

Forest Floor

PUPPET SHOW

Characters: Ellie Eft, Papa Newt, Dead Leaf, Wendy Worm, Freddy Fungus (mushroom puppet with white threads attached at the base), Mildred Millipede, Sammy Shrew

Props: maracas or a jar of beads to shake

Ellie Eft

Papa Newt, Papa Newt, look at me! My skin has turned orange. What's happening?

Papa Newt

Oh, my little girl, Ellie Eft, is growing up. Why, it's time for you to head off to the forest floor for an adventure of your own.

Eft

But I like living here in the pond.

Newt

Oh, don't worry. You'll be back in a few years when you're all grown up.

Eft

OK, Papa Newt! So, where is this forest and how do I get there?

Newt

Well, you'll have to cross this field, and it can get hot, dry, and windy by midday. You'd better leave now while it's still cool.

Eft

Goodbye, Papa! I'll be back when I'm a big newt like you.

Newt

Goodbye, Ellie, and good luck! *[both exit]*

Eft

[Eft re-enters; Dead Leaf appears mid-stage]
Ahhhh! At last. It sure was hot out in that field. Here the trees block the sun, and the forest floor feels cool, moist, and comfy. I can even burrow under this rotten old leaf for safety.

Dead Leaf

Did you call me a rotten old leaf?!

Eft

Oh, excuse me, I didn't mean to...

Leaf

Well, I **am** a rotten old leaf and proud of it, too! Why if we leaves didn't rot, we'd pile up so high that you couldn't see the forest for the leaves! Thanks to the Decomposers, that's not going to happen.

Eft

Decomposers? Who are they? Do they write songs?

Leaf

No, no, no! Composers write songs. Decomposers break us leaves and things down into smaller and smaller bits, until we're nothing but nutrients in the soil. Then plants use us to make new leaves.

Eft

So where are these Decomposers? I don't see anyone else around.

Leaf

Why, they're everywhere! Some are too small to see, like bacteria, but others are so big they can make a whole leaf disappear. Oh! The ground is shaking. Company's coming for dinner. So long. *[exits; Worm enters]*

Wendy Worm

MmmmMmm. That sure was a tasty morsel.

Eft

Why, Wendy Worm, you ate the leaf!

Worm

Sure did. Ground it right up in my gizzard. It's well on its way to becoming soil. A simple matter of in one end and out the other.

Eft

Well, I know just what you mean. You look like a great meal to **me!**

Worm

I would make a good meal, but first you have to catch me, nya, nya-nya, nya, nya!
[Worm dives behind stage]

Eft

That's easy. That worm went down right here. *[exits in same spot; returns draped in white threads]* Oh! I lost him! Got tangled up in these white roots. Why, they're everywhere down there.

Freddy Fungus

[enters, its threads draped on Eft] Those are me! I mean, I am they. I mean, I'm Freddy the Fungus and those are my fungal threads. I'm very attached to them!

Eft
Oh, sorry. I didn't know you mushrooms had roots.

Fungus
They aren't really roots. They help me break down my food, so I guess they're a bit like stomachs.

Eft
[sounding worried] Food? Um, exactly what sort of food? Nnnnot little orange efts, I hope?

Fungus
No, not efts – just dead leaves, roots, and bark. Now if you'll let go of me, I'll just thread my way right over to that rotten twig. MMMmmm. See you later, Ellie. *[exits]*

Eft
Goodbye, Freddy! Gee, I'd like to find something to eat, too. There seem to be lots of insects here on the forest floor. *[sbake maracas to a 4/4 beat]* Maybe that's one now.

Mildred Millipede
[sound repeats, then Millipede appears] Hup, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Company, halt!

Eft
You're no insect with all those legs! Who are you?

Millipede
We're Mildred Millipede on the march. We're the leaf patrol, on the lookout for dead leaves under attack.

Eft
The leaves are under attack?

Millipede
Of course. They're being attacked by bacteria and fungi. Then, once they're broken down a bit, we eat them. Now, if you'll excuse us, we have work to do. Forward, march! Hup, two, three, four... *[maracas sound as Millipede exits]*

Eft
I guess I'll stay out of her way – wouldn't want to impede a millipede! Hey, the ground is shaking again – wonder if it's another worm. I'll get it this time. *[Sbrew appears]* Hey, you're not a worm!

Sammy Shrew
A shrewd observation.

Eft
What a long nose you have! And what short, velvety fur, and beady eyes, and sharp teeth...

Shrew
All the better to bore tunnels with, slip through easily, spy my prey, and then bite it!

Eft
Yikes! I know who you are. You're a shrew! *[sobbing]* A forest floor predator if I ever saw one. I bet you eat little creatures like me.

Shrew
Yuck! Not this time. I just ate. Besides, that orange skin of yours tells me you're nasty tasting. I'm not hungry enough to want to eat you. But maybe I'll catch you later. *[exits]*

Eft
Phew, that was a close call. Life on the forest floor is quite the adventure! You never know what's around the next tree or under the next leaf. But I'm off to find out. *[exits]*

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