

Characters

Frank Stellar (M)	Assistant to Thaddeus Waterbury
First Child (M/F)	About 10 years old
Second Child (M/F)	About 8 years old
Nanny (F)	Nanny to First Child and Second Child
Victoria Woodfall (F)	Wife of Charles Woodfall
Mina Graves (F)	Victoria's friend
Thaddeus Waterbury (M)	Proprietor of Waterbury Chocolates
Charles Woodfall (M)	Victoria's husband, Member of Parliament

Scene 1 - Street

(The street in front of Waterbury Chocolates, est. 1753, an old-fashioned shop with display windows, a door with a bell hanging over it that rings whenever a customer enters or leaves, and the name of the shop above the door, with a slogan--“They’re out of this world!”--painted in smaller letters. Frank Stellar is sweeping the sidewalk and goes into the shop shortly after he sees first child and second child enter skipping, each with a balloon on a string. Both wear pendants resembling tiny glass bottles. They cross, playing with the balloons, and stop in front of the shop windows, eyes aglow, breathing in the chocolate aroma escaping the shop. Nanny enters, texting on her cell phone.)

First Child: Oh Nanny, *please*, may we have chocolates?

Nanny: (Texting) You know the rules--balloons *or* chocolates. You’re not allowed both.

Second Child: (Pointing at the sign) But the sign says they’re out of this world!

Nanny: (Still texting) You heard me. Now off you go.

(Still texting, Nanny follows the children offstage. Enter Victoria Woodfall and Mina Graves, Victoria in a rush and Mina trying to reason with her.)

Mina: Victoria, please don’t do this! I wish you’d think of the consequences!

(Victoria stops at a distance from the shop.)

Victoria: I *am* thinking of the consequences, Mina. I’m hoping it’s not too late, that if Charles stops now, he’ll get over this need, this terrible *addiction*—

Mina: Really, must you put it that way? Lots of people crave chocolate--

Victoria: *Crave chocolate!* Oh, it’s gone far beyond that. He can’t get through the day without it. And the cost! You should see our monthly expense ledger. To say nothing of what he invoices the government for by having it delivered to his office. Chocolate for breakfast, mid-morning, luncheon, tea, dinner, late night, and goodness knows when else. It’s too much. He won’t touch my rhubarb meringue pie. He scorns the mandarin orange scones that brought us together at that little bakery near Kensington Gardens all those years ago. It’s ruining our life at home and I can’t bear it any longer. I must put a stop to it.

Mina: But Waterbury’s isn’t the only chocolate shop around. He’ll find another.

Victoria: It’s a start. It’s his favourite, and they deliver.

Mina: (Relishing the chocolate aroma emanating from the shop) They do make lovely chocolates, Victoria. It’s an old company; over two hundred and fifty

years old. In fact, Charles is supporting the national economy; he's standing up for tradition.

Victoria: I'm surprised at you, taking his side. So many sweets aren't good for him.

Mina: Oh, he's very fit, isn't he? In fact, it's quite remarkable how trim he looks these days. And chocolates are full of antioxidants.

Victoria: When they're not full of caramel, creams, and jellies. If you won't think of Charles, you might think of the bill he's putting through Parliament, requiring all exports to third world countries to include twenty tons of chocolate, Waterbury Chocolate. He's letting his addiction rule his career. He used to be a champion of water cress and wimberry cultivators. He's not himself anymore. All he thinks about is chocolate. He's manipulating the industry. It's a Parliamentary investigation waiting to happen.

Mina: It's good to specialise, isn't it? Every politician must have special interests or it looks odd to all the rest.

Victoria: Oh, Mina, don't you watch the news? The numbers of chocolate consumers are at an all-time high. In England alone over a million people admit to chocolate addiction.

Mina: Oh, yes. I saw that. **(Meaningfully, to herself)** Lots of people saw that. Lovely news.

(Victoria approaches the shop.)

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Victoria: Are you coming with me, or not?

Mina: Oh, yes. I have business with Mr. Waterbury myself. Please do try to be polite, at least, and don't lose your temper. It won't help.

(The sky dims as though due to a passing cloud.)

Victoria: How dark it's getting. Was it supposed to rain?

Mina: **(Clapping her hands happily)** Yes. At last. Rain. What a beautiful day!

(Victoria pulls open the door, SFX. jangling the bell, and the two of them enter.)

Scene 2 - Shop

(The darkness passes as the two women enter the shop and stop just inside the door. It's a quintessential old London shop with wood-paneled walls, glass-fronted display counters, and a small café table with two chairs. Frank busies himself with the window displays and listens in on the following conversations while Thaddeus Waterbury arranges the countertop displays.)

Thaddeus: **(Stacking chocolates on a small plate)** Good morning, ladies. Won't you sample the chocolate of the day?

Victoria: Do you hear that, Mina? It's not even ten o' clock, yet. Are you the proprietor?

Thaddeus: **(Puzzled, slight bow)** Thaddeus Waterbury, at your service.

Victoria: Well, Mr. Waterbury, I'm Victoria Woodfall, wife of Sir Charles Woodfall, whose name you no doubt recognise from his position as Member of Parliament—

Thaddeus: Indeed.

Victoria: As well as from your account books

Mina: **(Interrupting her and starting toward the counter, inhaling deeply)** Just what *is* the chocolate of the day?

(Victoria clears her throat pointedly and Mina stops in her tracks.)

Mina: Temper, temper, Victoria.

(Thaddeus comes around the counter, still holding the plate. He crosses to Mina and passes the plate enticingly before her, then sets it down on the small table. Through the rest of the scene, Mina will take chocolates from the plate, initially daintily and surreptitiously, and eat them. Mina sits in a chair next to the table.)

Thaddeus: I call the filling Dark Chocolate Matter, madam. It is dipped in three layers; three orbits of chocolate, if you will: dark chocolate, milk chocolate, and thinnest of all, white chocolate, with a meteor shower dash of cocoa. Please, do help yourself.

(To Victoria. He extends his hand. She ignores him.)

Thaddeus: Lady Woodfall, it's a pleasure to meet you. I've never met Lord Woodfall in person, but he is one of our best customers.

Victoria: **(Turning grimly to him)** Oh, I'm sure he is. But he is *my* husband and your chocolates are destroying him! He will remain your customer no longer.

(Takes a paper from her purse and presents it to Thaddeus) I've had my solicitor prepare this cease-and-desist order. It stipulates that you must stop providing my husband, Sir Charles Woodfall, with chocolate. If you persist in doing so, I will take you to court.

Mina: **(Picking up another chocolate and luxuriating in its aroma)** Oh, Victoria, can't you just ask nicely?

Thaddeus: **(Taking the paper from Victoria)** I'm very sorry to hear this, Lady Woodfall. Perhaps you will wait while I peruse this document?

(Victoria nods and sits in one of the chairs, pointedly ignoring the plate of chocolates. Mina tries to appear supportive but can't resist giving the plate of chocolates her attention. Thaddeus steps away, distressed. Door bursts open, SFX. jangling the bell, as First Child and Second Child, without their balloons, rush in, heading straight for the display counter. Frank catches the door just in time to admit Nanny, still texting. Light dims briefly, as before.)

Victoria: I do hope we can get back before the rain. What do you think, Mina? Shall I call for the car to pick us up?

Mina: **(Selecting another chocolate)** Whatever you like, Victoria. You were the one who wanted to walk, you know.

First Child: **(Pointing at chocolates in the display counter)** We want a Neptune Nougat and a Solar System Silk Chocolate.

Second Child: **(Also pointing)** And a White Chocolate Full Moon Pie and an Asteroid Belt Crunch.

First Child: One of each--

Second Child: --for each of us.

Nanny: **(Still texting)** I don't think so. You had balloons already.

First Child: But we don't have them any longer, Nanny.

Second Child: You said we could have balloons *or* chocolate, Nanny.

First Child: But not both. If we don't have balloons and we can't have chocolate, then we won't have *either*.

Second Child: And Mummy won't like that.

Nanny: **(Still texting)** You let go of those balloons on purpose.

First Child: Mummy will be angry if you don't buy us chocolate.

Nanny: (Still texting) We'll see.
(Nanny heads for the door. Frank offers her a sample chocolate.)

Nanny: (Still texting) No, thank you. I'm allergic to chocolate.

Frank: (Glances back at the others, then quiet) I sympathise.

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Nanny: (Glances at him meaningfully and for an instant stops texting) Do you?

Frank: Indeed, I do.

(Nanny resumes texting. She pauses before the door, which Frank opens for her, jangling the bell. With a glance back at him, she exits. Light dims briefly, as before.)

Victoria: Oh, I do hope Charles remembered to take his galoshes.

(During the following conversation, First Child and Second Child play at being grown-ups, gazing at the wares, pretending to order at the counter, etc. Mina gives them each a chocolate from her plate but otherwise acts protectively about it and the children seem almost afraid of her. Thaddeus picks up a small stack of cards from the counter and returns to the table. Sorts through the cards as he notes the following delivery destinations.)

Thaddeus: (Sighs) Lady Woodfall, everything appears to be addressed in this cease-and-desist order. I see no reason to pursue this with the court. Please be assured that from today, no further deliveries will be made to Lord Woodfall either at his home address in town, his office in Parliament, or Toffington Hall.

(Victoria rises and puts out her hand to shake his, but he continues to sort through the cards.)

Victoria: Thank you, Mr. Waterbury. I'm sorry it has come to this, but so it has.

Thaddeus: (Continues sorting through the cards) Although not noted in the demand, Waterbury's will also cease deliveries to Lord Woodfall's club, the telephone box on the corner near Parliament and the one in Bethnal Green, also The Rose & Crown, Mayfair.

Victoria: I certainly appreciate your thoroughness.

Thaddeus: **(Finishes sorting through the cards)** Furthermore, Waterbury's will not deliver to Lord Woodfall's stables, the garage where the Jaguar is kept, or to his valet's, butler's, or footman's families' homes. We will also close his geocaching account with us. We will contact our partners in South Africa, Brazil, and Hawaii, and instruct them to disregard orders for overseas priority shipping requests.

Victoria: Do you hear, Mina? It's worse than I thought.

Mina: **(Holding up the much-depleted plate of chocolates)** Do at least try one of these, Victoria. Perhaps it will help you to understand Charles's appreciation of them better. To understand is the first step in helping--

Victoria: Really, Mina. You know I've never cared for chocolate.

Thaddeus: Lady Woodfall, Lord Woodfall's support of Waterbury's has been immensely gratifying, and we will regret losing him as a customer. I hope you will reconsider.

Victoria: Your solicitude is impressive, Mr. Waterbury, but my mind is quite made up. Oh, and I will be leaving these copies and related materials with you. **(Hands Thaddeus a sheaf of papers)**

Thaddeus: I don't believe anything further is necessary.

Victoria: What you have there are twenty thousand signatures--a thousand names for every ton of chocolate Waterbury's is proposing to send to third world countries, thanks to Lord Woodfall's advocacy of your wares in Parliament. Twenty thousand signatures to protest the abominable way you do business.

Mina: Victoria, you don't know twenty thousand people.

Victoria: Online petitions can be quite effective, can't they?

Thaddeus: Lady Woodfall, this is too much.

Victoria: Oh, no, it's not nearly enough, only the beginning. This is just a copy. The original list will be reaching Parliament just about now. But before then, you'll have to deal with the Department of Health.

Mina: Victoria, you wouldn't.

Victoria: **(Taking her phone from her purse)** Mina, whose side are you on? Dispensing chocolate in such quantities is clearly a threat to the health of the nation, not to mention the international community. Are you coming? I simply can't stay here any longer.

(She rushes out. Frank is just barely able to open the door for her, setting the bell jangling. The light dims, as before, and remains low as

though a storm is settling in. Frank remains at the door, gazing after Victoria.)

Victoria:

(Off) After the Department of Health, I'm calling for the car, Mina.

Scene 3 - Shop

(Thaddeus sets the sheaf of paper on the counter and leans dejectedly over it. Mina finishes the last of the sample chocolates and rises as if to follow Victoria out. First Child and Second Child sit in the chairs, watching. Frank continues to look out the door.)

Mina: **(Picks up the now-empty plate and carries it to the counter. Sets it down and leans against the counter near Thaddeus)** Don't worry, Mr. Waterbury. It will all come to nothing. You shouldn't give up a customer so easily, of course, but in the end it won't matter at all.

Thaddeus: It's kind of you to say so, Lady ---?, Mrs. ---?

Mina: Mrs. Mina Graves will do. **(Reconsiders)** Although, I prefer Commander Uhr, myself. Yes, it has been a long time since anyone called me by my own name.

Thaddeus: I don't understand.

(First Child and Second Child suddenly rise and stand before their chairs, their manner immediately militant and self-assured. Frank turns slowly to witness the following discussion.)

First Child: **(Saluting)** Commander Uhr, I am Sub-Commander Glocken, at your service.

Second Child: **(Saluting)** Commander Uhr, Sub-sub Commander Spiel, at your service.

Mina: **(Examining them)** Ah, yes. Glocken, Spiel, the Earthling bodies you have chosen--interesting.

First Child: Thank you, Commander Uhr. They were irresistible, always feeding on chocolate. They seemed able to go so many places without notice.

Second Child: Back on Cacao, we served in the spy division. We have continued our work on Earth, thanks to these bodies.

Mina: Very clever.

Thaddeus: I don't understand. What is going on?

(Frank tries to escape, but the jangling bell over the door gives him away.)

First Child: Commander!

Mina: Stop him, you fools. Really, need you ask?

(First Child and Second Child subdue Frank.)

Mina: I'll deal with him in a moment.

Thaddeus: Please don't hurt him--Frank's the best delivery boy we've ever had. What is this all about?

Mina: Yes. Mr. Waterbury, you, of all people, you, of all Earthlings, you should know that.

Thaddeus: What?

Mina: Today is the day. Today, the new order arises. Today, we Cacaoans declare ourselves. Our scouting expedition has been here for so long, preparing.

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Thaddeus: Preparing? Preparing what?

Mina: Preparing bodies for inhabitation. Preparing the planet for chocolate production to feed our people. Preparing to save ourselves from annihilation by starvation. Preparing to receive the rest of our population. Our planet, Cacao, is no longer capable of supporting us. Even Victoria has noticed the skies darkening today. Those clouds merely disguise our arriving ships. Even now, our ships are convening, waiting only for our signal. Surely your ancestors have informed you of our agreement.

Thaddeus: Agreement?

Mina: In your Earth year, 1753, we--that is to say, Supreme Commander Sprechen Z--met with your--what would he be to you? Your great-great-great-great grandfather--

Thaddeus: **(Helpfully)** Jonathan Benjamin Waterbury?

Mina: Yes. Supreme Commander Sprechen Z gave to your, shall we say, grandfather, to simplify things, knowledge of the cacao beans that our people had brought to Earth many millennia ago. He instructed your grandfather in the creation of such sublime chocolates that would change the future and make your family's fortune.

Thaddeus: **(Musing)** This is beginning to sound familiar. It's a nursery story. Yes, that's it. I remember my father telling it to me. "This is how Waterbury Chocolates began," he'd say. "This is how it all started." You've found it out, that's all. It's just a family story--isn't it?

Mina: Yes, if you like. A family story. One big happy family story. Earthlings and Cacaoans--we shall all be one family soon. And you, Mr. Waterbury, today,

you will be honoured for your family's many years of faithful service to our cause.

(She takes a glass container from her purse. It is filled with light generated by a mystical glowing object.)

Thaddeus: **(Alarmed)** What is that?

Mina: **(Adoringly)** My husband. Supreme Commander Sprechen Z.

Thaddeus: But I thought--you said--over two hundred and fifty years ago--how?

Mina: When he had finished his mission here on Earth, he returned to Cacao with the wonderful news of this planet with its perfect growing conditions for cacao beans and the Earthlings' ingenious methods of distributing them and encouraging their consumption. We are a very long-lived race, even longer if we revert to our amorphous stage in preparation for taking over a new life form. Sprechen Z returned to Earth only this morning in advance of millions of our people. **(To the jar)** How I've missed you, darling. But you will soon have a new host body, and then we shall go forth to greet our ships and finish the takeover of the Earth, the greatest chocolate producing planet in the galaxy! **(Sets down the jar and approaches Thaddeus)** Now, Mr. Waterbury, are you ready?

Thaddeus: **(Thoroughly alarmed, he backs up against the counter)** N--no! Stay away! Jonathan Benjamin Waterbury may have agreed to this, but not I!

(Mina corners him, getting close enough to smell his neck. Shocked, she backs away.)

Mina: What is wrong with you? You smell of chocolate, but only on the outside, only from being in this shop surrounded by chocolate. There is no chocolate inside you. You have never *consumed* it.

Thaddeus: That is family business practice for you. We don't eat our product. That would cut into profit. When he started this shop, Jonathan Benjamin Waterbury declared that no Waterbury would ever taste chocolate. That's why we've always hired independent tasters. He knew! He knew this day would come and he knew we would be safe from you Cacaoans when you returned.

Mina: **(Laughs)** Safe? You are not safe! If you will not, cannot, become one of us, you will become our drone. One of millions, no doubt. But we shall require drones to increase the chocolate production to feed the many millions more who will serve as host bodies to our people, host bodies that have been prepared by consuming chocolate to provide the correct living environment for us. **(Pushes him away. Her gaze falls on Frank.)** Glocken, Spiel, what about that one?

(First Child and Second proceed to sniff Frank's neck and instantly recoil in horror.)

First Child: **(Gasping)** Commander! He's--I-- **(Faints)**

Mina: Glocken! Spiel, what is it?

Second Child: **(Staggering)** He's--I regret to inform you, Commander--he reeks of--of--vanilla! **(Collapses)**

Mina: What? No! **(Tackles Frank)** Explain yourself, Earthling!

Victoria: **(Off)** Mina, the car's here!

(The door opens, SFX. jangling the bell. Victoria enters with Charles Woodfall. Sound of rain beginning to fail. Thunder.)

Victoria: Mina, just look who brought the car, all by himself. How thoughtful you are, Charles darling. Now, no chocolate, my dear. Don't even think about it.

(Victoria kisses Charles on the cheek. Sees First Child and Second Child on the floor, Mina with Frank in a headlock, and Thaddeus with the glowing jar in his arms.)

Victoria: Mina, what on Earth is happening?

Scene 4 - Shop

Frank: Lord Woodfall!

Mina: **(Blowing her hair out of her face)** Back so soon, Victoria?

Victoria: Mina, do get up. And you told *me* to avoid a scene! What will people say?

Charles: Mina, my dear, you needn't try quite so hard to get the boy's attention.

(Charles helps Mina up. Mina rushes to wrestle the glowing jar from Thaddeus. Charles extends his hand to Frank, then recognises him.)

Charles: Frank Stellar. Well, fancy meeting you here.

Frank: Yes, sir.

Victoria: Oh, I might have guessed you knew each other. **(To Frank)** How could you deliver all that chocolate to such a vulnerable man? You may have ruined his health forever. Not to mention the health of all those people in third world countries.

(Mina moves toward them, the jar clasped in her arms.)

Mina: Oh, I shouldn't think so. **(Inhaling Charles's aroma. To jar)** Do you smell that, my darling? Charles has the perfect host body for you. Mina always liked him--

Victoria: Oh, *did* she? Mina, why *are* you talking about yourself in the third person? That's new.

Thaddeus: She's an alien, a Cacaoan called Commander Uhr, and not really Mrs. Graves at all.

Mina: Oh, she's in here. **(Pulls a glass pendant on a chain from inside her collar)** This is where I keep her consciousness. We do keep them, just in case we need information.

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Thaddeus: You mean that's all there is to a person?

Mina: Don't worry, Mr. Waterbury, we've planned an extensive library of Earthling consciousnesses once the takeover is complete. We Cacaoans are very historically minded.

Victoria: Then you're not Mina Graves? Well, that's a relief.

Charles: My dear, you were always very fond of Mina.

Victoria: Well, yes, but ever since university she's been so horrid. **(Confronting Mina)** That's when you took her over, isn't it, *Pretender* Uhr? Charles, darling, that was when she first introduced you to chocolate. It's her fault you became such an addict.

Mina: **(Correcting her)** *Commander* Uhr. And no, it wasn't until last week when my ship arrived and I took over her body. Mina never really liked you, either, Victoria.

Victoria: I beg your pardon?

(Mina opens the jar and moves in on Charles.)

Mina: But she did think Charles was rather--cuddly--

(The glowing light floats out of the jar and envelops Charles. He tries to resist but fails. Lightning flashes. SFX. Sounds of rain and thunder. Shouts of dismay from Victoria, Frank, and Thaddeus. First Child and Second Child get up woozily, dust each other off, and stand at attention.)

Mina: **(To Charles)** Sprechen Z, are you in there?

(Charles stretches, an amorphous life form inhabiting this new body and enjoying it. Holds out his arms to Mina.)

Charles: Uhr, my dear, it is I.

(Charles and Mina embrace.)

Victoria: No! *I* am your dear! I mean, Charles' dear! **(Smacks him across the back, then proceeds to pummel him)** You get out of my Charles, you--Cacaoan!

Mina: It's too late, Victoria. **(Takes an empty glass pendant from her purse)** The next time he sneezes, his body will belong to Sprechen Z completely. **(To Charles)** My dear, do make him sneeze soon.

Charles: **(As Sprechen Z)** I'll do what I can, my darling, but after the disastrous Ensign Gesundheit affair, we've ceased forcing consciousness sneezing. It's simply too risky. Part Earthling, part Gesundheit, he was never the same again. **(As Charles, to Victoria)** Have no fear, my dear. Clever girl, collecting those twenty thousand signatures.

Victoria: Charles! You're still there! Fight him, Charles, fight him!

(Charles and Sprechen Z fight for possession of Charles' body and finally collapse in one of the chairs.)

Victoria: Back off, Mina! Or Uhr! Whatever you call yourself! **(She strokes his forehead, fans his face, etc.)** What did you mean, Charles, about the twenty thousand signatures?

(The door opens, SFX. jangling the bell, and Nanny enters, still texting. She finishes with a flourish and looks around.)

Nanny: Ah! Lord Woodfall, how nice to meet at last.

(Nanny crosses to shake Charles' hand, but First Child and Second Child intercept her.)

Mina: That's Supreme Commander Sprechen Z to you, Earthling.

Nanny: Now, now. There's no need to be rude. **(Takes a small atomiser from her purse)** You wouldn't want me to use this, would you?

First Child: Reveal the nature of your threat, Earthling.

Second Child: Yes, reveal it!

(Mina shoves First Child and Second Child aside. Sniffs in Nanny's direction and recoils.)

Mina: You fools! She is no Earthling!

First Child: **(Together. Sniffing in Nanny's direction)** She's a Vanillian! We never knew!

Second Child: **(Together. Sniffing in Nanny's direction)** She's a Vanillian! We never knew!

(They run for the door, fling it open, SFX. jangling the bell, and rush out.)

Nanny: **(Gazing after them, shrugs)** Well, that's one solution.

Frank: Shouldn't you – we--go after them? I'll volunteer.

Nanny: Thank you, but I don't think it will be necessary. Without their leaders they're harmless. To be honest, the Cacaoans Glocken and Spiel are far more pleasant than the Earthling children whose bodies they took over.

Frank: But, well, did you let them take over the children? I mean, shouldn't you have prevented that?

Nanny: Indeed, yes. But at that time, you see, I had to choose between preventing another Cacaoan from taking over the Prime Minister or watching the children riding a carousel at a festival. After that ride they were quite different, much less cruel to one another or anyone else, and of course the

pendants confirmed what had happened. **(To Mina)** You, however, are under arrest, Commander, as is the Supreme Commander.

Victoria: But he's still my husband. Under arrest? By whom?

Nanny: I'm Chief Inspector of the Intergalactic Police. We've been looking for these two for a very long time, ever since their conquest of multiple planets in the Cygnet constellation. It's possible we can still save your husband, but you'll have to come with us to obtain the correct medical procedure for extraction of the Cacaoan Supreme Commander Sprechen Z.

Victoria: Well, if it's the only way. But what did Charles mean about the twenty thousand signatures?

Nanny: Your online petition was the perfect solution for identifying Earthlings who would fight to prevent the overthrow of the planet by the Cacaoans. Even now, thousands of these Earthlings surround this shop--it's a--how do you say it--a crash pop--a flush mop?

Frank: **(Peering out the door)** A flash mob! Look? Look! She's right!

Victoria: **(Also peering out)** Just look at that. In all this rain. I do hope they remembered their galoshes.

Mina: **(Triumphantly)** Yes, in all this rain. All this rain caused by our cloud-cloaked ships! Our invasion is here, Vanillian, Earthlings! It's too late!

Nanny: It is not too late, Cacaoan. Your ships may have caused the rain, but they are now commanded by Vanillian captains. Your more than a million fellow Cacaoans are under arrest, and you will soon join them.

Mina: We will never surrender!

Nanny: **(A slight sigh. Approaches Mina with the atomiser extended)** I do hate when it comes to this.

(Nanny spritzes Mina, who writhes in agony and collapses behind the display counter.)

Victoria: **(Sniffing)** Why, it's just vanilla! Oh, do let me have that!

(Nanny gives Victoria the atomiser. Victoria liberally spritzes Charles, who writhes in agony before dispelling Sprechen Z. The glowing form hovers a moment before Nanny captures it with the jar.)

Charles: Well done, my dear.

Victoria: **(Embracing him)** Oh, Charles. Now, promise me you will never eat chocolate again.

Charles: Never fear, Victoria. I have eaten enough chocolate for several lifetimes. I promise.

(Charles and Victoria head for the door but stop before exiting.)

Victoria: **(To Nanny)** I suppose something ought to be done about Mina; that is, if you could put her back as she was before--

Nanny: We'll certainly try.

Victoria: Well, then, thank you--for, you know, saving the Earth and all the rest of it. Do come for tea some time.

Charles: Yes, indeed. MI-9 is at your service, as always.

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Nanny: **(Nods at him)** The Intergalactic Police thank you, Lord Woodfall. We're grateful to you for your personal sacrifice, as well. You were correct. Consuming all that chocolate ensured Commander Uhr's attraction to you. Supreme Commander Sprechen Z is a most dangerous Cacaoan. Few Earthlings would have been able to defeat his possession of them as you did.

Victoria: MI-9? Charles, you never said a word about it!

(She takes his arm, and they exit.)

Scene 5 - Shop

(Thaddeus crosses to Nanny and holds out his wrists.)

Thaddeus: Well, get on with it. I suppose you'll have to arrest me, too.

Nanny: **(Surprised)** Oh, I shouldn't think so. You and your family were victims of a massive deception. If anything, we may need to call you as a witness.

Thaddeus: Are you sure?

Nanny: Very sure. **(Registers his discomfort and remorse. Gently teases him)** However, don't leave the planet.

Thaddeus: **(Drops into one of the chairs)** Absolutely not.

Nanny: **(Looking around the shop)** And you may want to rethink your business. Go into tea or soap or something.

Thaddeus: **(An epiphany)** Do you know, I've been thinking just that for some time? Tea or soap or--buttons. Yes, perhaps buttons! So many possibilities! It's a new chance, a new life! **(Leaping up, he shakes her hand vigorously)** The family business has been weighing on me for so long, and I'd begun to feel terribly guilty about that. But I can change it. Thank you. Thank you! **(He rushes for the door, setting the SFX. bell jangling. Stops and looks at it)** I've always hated that bell. **(Reaches up and takes the bell down, cradles it, looks back at Nanny)** Thank you. **(Nods to Frank. Exits)**

Nanny: **(Takes out her cell phone. Begins texting. Offhand, to Frank)** You may as well go, too.

(Frank remains, gazing at her.)

Nanny: **(Still texting)** Well, what is it?

Frank: I'm just wondering. You're a Vanillian, but does that mean you're inhabiting a host body, an Earthling, like the Cacaoans do?

Nanny: **(Smiles, still texting)** No. We Vanillians are actually very like Earthlings.

Frank: And some of you have been on Earth for a long time?

Nanny: **(Still texting)** Some of us. We've been keeping an eye on Earth. You Earthlings are, well, rather susceptible to space alien influences. Frankly, we've come to feel a bit protective of you.

Frank: That's very kind of you. I've been wondering--you see--my grandmother was a very marvellous person.

Nanny: **(Still texting)** Was she?

Frank: She told me always to be careful, that people who were allergic to chocolate would be friends to me in dangerous times.

Nanny: **(Still texting)** You recognised our secret password.

Frank: Yes. And she used to tell me the most smashing stories, about a world where snow was actually flakes of gold and rain came in drops of the sweetest perfume, where the best defence against evil was, vanilla.

Nanny: **(Still texting)** Ah. True stories.

Frank: But one day, she said, she would have to leave, to return to that wonderful world.

Nanny: **(Still texting)** And she went away.

Frank: Yes, I thought she died.

Nanny: **(Finishes texting and holds out her hand to him)** There, I've finished the arrangements for escorting the Cacaoan invaders to the Intergalactic Court. My ship is waiting. Come with me. I'll take you to your grandmother.

(Frank takes her hand and they exit through the now-silent door.)

Scene 6

(The door opens. First Child and Second Child enter. They examine the shop. Each takes a plate of chocolate from the display counter or the front window. They carry them to the table and set them down. They sit facing each other. All of this is very precise until they begin giggling. First Child picks up a plate, offers it to Second Child.)

First Child: (Joyfully) Chocolate?

Second Child: (Picks up a plate, offers it to first child. Joyfully) Chocolate?

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(Both turn front, holding their plates toward the audience.)

First Child: (Together. Joyfully) Chocolate?

Second Child: (Together. Joyfully) Chocolate?

(Lights slowly dim. Sound of rain falling fades.)

End of Play