, led by Lady Severa-Ti, perform their – new – routine. Sun Tzu raises his hands in a ‘blessing’ as they finish and relax their poses.*

*SFX The sound of the wind, gently blowing through wind chimes can now be heard under their voices.*

Severa-Ti: You have done well. But the hard work, my friends, is just beginning.

Tai Chi: That cannot be true, Lady. I’m exhausted!

*One of the Rabbits whose presence has been totally ignored until now creates a stir, pointing (silently) to the sky, trying to attract attention. The other joins her, and they both point to the sky.*

Pilates: *(Noticing the activity)* Your attendant, Lady. I think she’s trying to tell you something
Severa-Ti:  *(Slightly irritated)* Yes, what is it, girl? You may speak in my presence. I give you permission!

*As they all turn to where the Rabbit Attendant is pointing, they see the red lanterns moving as if it were across the night sky.*

*[Note: we may run these on a pulley system from SL – SR; or, if that is too complex, given the number of flies etc., they can be brought in suspended on flexible poles, carried by the crew.]*

Pilates:  It is the South Wind. And she brings us an urgent message.

*One of the Rabbits collects a lantern and hands it, bowing, to Tai Pando as the Pandas dash up the steps.*

Severa-Ti:  It is a sign of danger – that is why the South Wind has carried the lanterns to us! *(She slowly ties a band round her head, wristbands to her wrists, and transforms herself into the fighting machine she is to become as she prepares for the mission)*

Tai Pando:  *(Reading the script on the lantern then turning to his fellow Pandas)* They are in great danger, friends.

Kung Fu:  Who, Tai Pando. Who are in danger?

Tai Pando:  This is from Sima the Scholar –

Kung Fu:  - of the Island of Hainan?

Pilates:  What does it say? Tell us, Tai Pando!

Tai Chi:  *(Gathering another lantern to read)* Bluebeard the Pie Rat and his villainous Crew have landed on Hainan in search of the Firebird?

Tai Pando:  Ah, that explains it. That's why the Elements are disturbed. Someone wishes to harness the power of the Firebird – and I think I know who!

Severa-Ti:  The Imperial Mandarin! It can be no-one else. So that was the whisper on the wind.

Tai Pando:  There's no time to lose. The animals of Hainan are in terrible danger. We must race to their assistance. *(Bowing to Lady Severa-Ti)* *(To the heavens)* We shall summon your sister, the great North Wind to take us to Hainan.

Severa-Ti:  Yes, go, my little ones. You are ready for battle. I shall catch the wind and join you shortly. But I have unfinished business - with the Imperial Mandarin.
Drumbeat, the flags/pennants are gathered up as the Pandas circle and head up over the wall to Yunnan. The great North Wind can be heard howling and in the chaos Yinglong once more crosses the stage. From SR to SL on the diagonal.

Music FX Panda Theme plays the scene to its close. SFX the howling North Wind remains audible as the LFX fade to black.

Scene 17: Outside the Courtyard Home of Sima the Scholar.

Music FX establishes the Von Duck Family. Mother Duck is conducting the Ducklings to keep them prepared in case they eventually do get to do their performance for the Australian Animals and Sima the Scholar. They are in a group SL as the LFX comes up. Mother Duck has her back to the SM entrance. They have not even noticed Omelette’s absence.

Mother Duck: Altogether, now, girls. Three part harmony! One, Two, Three ...

Tangerine, dropping feathers, her bonnet quite skew dashes in from SR, out of breath, but quacking frantically.

Mother Duck: (Always totally calm – unflappable) Now dear, that’s not the way to behave in Sima the Scholar’s home. You’ll disrupt the feng-shui if you speak in those raucous tones.

Omelette: (Beside herself) Quack. Quack. Quack!

She gestures wildly signaling how close she came to being the Pie Rats’ dinner. Her sisters will be practising the three part harmony all through this exchange.

Mother Duck: (Looking at her quizzically) I can’t understand a word you’re saying, dear. You must artic – u- late!

Omelette: Quack!

Mother Duck: What a sight you are dear. Whatever have you been up to? Come along girls, we’ll need to get our costumes on – and clean up your ruffled little sister too. What a mess you are, Tangerine! (She bustles out, the others following – smugly aware that they’re not in their mother’s bad books – in ‘Duck Formation’) Duck formation!

They exit, to their music, with Omelette crestfallen bringing up the rear.

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Scene 18: The Ante Chamber of the Palace of the Imperial Mandarin

The Imperial Mandarin sits on his chair, CS facing forward. He is clearly furious.
Mandarin:  (Reading from a scroll.) This will upset everything I have planned. That wretched Scholar, Sima, is behind it. I should have dealt with him years ago. When we were two young scholars in training. (Sneering) Always the goody-goody. And now, he’s summoned the Fighting Pandas of Yunnan Province. If they get there before I do and discover the Island’s secret, I am undone!

Lady Severa-Ti, dressed for battle, leaps through the doorway behind him, landing in front of him with a series of martial arts moves that will startle him.

Severa-Ti:  “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon”, my friend. (To the audience, over her shoulder) My favourite movie-line ever! Prepare to meet your doom, Mandarin! (She circles him, menacingly.)

Mandarin:  You! What are you doing here? How did you get past the guards?

Severa-Ti:  (Gestures to where her Rabbit Retainers are standing, their backs to the chamber, keeping anyone else out.) Never mind how. You know why I’m here!

Mandarin:  I haven’t the faintest idea.

Severa-Ti:  I’ve come to get her back. You know that. And to -- seek my revenge!

Mandarin:  (Laughing nastily as he looks her up and down) I’d like to see you try!

Severa-Ti:  (Looking around) Don’t waste my time, Sun Bear. Where is she? What have you done with her?

Mandarin:  You mean your Monkey, Manchu? She’s mine now, all mine. And in any case, she’s not here in the Palace.

Severa-Ti:  Where is she? I must know – before I seek my revenge on you, you thieving creature.

Mandarin:  You couldn’t lay a hand on me if you tried!

Severa-Ti:  Oh, couldn’t I?

She will subdue him in a stroke. Her martial arts abilities are way in excess of his.

Severa-Ti:  (Holding him down with the lightest of touches.) Now will you tell me where she is, my Monkey, Manchu. The sweetest creature I’ve ever known.

Mandarin:  (Struggling a bit.) She’s not here, I told you. She’s with Tang –

Severa-Ti:  - that loathsome predator.
Mandarin: - and they’re working for me on the Island of Hainan. Spying on Buccaneer Bluebeard and his crew of Pie Rats.

Severa-Ti: This is very strange. All roads lead to Hainan. *(Pulling him up by his ear like a naughty school boy)* Very well, we shall go there together, riding the North Wind.

Mandarin: I won’t. Ow. I won’t go with you! Ow.

Severa-Ti: You will do as I say, Sun Bear, or you will be sorry. Bring him with us, Rabbits. We have to catch the Wind! To Hainan – to join the Fighting Pandas of Yunnan Province in their mission to save the animals of the Island from *(she looks at him in disdain)* Bluebeard the Pie Rat and you, you Evil Mandarin.

Mandarin: How forceful she is! *(She tweaks his ear)* Ouch, that really hurts!

*SFX GONG*

*LFX down on the scene as the curtains close.*

**Scene 19: A Cove on the Island of Hainan**

*LFX up on the Apron as the Pie Rats enter from SR and gather to hear their Master’s instructions. Dim Sum will be carrying the net as in Scene 10 though this time their quarry is none other than the Phoenix herself.*

Bluebeard: She’s somewhere on this Island. Aarrgh. There’s no time to lose! Fan out across the beaches and don’t return without her, Pie Rats. The Firebird, Creature of Legend! And the source of my fortune! Mine, all mine!

Peking: *(Suspicious of his intentions)* Steady on, Buccaneer Bluebeard. What about us, then? You promised this would make our fortune too!

Bluebeard: Did I now? Aarrgh. *(Pause) Find me the Bird and I’ll keep my promise. Aarrgh. Word of a Buccaneer.*

Pong: *(Getting a bit carried away)* We’ll be rich! And I can become a Celebrity Chef with my very own restaurant!

*He and Dim Sum dance a little jig in their excitement.*

Bluebeard: *(Aside)* Little do they know, I’m not to be trusted. *(Winks)* Aarrghh!

Peking: *(Aside)* Little does he know, I KNOW he’s not to be trusted!

Dim Sum: Quiet! There’s someone coming!
They all react immediately, adopting their ‘Duck- Hunter’ pose of Scene 13. Dim Sum has the net at the ready. They creep up towards the source. Stage Business as they bump into each other.

Bluebeard: QUIET! You’ll scare her off, you scurvy Pie Rats.

Dim Sum: (Struggling with her quarry who will be just offstage) I’ve got her, Master! I’ve got her!

They’ve caught the prowling Tiger in their misguided efforts and she is furious. Manchu has escaped the net, but should be amused at her ‘partner’s’ misadventure. The Mandarin’s henchwomen will be dressed for battle in camouflage gear, bandannas round their heads and with war paint on their faces – a challenge for the makeup team!

Tang: (Roaring) You idiots! What do you think you’re doing?

Bluebeard: (Laughing nastily) Settling old scores, Tang. Aargh! Well done, Dim Sum! You’ll be promoted for this.

Peking: Let’s make her walk the plank, Buccaneer Bluebeard!

Tang: (Roar) Be careful, Rat. Be very careful!

Pong: Keel-haul her, Buccaneer Bluebeard. Send her to the bottom of the ocean!

Pie Rats: (Enthusiastically) Aarghh!

Manchu: (To the others) She’s not the one you should be after! The Imperial Mandarin told us it’s the Firebird you want. And we saw her – didn’t we, Tang - a little way off over there – (She indicates the balcony)

Bluebeard: (Focusing now, intently) The Firebird? That glorious Creature of Mythology? Worth her weight in gold – to me! Aargh. You’ve seen her? You know where she is?

Tang: Yes, and if you don’t hurry she’ll have disappeared altogether. She didn’t look very well. (Sniggers) You wouldn’t want to disappoint the Imperial Mandarin, now, would you? (Sneering) Buccaneer Bluebeard.

Bluebeard: I don’t like your tone, Tang! But now is not the time to argue. My men - (coughs) women – are on a mission to find the Firebird.

Manchu: Well, then Pie Rats. Bring your gear and I’ll show you the way.
Bluebeard: There's no time to lose - if the Firebird's on this Island, she doesn't stand a chance! Not against Buccaneer Bluebeard! Aarghh!

Manchu: This way, follow me!

They start to exit SL towards the site of the 'cliff' that had been Tang and Manchu's vantage point. Tang remains, briefly spot-lit.

Tang: (To the audience) And 'The Rat' won't stand a chance either if those Pandas get here. A small omission on my part. (Mugging it) I forgot to tell him that they're on their way - 'The Fighting Pandas of Yunnan!' (Sniggers nastily as she exits after them.)

Scene 20: The Island of Hainan

The Rainbow Lorikeet Warriors are now dressed for battle. Sanya has deposited her eggs and is also battle-ready. They will have war paint on their faces and bandannas round their heads. In all cases this will signal the change of costume to the 'war footing'.

The Mountain set is in and the wall is visible behind it. Fenghuang is CS with Sima and Guan Yu flanking her. Kangaroo is DSR looking offstage, keeping watch. Wombat is parallel doing the same thing SL. Emu Is USR and Quokka and Sanya are on the lookout USL.

The ambience should be eerie and the sounds of the forest should be audible. It is night time so the LFX should reflect this. Wisps of mist once again curl across the stage as the scene opens.

Fenghuang: It is time, Sima. I must leave you all.

Sima: Yes, Fenghuang. The Elements are shifting. Yinglong is abroad and the wind-chime has murmured. The first time in centuries.

Guan Yu: My Mistress grows weaker. We must not stay any longer.

The next exchange is taken quickly, urgently, as the Rainbow Lorikeet Warriors - and Sanya, with new-found courage now that her eggs are no longer a cause for anxiety - take on their roles as Defenders of the Phoenix.

Kangaroo: (Blowing his whistle) There's someone coming!

Wombat: (Intensely) It's over there, Dude. I can see movement.

Emu: (Anxiously) Who is it, Kangaroo?
Quokka: (Stepping forward, Sanya beside him) Warriors of the Rainbow Lorikeet! To your positions.

Sanya: We’re ready for you — whoever you are!

They will gather around Fenghuang in a protective circle, facing outward, masking her. In the ensuing action she will ‘vanish’, together with Guan Yu.

Music FX signals the presence of the Pie Rats. Bluebeard and his troop will enter through the auditorium, heading for SR, following Manchu, with Tang bringing up the rear. Their goal is to net the Firebird.

Manchu: (Running ahead) That’s her, Buccaneer Bluebeard! The Firebird you’re after!

Bluebeard: (From the top of the stairs in the auditorium,) You’ll never escape me, Fenghuang. (Sneering) Just look at her. Her flames have gone out! (Laughs nastily). Get her, Dim Sum.

SFX Battle sounds. Music FX Pie Rat Theme. The Pie Rats and Tang hurtle down the stairs towards the group on stage, Dim Sum with her net at the ready. The Australian animals draw swords and while Sanya and Dim Sum circle each other, an uneven fight ensues. Fenghuang and Guan Yu exit as the battle rages.

Quokka: You will never defeat us, Bluebeard. We of the Rainbow Lorikeet will defend — to the death — the animals of the Island of Hainan.

Bluebeard: Draw your sword, then, Quokka. Aarggh! We’ll see if your deeds can match those fine words!

They cross swords and the fight begins. Sima, the Scholar, turns to the Mountains in his despair.

Sima: It’s too late! We are undone!

Tang: Yes, Sima! Accept it! You are defeated. (Looking round for the Fenghuang) Now where is she? Where have you hidden her?

Just as things appear to be going really badly for the Australian animals, there is the sound (SFX) of drums and the Pandas, led by Tai Pan Do, swarm over the wall — possibly down some ropes from the balcony — and into the action. Their routine will then be performed and will culminate in the annihilation of the Pie Rats, Tang and even Manchu, all of whom, except Bluebeard, will be subdued by the end of the sequence, taken prisoner by their counterpart among the Australian animals/Pandas. Bluebeard will have grabbed Sima and be threatening to kill him.
Bluebeard: You’ll never defeat me. I, Buccaneer Bluebeard, Captain of the Black Albatross, will find that creature if it’s the last thing I do! Where is she hiding? Speak, or the Teddy Bear dies!

The Phoenix will rise at this juncture, complete with all the FX we can muster – smoke, fire and sound. LFX will convey the mood and Yinglong will appear on the Great Wall (or on one of the balconies) depending on the levels. From behind the Great Wall, her voice amplified by a microphone, Fenghuang will speak. From the smoke/mist, Guan Yu, transformed into a powerful Preying Mantis, approaches the shrinking Bluebeard.

The Pandas and the Australian animals will all cheer loudly and then maintain their warrior poses with the defeated Pie Rats, Tang and Manchu under their control.

Wombat: Awesome!

Emu: You’re beautiful, Fenghuang!

Kangaroo: Will anyone at home believe this?

Guan Yu: (To Bluebeard) You were looking for someone?

Bluebeard: Phwoar!! (He falls to his knees in awe). This is amazing.

Sima is released and adjusts his clothing trying to regain his dignity

Fenghuang: The cycle is complete and once more I can roam free across the world with my friends, the Elements. You foolish creature! You could never contain me!

Guan Yu: (Introducing her) My Mistress, the Phoenix, the legendary ‘Firebird’, flies once more!

Entering from SL, Sun Tzu, Lady Severa-Ti in her Sedan Chair and the Imperial Mandarin appear. The Sun Bear is tied to the back and is being closely monitored by the Rabbits.

Severa-Ti: Ah, my pupils. You learned your lesson well. (Looking at the carnage around her) I see you had little need for my skills once you left the Mainland. (Bowing before the Phoenix) My warriors served you well, Madam?

Fenghuang: Indeed they did. But you, too, I see have fought — and won — a great battle! What have you to say for yourself, Sun Bear?

Mandarin: (Begins to assert himself but Severa-Ti gives him a look and he subsides. Keeping a weather-eye on her reaction) I —
Severa-Ti: *(In full ‘school-marm’ mode) What* have you got to say to everyone, Sun Bear?

Mandarin: I...

Severa-Ti: Speak up. We can’t hear a word you’re saying!

Mandarin: *(Nervously and speaking as fast as he can, reciting the ‘lines’ he has been forced to learn)* “I’m very sorry for what I’ve done and I promise never to harm anyone — ever — again.”

Tang: *(From her subdued position)* I don’t believe it!

Severa-Ti: *And ...?*

Mandarin: The gold I was going to give Buccaneer Bluebeard —

Bluebeard: *(In despair)* Aargh!

Severa-Ti: *(Prompting him)* Yes, the gold ...?

Mandarin: Will be donated to the Hainan “Save the Turtles” Fund!

Everyone: Hurray for the Sun Bear!

Severa-Ti: *(Benignly looking at him)* Well done, Sun Bear! I’m proud of you!

Mandarin: *(Looking at her in undisguised admiration — probably suffering from Stockholm Syndrome — rubbing his aching ear)* She’s *so* forceful!

*Manchu peeps at her former Mistress and then runs over to Severa-Ti, chattering as she goes.*

Severa-Ti: Manchu? Is that you? Come here you naughty little thing. Oh, how pleased I am to have you back again. *(They hug each other)* I’ve entirely forgiven you, Sun Bear. I had such FUN getting my revenge. *(She hugs him too)*

Sima: Well, it looks as if everything has turned out happily in the end —

Bluebeard: Aarggh!

Sima: For most of us! Thanks to Fenghuang and Guan Yu —

Guan Yu: - and the Fighting Pandas of Yunnan Province —
Sima: Not to mention our visitors from Australia, Evil has once more been defeated, the Elements have been restored *(SFX wind chime)*

Captain Quokka: Look! Sanya’s babies are safe after all. Well done, crew!

*Sanya will enter with two small soft toy turtles on strings, like puppets, at this point. Captain Quokka will move to help her with them.*

*The crew will cheer and perform their routine.*

Sima: That’s wonderful. The next generation is safe and we can all live happily ever after!

Fenghuang: Which I certainly will do!

Guan Yu: Eternity awaits us, Madam. *(He bows before her)*

Fenghuang: This calls for a celebration!

Sima: Indeed it does. *(Winks at Guan Yu)* They’ve been waiting all day for this—

*Peeping round the curtain DSR Mother Duck and her Ducklings can be seen.*

Sima: - the Von Duck Family Singers are here to perform for us all. Gather round everyone let us drink a cup of tea – China’s finest blend - and enjoy the show!

*The Ducks waddle in, take up their positions CS with Mother Duck conducting as the other characters drink the tea provided by the helpful Rabbits. Pong is heard as they begin their piece*

Pong: You wouldn’t be interested in working for me in my restaurant, would you?

*The Rabbits ignore him.*

*SFX fireworks. Music theme for the Ducks. LFX lanterns across the stage.*

*They – finally – sing their song.*

**FINIS**