

FADE IN:

EXT. THE SEA OF THE SUN - AFTERNOON

Dark clouds and an amber sunset loom over an endless field of BLUE FLOWERS. They sway in a gentle breeze.

A LOCUST zips through the field. A red diamond-shaped eyeball painted on his forehead. It makes a beeline towards--

SACRIFICIAL SHRINE - CONTINUOUS

A SHRINE made of stone atop a desolate hill. INSECT CULTISTS in black robes gather around an ALTAR where a ANT PRINCESS lays, struggling to break free. THE SWARM OF SANGRIA.

A CULT LEADER, in a scarlet robe, approaches her with an iron dagger in hand.

He raises it over the princess when battle horns BLARE out.

Dark clouds part as an armada of MURDER HORNETS swarm overhead in tight formation.

Leading the charge is ADMIRAL VESPA, an eye-catching murder hornet with the physique of a goddess. She stands before cultists, draws her spear, and points at them.

Hornet soldiers ZOOM full speed overhead.

SANGRIAN WARRIORS rise from the shrubs, meeting the hornets mid-air. A tense battle ensues!

The hornets SLASH through the Sangrian frontlines and free the princess.

A ROOKIE HORNET SOLDIER falls to the floor. Desperate for his life, he scrambles back as the enraged Cult Leader raises his dagger before him.

Vespa's spear drives through the leader. Just in time.

With a benevolent smile, she helps the rookie to his feet.

The battlefield calms. The Order of Sangria falls. The hornets celebrate their victory. It's brief...

The ground trembles, effigies crumble. A gargantuan PRAYING MANTIS bursts from underground! Four legs, vivid yellow eyes, and razor-sharp raptorial arms. The face of a monster!

It snatches the princess and scales the shrine.

Soldiers flee. Vespa stands tall. She locks eyes with the mantis and darts at it like a speeding bullet.

Face to face, the mantis SWINGS its arm at Vespa.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A LADYBUG CHILD gives a book report in front of a classroom of INSECT CHILDREN. A chalkboard reads: "WHAT INSPIRES ME:"

LADYBUG CHILD

--And then, Vespa flew faster and faster and faster! She looked that gross monster in the face and shoved her spear down its--

Her teacher, LEAF, a yellow butterfly with blue wings and beak-like face, cuts her off.

LEAF

Okay! I think we'll stop here for now! T-thank you Delilah.

An awkward beat as he stares at his class.

DELILAH

Aww, come on... I was getting to the best part. Didn't you like it?

LEAF

Of course I did. Your writing has improved so much this season! You had me at the edge of my seat the whole time.

DELILAH

Do you like the drawings with it?

Leaf turns to the next page-- a crude, crayon drawing of Vespa GORING the mantis.

LEAF

Oh, yeah... They're...
(clears throat)
Very creative...

DELILAH

I used my whole red crayon for this one!

LEAF
Did you now?

Leaf glances at the sundial on the wall. End of class.

LEAF (CONT'D)
That's all the time we have! Before
you go, I want to say it's been a
pleasure teaching you this season.
I hope you all have a great--

He turns back to an empty classroom. Not a single goodbye.

Leaf begins to pack his things in a MESSENGER COURIER. He stops at the stack of reports and flips through them. All of them about accomplishments by Vespa and the Armada.

Leaf sighs at the collection.

OUTSIDE WINDOW:

EXT. ARBORDALE - CONTINUOUS

A town high up in the grove of a mighty oak tree. VARIOUS INSECTS zip around wicker buildings and wooden walkways that snake around the tree's branches. It's full of life!

TITLE: **FLUTTER**

ARBORDALE - MARKET - CONTINUOUS

Leaf flies over an endless row of storefronts abuzz with activity. MERCHANTS peddle a variety of goods to PATRONS.

Center of it all, WORKERS put the finishing touches on a statue of Vespa. FERN, a yellow butterfly with teal wings and an ascending sloped nose, directs the effort. A LEAFY CLIPBOARD in one hand, a QUILL in the other.

FERN
A little more! You got an inchworm
to work with.

The statue SNAPS into place.

FERN (CONT'D)
And... perfect! Great job everyone!

Fern checks off the last item on a TO DO list.. A reminder at the bottom reads: "BECOME A LEADER!"

LEAF

You might be a little off center.
Might need to start over.

FERN

You're more than welcome to help us
if you'd like, little bro. There's
only so much four arms can do.

Fern flitters around the statue for one last inspection.

LEAF

You know I'd love to Fern, but I'm
pretty spent. You wouldn't believe
what sugar water does to a kid.

Fern rolls her eyes, and joins Leaf's side. They stroll
through the market.

FERN

So, your first group of students
heading into their metamorphosis.
Pretty exciting stuff!

LEAF

Yeah. I'm excited for them. We went
over their reports--

Leaf glances back at the Vespa statue.

LEAF (CONT'D)

--but I'll hold my proboscis.

FERN

Let me take a guess. They were they
all about Vespa and the Armada?

LEAF

What are you, a fly on the wall?

FERN

Close.

LEAF

Is it that obvious?

FERN

You do obsess over her. Might be
rubbing off on your students. Just
not in the way you think.

LEAF

I was hoping they would tell me
what they're passionate about.
What's inspiring about the armada?

FERN

I mean, they wiped out a
bloodthirsty cult that was on the
brink of destroying our way of
life. Kinda hard not to be inspired
by that. Or take issues with...

LEAF

You know *that's* not my problem.
Next season, they won't be
caterpillars, and I don't know if I
got through to any of them.

FERN

You need to find a way to be more,
y'know, inspiring.

LEAF

If only that was easy...

ARION (O.S.)

Little did I know those crustaceans
had been following my trail since I
left Molnock, and heaven knows they
weren't looking for any comradery.

Excitement blooms on Fern's face. She snatches Leaf by the
wing and drags him over to a crowd surrounding ARION, a
strong, naga-esque leopard slug in a sapphire-colored armor.

A group of CHILDREN hang onto every word of his story.

ARION (CONT'D)

So there I was. Face to face with
Lord Dredge himself! Claws the size
of bird talons and breathing down
my neck. You could say I was
between a salt block and a hard
place here.

INSECT CHILD

How did you get out?

Arion raises a giant axe before an acorn.

ARION

The battle was tough, but I made my
move and... WHAM! Shattered his
armor claw with one clean strike!

He SMASHES the acorn-- small shards fly at Leaf and Fern.

ARION (CONT'D)
I sent those salt peddlers
scuttling for the hills!

The children CHEER. Fern CLAPS as if it was her first time hearing this.

FERN
Now that's how to be inspiring!
Arion has it all. A ton of
confidence. Great with kids.
(more intimate)
An irresistible physique...

LEAF
Your boyfriend. Kind of a biased
example, don't you think?

FERN
(cheeky)
Mmm, maybe.

As the crowd disperses, Fern and Arion's eyes meet. They exchange excited smiles as Fern flies into his arms.

FERN (CONT'D)
Oh my gosh, I missed you so much!

ARION
My family stay was longer than
expected. By the way, mom says hi.

FERN
The way my week has been, it felt
like an eternity.

Leaf winces as Fern and Arion touch noses.

FERN (CONT'D)
I'm really looking forward to what
you have planned for our date this
week. You've made quite a big deal
of it.

Fern traces a heart on Arion's neck.

ARION
What can I say? I got a feeling it
will be a night to remember!

As Fern leans against his shoulder, Arion checks on an ENGAGEMENT RING tucked away in his pocket.

ARION (CONT'D)
(to self)
At least I hope so...

FERN
What was that?

Arion glances back to Fern and stuffs the ring back in.

ARION
N-nothing. I'm thinking out loud.
You smell... nice today.

FERN
Aww, thank you!

ARION
New fragrance?

FERN
It's citrus! I think it might be my
new favorite!

LEAF
(to self)
You sure it's not the pheromones?

Fern STOMPS on Leaf's foot.

LEAF (CONT'D)
Ow! Geez!

FERN
You remember my little brother,
right? I know it's been a while.

ARION
Of course! How's it hanging kid?

Arion reaches out to give Leaf a fist bump. Leaf reaches out for a handshake. An awkward beat.

ARION (CONT'D)
We'll... work on that.

Leaf thumbs through papers in his bag. Arion watches on.

ARION (CONT'D)
Fern says you're a writer or
something like that?

LEAF
A teacher, actually. I teach
prepupal.

ARION

Teacher? Well good on you. Someone has to do it.

LEAF

But teaching is my passion.

ARION

Really? You seem so busy all the time, I'd imagine you'd be striving for something more. But hey, we can't all be knights.

Leaf rolls his eyes.

FERN

You boys want to come with me to the citadel? I have a little business to tend to with the Chancellor and Vespa.

LEAF

Wait a sec, we just got here. You're leaving already?

FERN

It's kind of my job. Besides, it gives me an opportunity to ask about my walkway restoration proposal. Heaven knows we need it.

They watch a LEAF BUG trip and fall flat on his face.

LEAF

I'm good. Pretty sure I hit my Vespa quota for today. I'll catch up with you guys later.

FERN

Sure. Guess I'll see you around.

Arion offers her his arm.

ARION

An escort for the lady?

FERN

You know it!

She waves back to Leaf, then continues her flirting.

Leaf takes a step forward-- right into Arion's slimy trail.

LEAF
(to self)
Great...

He pulls at his legs and flaps his wings to no avail. He tugs even harder until breaking free, stumbling back and CRASHING into a pile of vases. A disgruntled VASE OWNER stills a wobbling vase and drags it close to her side.

Leaf scrambles to his feet and slinks away.