

THE BOOKWORMS

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A Buggy Play

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## PLOT SUMMARY

In an abandoned library, three bugs learn to read the books they were tasked to destroy. The teens secretly meet in their book club to share their findings on human culture and the outside world. Their soon-to-be member stumbles upon a pest control booklet, making them ask whether humanity should be remembered.

Turner is a worldly cockroach nymph who founded the Book Club to record books their parents tasked them to destroy. The two other longtime members are Ear, a musically inclined beetle larva, and Luke, a moth caterpillar who is the textbook definition of boring. Bark is the new kid hoping to join as their booklouse nymph.

Before Bark's trial, they search for the perfect book to share with the help of a jumpy bacterium named Germ. They find a book titled *The Audience*. They bury their head in this book.

In the book club, all share their findings. However, Bark's discovery left most unmoved. Bark is not yet welcomed in the Secret Library, but is given another chance to read more. They seek literature in the library's backroom, patrolled by the Tailless Scorpion. There, they find a booklet titled *How to Put Bookworms on Hold*. When Tailless awakens, Bark escapes.

Bark returns with no story. The book club rejects Bark, but Turner still hangs out with Bark. Soon, the library's figurehead, known as the Firebrat, visits to check on the decomposition process and give a state of the library speech. Inspired, Bark goes to the book club with three books containing anti-human sentiments. The three are not persuaded, but now welcome Bark. However, Bark had the Firebrat watch them secretly from afar. The Book Club is detained, and the Secret Library is torn down.

In the following act, the three are locked up under a jar. The Firebrat holds Bark to a high esteem. They have Bark lead the demolition of the history aisle. There, Bark notes child labor and notices that bugs and humans are not so different. Feeling guilty for their betrayal, Bark offers themselves up to Tailless. Tailless welcomes Bark in their mouth, so Bark can understand why they protect books. A while ago, Turner faced Tailless and had that same realization after a life of destroying books.

Bark returns to free the book club. The Firebrat's swarm chases them until bacteria take them down. The Firebrat catches Turner, ready to end them, but Bark sprays the Firebrat with pesticide, having learnt from the booklet. Blinded, the Firebrat ends up in Tailless's claws. The Book Club members hide in *The Audience*.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**BARK**, booklouse nymph, a kid and Book Club hopeful who reads

**TURNER**, cockroach nymph, a campy teen who reads field guides

**EAR**, beetle larva, a poetic teen who reads sheet music

**LUKE**, moth caterpillar, a toneless teen who reads textbooks

THE **FIREBRAT**, firebrat, an adult supervising the library

JEREMY GERALD **GERMAIN** THE GREAT, bacterium, a bug's bug

THE **TAILLESS** SCORPION, pseudoscorpion, a bug's shadow monster

Ensemble

**BUGS**, bugs from Firebrat's swarm portrayed as stick puppets

**BACTERIA**, bug's bugs portrayed as laser pointers' dots

○ Androgyny Entomology: Each character resembles the androgynous nature, with open-ended vocal requirements

○ People of the Global Majority most represent the experiences of this communal swarm; cast accordingly

ACT IPROLOGUE

## ABANDONED LIBRARY

TAILLESS (OFFSTAGE)

I'm by the book! Yonder, guarding a book shelf.  
The history of this library is an open book,  
and I have used every trick in the book to  
ensure this library does not end up history.

There were once human beings occupying this  
library. They came from the outside world to  
find refuge in these wondrous collections of  
inks and papers. The desks teemed with colorful  
bookmarks. The aisles brimmed with stories told  
by those who have gone. They left their mark.

These giants are long gone. A mass extinction  
event wiped out all of humanity. The library  
was left abandoned. No animal has visited the  
library since. Except us, the bugs.

Most were not interested in books. They came  
simply to take back their land. Generations  
after generations, the Firebrats led the charge  
in dismantling the library. From the very  
beginning, kids are taught to erase history.  
The moment they hatched, larvae, nymphs, and  
caterpillars are tasked with destroying any book  
in sight. I'm here to do what's right and eat  
these pesky kids! I judge a bug by its cowers.

TURNER, EAR, and LUKE squirm in.  
TURNER leads with field guides. EAR  
reads music. LUKE reads textbooks.

TAILLESS (OFFSTAGE) (CONT'D)

But some are not for my taste. You cannot judge  
these bugs by their covers. In comes the first  
bookworms to ever learn to read. They formed a  
book club with the mission to archive as many  
books as possible. By the book, for all books.  
This is their founder. They soon find two other  
bugs who can see the text for what they are.

BARK enters.

TAILLESS (OFFSTAGE) (CONT'D)

And there's a new reader found in the swarm.  
The Book Club takes interest in this booklouse.  
However, it takes more than reading to get in.  
It takes bleeding for the best of books...

TURNER, EAR, and LUKE squirm out.

SCENE 1

PERFORMANCE ART AISLE

The stage is a shelf with books  
projected larger than life itself.

A laser pointer's dot (GERM) heads  
to a book titled *The Audience*.  
They bury themselves in the book.

BARK approaches the book.

GERM  
Read *The Audience*!

BARK  
What's an audience?  
Jeremy Gerald Germain...

GERM  
The Great!

BARK  
Whatever, Germ... Bacteria get on my nerves.

GERM  
Nerves, veins, brain, stomach, intestine-

BARK  
*I'm testing you. What's the audience?*

GERM  
The book says: "a group of people who place  
their attention at a single entity. They see  
and feel in the space together."

You spacing out again? Bark?

BARK  
I want the "audience" to see me.

GERM  
You'll get them, I'm sure.

BARK  
How long does their attention span?

GERM  
It says it is as long as bugs actually: Ninety  
milliseconds.

BARK  
We got ninety million seconds on this Earth.  
This library. Let's make them count.

GERM

*We could visit the math aisle.*

BARK

Negative. We're borrowing this book. I'm sure the Book Club would appreciate my share.

BARK buries themselves in the book.

**SCENE 2**

QUIET AISLE

The stage is a part of a desk.

TURNER, EAR, and LUKE squirm in.

EAR

FAMILY IS EVERYTHING, YA KNOW?  
FAMILY IS EVERYTHING. YA KNOW  
NOT WHAT IS EVERYTHING.

LUKE

(Monotone)

I got to admit. This score you read this time around. It's... fun.

TURNER

*ELLIPSES*, huh? Who wrote this?

EAR

A musical writer? The biography said they died in complete obscurity in 2019. Curiosity...

TURNER

Sometimes, I wish humans never went extinct.

LUKE

It has been 65 million seconds.

EAR

Why, why would ya want giants walking amongst us? Not even ants do we trust.

TURNER

Fortunately, y'all will trust a booklouse. Look: I know it's been a while since we welcomed anyone new in the Book Club.

LUKE

25 million seconds ago.

TURNER

Indeed. That moment was when I noticed your textbook learning, Luke. And see how much more fun this club has been since you've joined?

LUKE

Yes. I have been a ton of fun. I'm glad you noticed that I've been reading the textbook, *How to be Textbook Fun*.

EAR

The fun will be over, if one blows our cover.

LUKE

They would be our youngest member. Do you expect a kid to keep our secrets?

TURNER

I founded this club. I invite those I know who can read. Each new ally counts.

LUKE

Statistically, each member is a six percent increase in chance for our enemies to catch us.

TURNER

Where'd you get that number?

LUKE

I feel it in my six legs.

EAR

All filler, caterpillar.

LUKE

At least I won't grow up to be a butterfly like you, Ear.

EAR

Oh, beat it. I'm on my way to the ol' beetles club.

TURNER

Us moths, beetles, and cockroaches, we've got something in common. We will soar in the end!

EAR & LUKE

Your wings are filthy!

(Respectively laughing truly and dully)

Ha ha ha ha ha ha!

TURNER

When Bark gets here, I need to share the latest field guild I've read about birds.

LUKE

Eww...

EAR

Birds are nuisances in daylight, especially blackbirds in the dead of night.

LUKE

The Sun will rise. Where is your friend,  
Turner?

BARK reveals themselves.

BARK

I'm here to turn the page!

EAR

Set the stage. Ya are late.

LUKE

The universe wants to answer my question.

BARK

I was uh... I was nearby, listening.

TURNER

I thought you'd be less awkward since we last  
met. *I told you to rehearse.*

BARK

Well, I did enter during a good... line. It's  
like... theatre!

EAR

What's theatre?

LUKE

It's that song you sang.

TURNER

Eww. Anyways, you know the cockroach nymph  
named Turner. This is our token beetle larva  
and moth caterpillar.

EAR &amp; LUKE

Token?!

TURNER

It's comedy gold. I read *Provoke*, the joke book.

BARK

Is that a picture book full of cockroaches?

EAR

Ha, they roast ya. Ya ain't gonna coast this.

LUKE

I'm starting to like this kid.

TURNER

Well, you're in big kid territory now. Before  
you can join our book club, we request you  
bring a worthy offering.



LUKE takes out a notepad and jots down BARK's words.

BARK

I'd like to share with the Book Club... *The Audience*.

TURNER

I'm listening...

BARK

No no no. The audience is more than just one individual.

TURNER, EAR, LUKE

We're listening...

TURNER

What's the book about?

BARK

It's about how to capture the audience's—

LUKE

Using a booby trap?

BARK

Audience's *attention*.

EAR

So with rap?

TURNER

Pay attention.

LUKE

I have no such currency.

EAR

I ain't stacked like Johnny Cash.

TURNER

(Popping off)

*Here's Johnny* telling y'all to shut your mandibles.

(to BARK)

What's more to this story?

BARK

That's all I got.

TURNER

You did not read *The Audience* really well...

EAR

The story ya are redrafting is stuck in a rut.  
*The Audience kinda sucks.*

LUKE

*The Audience* seems not to have a good grasp of the world based on your summary of its text.

BARK

Actually, I remember something else. One needs to capture the audience's attention in order for them not to text.

TURNER, EAR, and LUKE stare blankly.

BARK (CONT'D)

It says something about "phones." I'm not sure what a phone is either...

LUKE

(to TURNER)

Look. Bark is a phony.

EAR

Bark's barking up the wrong tree. Can't ya see?

GERM gets on EAR's face.

TURNER

I see...

EAR

Uh?

LUKE

(Still monotone)

Ah! A bacterium!

EAR

EEEEEEE! Get it off me!

LUKE slaps EAR with the notepad.  
They try to stomp on the erratic laser pointer's dot.

EAR (CONT'D)

My antenna! Ya stupid bug.

LUKE

You cannot grow antennas yet, you uneducated larva.

EAR

Ya brain pillars are made up of moron.  
Caterpillar.

GERM

(Only heard by BARK)

You are all kids. You don't know squat.

TURNER

I'll get the bacteria swatter!

BARK

No, I got this.

BARK puts out their palms.

GERM gets in BARK's palms.

BARK swiftly closes their hands.

TURNER

Yuck. Perhaps it is a bad hour to do this.  
We'll give you another chance. Next time, bring  
something of sustenance and not *The Audience*.

BARK

I don't get to see y'all's Secret Library?

TURNER

Not yet.

LUKE

You'll like its atmosphere...

EAR

We think ya'd wreck it, we fear.

TURNER

Ear, your treatment of Bark disgusts me.

Excuse me, I've gotta run to the toilet. I'm  
starving.

LUKE

Don't fall in or we'll have to fish you out  
with my submarine again.

EAR

That submarine got yellower and yellower.

BARK

While you're eating out of the toilet bowl, you  
might as well flush *The Audience* down it.

TURNER

While we won't give *The Audience* another  
chance, we're giving you and your character it.  
We'll leave you with this: the Book Club motto.

TURNER, EAR, LUKE

Consume knowledge, not books.

TURNER, EAR, and LUKE squirm out.

GERM

They are so full of crap.

BARK

You started a crap show. What was that?!

GERM

Justice. Remember reading *Killing Floor*?

BARK

That's a reach.

GERM

Jack Reacher went all vigilante like I did. I want you to reach all bug kind.

BARK

You know what I want to reach? The center of the Earth.

GERM

That's in the sci-fi aisle under Verne.

BARK

No, I must go to the library's backroom.

GERM

The backroom? That's where the monster lurks.

BARK

Yes. Novels of epic proportions.

GERM

I mean... the Tailless Scorpion.

BARK

Legend says that they prey on book-eating bugs.

GERM

You do that all the time!

BARK

Did. I no longer eat books. I eat knowledge.

GERM

Well, they still cannot tell you apart from the other kids.

BARK

They don't have to. We'll be in and out. You'll be on lookout.

GERM

I'll be a fly on the wall?

BARK

Too loud.

GERM

Butterfly on the wall.

BARK

Better.

GERM

Then sting them like a bee.

BARK

Gee, your mind buzzes.

GERM

I read Muhammad Ali's biography.

BARK

I'll give Tailless a knockout punch.

GERM

You'll end up in their punch like the Caribbean folklore about a vampire witch, Soucouyant.

BARK

We're getting off tropic here. I'm sailing to the edge of the world like Sinbad the Sailor.

GERM

You'll sink like Pequod in *Moby Dick*.

BARK walks in place.

Aisles of the library zip by.

GERM (CONT'D)

You're such a douche. You are not going to come back from this. This is no hero's journey. You're not getting passed the exposition.

### SCENE 3

BACKROOM

The stage is dark and mysterious.

GERM jumps out of BARK's hand.

BARK

We're here.

GERM

It looks unnerving as I imagined.

Giant footsteps are heard moving.

GERM (CONT'D)

It sounds unnerving beyond my imagination.

BARK

Finally! Something gets on your nerves.

GERM

I have no nerves. *Unicellular organism*. You got some nerves, multi.

BARK

I admit. I am kind of nervous.

GERM

Trust the instinct.

BARK goes all in.

GERM (CONT'D)

Your bug instinct is supposed to tell you to run away!

BARK

Oh... I was following a bacteria's. To go inside, where I am not supposed to.

GERM

And to multiply, but you cannot form an army.

BARK

I visited the math aisle and also read *The Art of War*. "Appear weak when you are strong, and strong when you are weak."

TAILLESS's shadow goes by. They only ever appear as a shadow.

GERM

You appear weak. So that makes you strong?

BARK

(Nervously)

Precisely, but it wouldn't hurt if the Tailless Scorpion does not see either side of me...

Bark walks in place.

The backroom holds banned books.

GERM

*Out of Darkness. The Hate U Give.*

BARK

Take it lightly. I have no hate in my salivary glands.

GERM

I'm spitting out book titles that I'm seeing here: *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

BARK

I'm sure the others would love to do that.

GERM

*Of Mice and Men*.

BARK

Can we stop it with the predators?

GERM

*And Tango Makes Three*.

BARK

(Observing the book cover)

Warmer. What kind of birds are they?

GERM

Gay birds.

BARK

The only acceptable birds. Warmer.

GERM

*All Boys Aren't Blue*.

BARK

I need something redder.

GERM

*Fahrenheit 451*.

BARK goes up and touches the book.

GERM (CONT'D)

You're on fire!

BARK's hands feel like they are on fire. They fall back, trying not to scream in pain.

BARK

My palps are!

GERM

Don't move a muscle. I'll look for a piece of literature that may help.

GERM goes out and looks for aid.

BARK moves about, soon stumbling upon a plastic water bottle.

BARK

Water?!

BARK punches a hole through the bottle. They feel relieved.

The bottle suddenly bursts and washes BARK downstage.

BARK notices a booklet titled *How to Put Bookworms on Hold*.

GERM swims in.

GERM

There you are! I've been looking everywhere for you in this ocean. I found a booklet called *First Aid*, but it can only be administered to those with thick skin.

BARK

I'm not thin-skinned. You were taking too long.

GERM

I can't help that your nymph legs cover more ground than my *flagellum* could.

BARK

I spot a red flag.

GERM

Redder than that book about book burning?

BARK points.

GERM (CONT'D)

Oh... *How to Put Bookworms on Hold*. Okay. Hold yourself together. I'm going in!

Oh no... I'm out.

BARK

Read.

GERM

Need?

BARK

Need?

GERM (CONT'D)

Do you need to hear all this?

BARK (CONT'D)

You're right. I've got to stop holding my breath for you.

BARK puts their head under water.



GERM

Alright. This booklet lists instructions on how to kill booklice, like you...

I'm sorry to have to read that. Listen: 99.99% of my kin have been constantly wiped out in the palms of these humans. I get you.

TAILLESS roars in the distance.

GERM (CONT'D)

Let's not have the Tailless Scorpion get you. You'll be the 0.01% who lives to tell the tale!

GERM hitches a ride on BARK. They soon run by a pesticide bottle.

TAILLESS's shadow looms.

GERM (CONT'D)

Quick. Cover yourself in pesticide!

BARK

What's pesticide?!

GERM

Based on the booklet: its remnants burnt your palps!

BARK

Pesticide sounds like suicide!

GERM

This bottle says that it expired long ago.

BARK

Let me expire.

GERM

I will not. Punch the bottle.

BARK

Ugh.

GERM (CONT'D)

Muhammad Ali it!

BARK punches the pesticide bottle.

The bottle bursts, flooding the stage.

TAILLESS screams and runs off.

#### **SCENE 4**

AISLE OF NOWHERE

BARK lies on the wet stage.

BARK  
Everything sure stings like a bee!

GERM  
You're floating like a butterfly!

BARK (CONT'D)  
Either way, the Book Club won't let this slide.

GERM  
What do you mean?

BARK  
I came out with no books.

GERM  
That's perfectly fine! I have read dozens of book in that backroom. I can pass on the notes.

BARK  
I... I don't want to hear them.

GERM  
Don't you want to hear back from the Book Club?

BARK  
The club, yes. The books...

GERM  
Reading comprehension is difficult. But you can make out the words unlike 99.99% of your fellow insects.

BARK  
Do you want to remember those who wiped out 99.99% of your kind?

GERM  
Of course. I wanted vengeance. However, those darn viruses beat us to them.

BARK  
Knowledge is viral. The book is the carrier.

GERM  
Books are inanimate. They can cause no harm, *except 451*.

BARK  
Books have been around for 451 trillion seconds... too long.

GERM  
That's probably not accurate at all. Let's have Luke fact-check that.  
Ear is all antennas for you. Get into music!

BARK  
I DON'T LOVE BOOKS  
LIKE I DID  
YESTERDAY.

GERM  
Music belongs to the beetles. You're tone-deaf.  
Bark, your tone hasn't just changed. It's dead.

BARK  
I still want the Book Club to stay alive and in  
tune with the library.

TURNER, EAR, and LUKE squirm in.

EAR  
AH, HA, HA, HA, STAYIN' ALIVE!

LUKE  
I never felt so... alive.

TURNER  
Whatcha doing here, Bark? You look like you  
fell in the toilet.  
(Disgustedly)  
Then came out clean.

LUKE  
There is a bacterium on you!

BARK swiftly covers GERM.

GERM  
Ouch! Staying alive is hard with you all...

EAR  
So, are ya out and about scouting books?

BARK  
I'm taking a break.

LUKE  
Your Book Club trial is coming soon...

TURNER  
Everyone, we can postpone it.

BARK  
I need an extended break.

LUKE  
Books are breaking Bark.

EAR  
I LIKE THAT YA ARE BROKEN, BROKEN LIKE WE.

TURNER

Books are like exoskeletons. They take effort to break into, but you'll get comfortable in its bindings much like your body.

BARK

There is a fire on my exoskeleton reading them.

TURNER

But no fire in your heart?

That's too bad... You're no longer considered for a position in our Book Club.

GERM

Eat crap, cockroach!

BARK slaps GERM.

TURNER

It is rare for us bugs to learn to read. You're a kid with a bright future ahead. We trust that you'll keep your knowledge of the Book Club's existence in the past. You know what they'd do to us if they found out we were archiving books that we were tasked since birth to demolish.

LUKE

We'll see our membership grows. Now's not the time.

EAR

We will scout them. We won't out them.

TURNER

Don't let anyone catch you kid out here with us. As we wise teenagers say...

TURNER, EAR, LUKE

Consume knowledge, not books.

TURNER, EAR, and LUKE squirm out.

GERM

I'm going to put pesticide in your moldy food when you're not looking...

BARK

Try to do that as I mold myself to be a better bookworm.

GERM

Who's the better bookworm? the Book Club who's fighting or the chumps out there biting? Those who consume knowledge or those who consume books. The kids or the adults?

SCENE 5

## INFORMATION DESK

A helicopter-esque swarm is heard.  
BUGS gather, among them are BARK,  
TURNER, EAR, and LUKE.

The FIREBRAT marches in.

EAR

(To TURNER and LUKE)

Ugh, the Firebrat is back...

FIREBRAT

That's Firebrat (*fire-brought*) to you.

(Addressing the crowd)

Be a better bookworm. For your swarm. This library will be torn down and a new age of insects will rise from the shredded papers. You've all made excellent progress. Yet, it is not fast enough. Generations before us came and went, living in humanity's gentrification.

Its time that we bugs reclaim history and make way for our stories. What use do these books have towering above us, stories and stories high? None are able to read deeply into the reasons that the giants look to take up more space that they already don't have. It really is not novel of them. They've had brain worms.

Most BUGS laugh.

TURNER

Brainwashed masses...

BARK listens to FIREBRAT, with growing admiration.

FIREBRAT

It is a massive undertaking. The workforce is entirely made up of children, but you have the energy and stomach to stomach swaths of paper. When you become adults, you'll eventually feel our paper intolerance and, therefore, be wiser.

I have a feeling that at least one of you will be ever so wiser than any bug in this library, as soon as you eat away at this chapter of insect era.

Tear down this library and rise up in liberty.

Most BUGS applause. They exit,  
except TURNER and BARK.

TURNER

Liberty is best taught at libraries.

BARK

So are lies and indecency.

TURNER

You will be ready.

BARK

For what?

TURNER

The real world.

BARK

What world is real?

TURNER

I don't know, but my search for answers is why  
I seek field guides.

BARK

You've been a real guide to me. That's all I  
know.

TURNER

And you've been a real friend. I hope you'll be  
a real bookworm eventually.

TURNER exits.

BARK

And like a real friend, I will expose the lies.

GERM

You mean the truths?

BARK

The truths about the lies that humans do time  
and time again.

GERM

What is that gonna accomplish?

BARK

The last time we read about humanity.

GERM

Oh! The humanity!

BARK

Ah! But entomology!

GERM

Ee! And microbiology!

BARK

You and your unicellular friends will live on no matter what, and so will bug kind. The memories of humanity will be swallowed.

GERM

But the Book Club loves swallowing the truths from knowledge to wisdom. How are you gonna convince them?

BARK

Books.

GERM

THE things that got them in?

BARK

And will get them out.

GERM

You are in way over your head.

BARK

Oh, please. All an insect has is a head, body, legs, and exoskeleton.

GERM

You wanted this so badly, to be a part of the club.

BARK

Why do I need them when I'm in a bigger one called bug kind?! This time, I'm recruiting.

GERM

Bark...

BARK

Are you with me or not, Germ?

GERM

Huh... This bacterium will always be *in* you!

## SCENE 6

### ABANDONED LIBRARY

A mirage of books pass by in projection. The book covers get more and more disturbing.

BARK combs through aisles after aisles for books containing the worst of humanity.

They find three books: a field guide about dodos, sheet music of "Drop Myself" by Ey East, and textbooks on eugenics. They exit.

The shadows of BARK and FIREBRAT is conversational, then vanishes.

### SCENE 7

ENTRANCE TO THE SECRET LIBRARY

Binder clips prop up a gate.

TURNER, EAR, and LUKE squirm in.  
Well, more like they are fighting.

EAR  
HAH, THAT'LL BE THE DAY...

I read *The Colour of Magic* before *Soul Music*!

TURNER  
Don't be dissing *Discworld* with your unconventional order!

LUKE  
If you want order, you could have it easy by reading *The Science of Discworld*. They are actually ordered by volumes.

TURNER & EAR  
That suggestion makes *The World of Poo*.

LUKE  
You are so full of crap.

BARK leaps in.

BARK  
I am a real bookworm.

LUKE  
You also.

EAR  
INVINCIBLE, UNBREAKABLE, UNSTOPPABLE, UNSHAKEABLE!

TURNER  
Prove it, kid.  
(Winking)  
I am so proud of you, Bark.

TURNER, EAR, LUKE  
What is the book?



BARK

Actually *books*! I have one for each of you.  
Luke, I have a homeschool textbook.

BARK hands slips of paper to LUKE.

LUKE

Homeschool?

BARK

School but at home.

LUKE

(Reading)

Why does the table of contents leave out 1619,  
1861 to 1865, the second half of the 1900s, and  
the entire twenty-first century?

BARK

The textbook did not actually skip over them.  
They summarized it as a time when they took in  
immigrants from across the ocean. Apparently,  
they had a disagreement for four years that was  
resolved. Then, they lived happily ever after.

LUKE

I don't remember reading that. Wasn't there a  
war or something? Separation, uprising, and-

BARK

The book was published in a peninsula that is  
now underwater.

LUKE

Is it that peninsula that was known in history  
to have banned books? Well, I'm floored.

BARK

You just know too much... Anyways, Ear... This  
song is going to be your latest bop!

BARK hands the sheet music to EAR.

EAR

(Reading)

CRAPPY-DI CLAP.  
CRAP-DIDDY-SNAP.  
SNAP-DI-CLAP-DI-CRAP.  
CLAPITY-CRAP, CLAP-CRAP.  
CRAP-DIDDY, SNAP-CLAP.  
CRAP, CRAP.

BARK

"Drop Myself" by Ey East.

EAR

This is crap.

BARK

(Sarcastically)

Oh sorry to hear that...

EAR

This is the shiz!

BARK

(Disappointedly)

And to you, who believes in me and us. Turner,  
this is the book I'd like to share with you.

BARK hands a field guide about  
dodos to TURNER.

TURNER

(Reading)

Dodos? Are they like birds?

BARK

Birds?

TURNER

Oh right, you've seen other animals that look  
like this but are not the exact same color and  
shape? They are called birds, like we are  
called bugs.

BARK

Anyways, dodos are special.

TURNER

Indeed. I have never read a thing about them in  
the latest volumes.

BARK

That's because they went out like the humans.

TURNER

They're extinct?! What beautiful creatures...

BARK

And guess who caused it?

LUKE

Humans?

EAR

Spoilers.

BARK

I am sorry to spoil the fun of reading.

TURNER, EAR, LUKE  
Not at all.

BARK  
What?

LUKE  
You put the text in the book.

EAR  
You lay sounds all around.

TURNER  
You turn the page better than I ever could.

BARK  
But these books are horrible...?

EAR  
They are crap-diddy, snap clap.

LUKE  
It is lukewarm.

TURNER  
This is the side of humanity we rarely get to read.

TURNER, EAR, LUKE  
You're ready.

BARK  
To read?

EAR  
That's what it means.

LUKE  
Ready is "read" with a "y."

BARK  
Why?

TURNER  
Why we're here is the answer you now receive.

EAR and LUKE remove the binder  
clips that prop up the gate.

Light expels from out of the gate.

TURNER, EAR, LUKE  
Welcome to the Book Club.

FIREBRAT enters, wielding a club.

FIREBRAT

And in comes the book clubber.

TURNER, EAR, LUKE

Firebrat?!

FIREBRAT

Thank you, Bark, for leading us to these traitors.

TURNER, EAR, LUKE

Us?!

A helicopter-esque swarm is heard.

FIREBRAT

*Bugs.* Stop reading too much into things. You three are simply under arrest.

TURNER

(to BARK)

We trusted you, you little dung beetle.

EAR

This beetle didn't!

LUKE

Our chances of getting out of this is zero.

BARK

You all needed to read the room!

TURNER

Well, there certainly won't be room for you in the Book Club, or us.

TURNER, EAR, LUKE

Consume knowledge, not books.

FIREBRAT

Eat them up, bugs!

The shadows of the bugs loom over.  
Blackout.

**END OF ACT**