

Preshow Announcement²

MAYOR CANNA BLOMQUIST enters,
perhaps reading a leafy script.

MAYOR

(to the audience)

Wildflowers and manures. This is your dirty Mayor Canna Blomquist speaking. We'd like to thank theatre for planting our garden titled *Turnover: A New Leaf*. Before we plot along, I must give you tourists some pointers. You need to trade in your bills...

The MAYOR holds a dollar bill,
then switches to a brown bill.

MAYOR

For our currency called *bullshit*. Which you all have done a fruitful job at the box office. Keep your bullshit safe—

The MAYOR drops the bills.

MAYOR

Crap! Poop! Pardon my foul fucking language. We don't say the C or P words here. That unenforced law is fucking shitty. I know. Oh, and X- Exits are located there in case of a forest fire.

The MAYOR points to the exits.

MAYOR

Speaking of fired... Who here has a green card?

Optional: The MAYOR singles out
audience members who wear no green
ribbon.

MAYOR

Some of you did not raise your appendages... Hmm. You must be transplants. Your roots have no place in our soil. No porosity or permeability will ever help you earn a green card here. Oh, you poor tourists need to learn science words like *porosity*! In our program are reference guides to translate our plant language. The tour is a bit over an hour. Welcome to Dirty City!

The MAYOR exits.

²Fang Tseng originated the preshow during her interview to be the director on May 11, 2024.

SCENE 1

DIRTY CITY

Dirty City is a city-wide garden.
The city is scaled down so that a
single block takes a single step.
Empty plots of land scatter about.
It is between seasons. Any season.

RAU, a Cilantro, enters. Her earthy
hair and tan gleam. She is expecting
a new seed. She tries to plant
herself in an empty plot of dirt.
A picket that reads "Curb the
Herbs" projects upon that plot.
RAU moves to another empty plot of
land. The same message projects.
RAU repeats. The message repeats.
The sun sets as RAU collapses.

RAU

Sun... A leaf must not turn away this light.

MALUS, a Crabapple, enters,
opposite the sunset. They have
green marks on their palms. Their
attire is fabulously angelic.

MALUS

Turn over to the night.

RAU turns away from the sunset.

RAU

Chào. Aren't you an angel?

MALUS

Hello. Aren't all Figs?

RAU

Hell! Any Fig is a malice!

MALUS extends their hand to RAU.

MALUS

Dat's my name: Malus Crabapple. I am a Fig—

RAU tries slapping away MALUS's
hand, but MALUS nabs her hand.

RAU

Figment of my imagination. Get your appendages
off me!

MALUS

Reality... I got to hand it to you. You are no angel. You ain't owed a safe haven. You do not belong on our soil.

RAU knocks down MALUS.

RAU

Heavens. Your kind soiled safety.

MALUS

Your kind of soil is mud.

RAU

Mud is where you're most safe... *Stranger*.

MALUS stands, showing green hands.

MALUS

I ain't the one with no Green Card.

RAU

Where I came from, I had the greenest of cards.

MALUS

The other side of the ocean had the right conditions for you. However, ain't no unconditional love in our Dirty City. Is that what you imagined for the American dream?

RAU

This Cilantro dreams! *Bleeds!* I believe this city needs its garnishes. Imagine Dirty City's first-ever salon. I *know* of a better life for my family here...

MALUS

You immigrants got wild dreams. *But imaginations.* You cannot imagine my people living in peace with your family, wherever yours come from.

RAU

You don't know where I come from.

MALUS

Like a leaf, Figs are always floating around the world. Your tone ain't a *brussels* sprout's.

RAU

Well, your attitude is crap!

MALUS

Watch your language!

RAU

Caca! Pardon my French. I do not have a tone!

MALUS

Okay, well you look like you took a leave from Southeast Asia? All your last names are like... Weed (re: *Nguyen*)?

RAU

Răm. Rau Răm. Lots more last names in Vietnam. And no. You know nothing about life out there.

MALUS

Rau, I ain't judge ya days. Don't judge my nigh-

RAU

I know not of where your nightlife comes from.

MALUS

It stems from birth.

RAU

You chose this light. This lifestyle you have, you are not born with it. You are not natural. I cannot imagine a life without light.

MALUS

You keep this up and your salon stays an imagination. Your story will end here.

RAU

I cannot keep my stems up. No plot of land in Dirty City will ever let me plant myself. I moved this far for what? My story will... What?

1. "*MOVE THE PLOT FORWARD*"

MALUS

MOVE THE PLOT... MOVE THE PLOT... FORWARD...

MALUS steps onto a colorful plot.
They push aside an adjacent block
of concrete to unveil fresh soil.

MALUS (CONT'D)

MAKE YOUR ROOTS AT HOME.

RAU

THIS IS YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD?

MALUS

ROOT FOR ME...

RAU

IM LANG (Vietnamese: "Shut up").

MALUS

(Puzzledly)

MAKE YOUR BED.

A tanning bed rolls out. Over time, a seedling grows nearby.

RAU

SHUT UP.

MALUS

I WASN'T BORN WITH LIGHTHEARTEDNESS.
I HAVE CHOSEN IT!

NOW YOU CHOOSE:
MOVE THE PLOT FORWARD...

RAU

OR...?

MALUS

LEAVE THE PLOT HOLE...
(Repeating)
MOVE THE PLOT FORWARD...
LEAVE THE PLOT HOLE...

RAU reluctantly plants herself.

RAU

WHOLE...

RAU & MALUS

MOVE THE PLOT FORWARD...

RAU

FORWARD!

MALUS

YOU'RE WHOLE!

SCENE 2

SALONTRO, DAY

The plot thickens. The salon takes over Dirty City. An Open/Closed sign hangs. It faces "Closed."

RAU

Im lang. Im lang. Im lang! Im lang!

MALUS touches the tanning bed.

MALUS

Imagine a better plot device.

RAU

Im lang. The sun is more than anything, but a tanning bed will do.

MALUS

Shut up. I cannot take anymore of your deep gratitude, foreigner.

RAU

We bleed the same eukaryotic cells...

MALUS

Indeed, then treat me like I do.

RAU

But... how much does your wallet weigh?

MALUS

Greedy... You've got morals that need cleansing.

RAU

Greens! It's not greed for us Cilantros to have good taste! Do you have bullshit on you?

MALUS

My business adheres to the capital and makes profits. So yes. What's your worth?

RAU

That'd be ten bullshits, please...

MALUS

Dat's the start of a plot.

MALUS hands a manure-laced bill to RAU. They hide in the tanning bed.

RAU

IT'S THE TURN OF AN ERA!
I WAS DEALT A BAD HAND.
THIS AREA HAS NO REGARD.
THEY TREAT ME AS AN ALIEN.
I HAVE GROWN THESE LEAVES THAT COULDN'T EVER HOLD THIS WATER.
I WAS GONNA COME APART.
BUT I GUESS YOU DO HAVE A HEART.
I HAVE A NEW START.

MALUS gets out of the tanning bed.

RAU (CONT'D)

TURN AROUND. NICE TAN.

MALUS

NOT A FAN.

RAU

NOTHING FANCY.

MALUS

YOU WILL SEE DAT FANCY GETS THE FANS.

RAU goes out and gets a potted herb. She puts it on a shelf then turns the "Closed" sign to "Open."

MALUS (CONT'D)

I'll try to get my pals en root. You're on your own in this soil. It's all your turn from here.

MALUS exits. The MAYOR, dressed as a tumbleweed, dances in and out.

RAU

I CAN'T EARN MY GREEN CARD
IF I DON'T STAY ON MY GUARD.
MY LEAVES HAVE COME SO FAR.
YOU CAN'T MAKE ME LEAVE!
ALL THAT REMAINS ARE MY ROOTS, FAMILY...

I MISS YOU, BROTHER.

RAU hugs the pot. She sits on the tanning bed. She pulls out body oil and rubs her belly with it.

Audience Engagement: The leaves that the audiences wrote on blow in. RAU reads the leaves aloud.

RAU (CONT'D)

Seems the most proper maternity gift is reality.

PARSLEY (OFFSTAGE)

(Echoing from the great beyond)

TURN AROUND!

Positive whispers are audible. The colorful light show demonstrates FigLeaf patrons coming in and out. With the rising and setting sun, financial quarters roll by.

RAU

My body oil? You like this foreign stuff...?
Well, it's no fertilizer! This oil is not found in Dirty City. It's from my dirty ol' village!

YOU HAVE MADE IT.
TURN AWAY FROM YOUR OLD LIFE.
YOUR BED IS MADE.
TURN AWAY FROM THEIR WILD NIGHT.

THIS DIRTY CITY IS OUR HOME.
THE NEIGHBORS, THEY'LL KNOW
TO STAY IN THEIR ZONE UNLESS THEIR TONES...
TURN OVER AND CHANGE FOR THE BETTER.

Business is booming. More tanning beds roll out. Bullshit rains down.

MALUS steps in, unimpressed with
RAU's success.

RAU (CONT'D)
(Deceptively)
THIS IS THE START OF...
A BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP.
A "FRIENDSHIP" WHERE I CAN'T
KEEP MY GUARD DOWN.

MALUS
(Doubtfully)
THIS IS THE START OF...
A BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP.
A "FRIENDSHIP" THAT SOWS MAD
SEEDS IN OUR GARDEN.

MALUS gathers bullshit and leaves
the rest to RAU. They exit.

RAU turns the sign to "Closed."
She places the seedling in a lit
tanning bed and closes its lid,
then hides in another tanning bed.

RAU (CONT'D)
BUT THE BEST TURNOVER I'VE EVER HAD...

RAU gets out. Her belly is no more.

Direct sunlight lands on a
distinct tanning bed, leading to
PARSLEY leaping out of it.

RAU (CONT'D)
IS MY SUN!

PARSLEY
MOVE THE PLOT FORWARD!

End of "MOVE THE PLOT FORWARD"

RAU (CONT'D)
Turn around... You missed a spot. But son, do
you shine...

PARSLEY turns around.

PARSLEY
Me (Vietnamese: "Mom")... Don't embarrass me in
front of the sneezeworts!
(to the audience)
Don't worry, loyal customers. We'll open up the
salon on the first light of dawn. Now, try not
to fight over our complimentary moisturizers!

Audience Engagement: PARSLEY
tosses moisturizers or squirts
them into the audiences' hands. He
gets to work sterilizing the place.

RAU
Us Cilantros are all about presentation.
Parsley Răm is a natural. Organic. American.

RAU holds PARSLEY's green hands.

SCENE 3

SALONTRO, NIGHT

RAU has PARSLEY sit on a tanning bed. She clips PARSLEY's hair.

RAU

But your trichomes getting unnaturally long.
(Repeating and interspersing)
I love you. I love you lots.

PARSLEY

(Repeating and interspersing)
I love you. I love you more.

RAU

How many trims are needed for all the love?

PARSLEY

Odd... Mom... For once, please no math-

RAU

What is the airspeed velocity of an unladen dandelion seed?

PARSLEY

Thirty centimeters per second. Last math probl-

RAU

Thirty seconds. Square root of a boxwood tree?

PARSLEY

I'll learn square roots when I start middle school in the fall.

RAU has PARSLEY face a mirror.

RAU

Is this worthy of a Flores Elementary graduate?

PARSLEY

Gym class would have a good laugh.

RAU

With this cut, they'd actually pick you before the Cherries.

PARSLEY

Dodgeball is an Apple's sport anyways.

RAU

You need your root canals checked. Speaking of Apples, how was class before the ceremony?

PARSLEY

Fruitful! Ms. Red's partner stopped by.

RAU

That's delightful. Who is he?

PARSLEY

Her name is Golden Delicious. She is an archaeologist.

RAU

Oh, *she* is... *She*...

PARSLEY

Ms. Red's final lesson was that Fig weddings are more fabulous than any other kind.

RAU

Schools should not be teaching minors that! Schools should be teaching kids major subjects, like if Florida schools teach math and science.

PARSLEY

History!

RAU

Here's a story: seedlings exist only because stamens and pistils love one another.

PARSLEY

A kid at recess once told me that love is like the legendary tale of the bird and the bee.

RAU

Kids fall for so many rumors these days. Plus, those don't add up. Birds and bees don't go together. It's bird plus bird. Bee plus bee.

Dance music distantly echoes, so
PARSLEY perches by the window.

PARSLEY

Ugh, math. Something's buzzing at FigLeaf.

RAU

The Figs are hosting another party. You can always count on that.

RAU uses a tanning bed as a desk
to do taxes and count bullshit.

PARSLEY

Mom... Who goes out at night?

RAU

A light with no sense of direction, son.

PARSLEY

But the sound sure likes going our way.

RAU

Sounds don't feed us.

PARSLEY

A light with no sense of direction... So, there is light. They are just lost.

RAU

Their light is artificial. They chose not to follow what is natural.

PARSLEY

But our tanning beds... Its light don't come from the sun?

RAU

They paint skins with UV. It is like if you split the spectrums of sunlight onto a palette.

PARSLEY

What is a spectrum?

RAU

I don't know... But don't ask Malus. Malus...

PARSLEY & RAU

Has malice intent.

RAU

Figs are the root cause of identity and social norms' instability.

PARSLEY

I know... But they have society's money. And money is the root of all evil-

RAU

Sure, he and his customers paid our rent for a while. But we paid off our plot of land. Salontro is independent of FigLeaf.

PARSLEY

Yet, Salontro still depends on FigLeaf.

RAU

Depends on the years to come.

PARSLEY

We would go under without them.

RAU

We will never overturn our views for them.

PARSLEY

You see new business models everyday.

RAU

Well, their bullshits are unnatural.

PARSLEY

Yeah, the money's unreal. What's natural to you?

RAU

Biodiversity like your class of plants. It makes for a healthy garden.

PARSLEY

What makes more diversity?

RAU

Less homogeneity.

PARSLEY

Homo-

RAU

Figs need more sun on their skins. Sons in their lives. My parents had a son once. He once set things straight. Until he no longer isn't and so couldn't.

PARSLEY

Malus is like the American aunty/uncle we need.

RAU

Don't say such nonsense. Back to my point: the sun's what grooms all things...

2. "A NATURAL"

RAU

NATURE...

NURTURED FROM THE LIGHT OF OUR SUN.

IT'S NATURAL.

PLANTING THEIR HOT FEET ON OUR GROUND.

THEY'RE NATURAL.

BUT IT'S NOT AS WARM AS A MOM'S HUG.

RAU hugs PARSLEY.

RAU (CONT'D)

COMES NATURAL.

WHAT'S NOT? THAT WOULD BE THE TICKLES!

RAU tickles PARSLEY.

RAU (CONT'D)
(Repeating)

A NATURAL... IS TRUE TO THEMSELVES.

SON. YOU ARE A... NATURAL!

End of "A NATURAL"

PARSLEY

Will the sun always be around?

RAU

The sun will never turn over to the dark side.

PARSLEY

What about during an eclipse?

RAU

What? *You're talking like those Venus flytraps.*

PARSLEY

Ms. Red taught us that the moon can sometimes get in the sun's way.

RAU

The moon sounds unnatural... Anywho like you, even the sun has a bedtime.

PARSLEY

Ugh.

RAU opens a tanning bed and plants a blanket in it.

RAU

Your planter is made. Now go lie in it.

PARSLEY points at the outlet.

RAU plugs in a nightlight.

PARSLEY lies in bed.

PARSLEY

I am a natural at lying.

RAU

You speak the truth, my son.

PARSLEY

Mom. I wonder who'll be my moon...

RAU

Ngủ ngon (Vietnamese: "Sleep well"), my son.

RAU exits.

SCENE 4

SALONTRO, DAY

MALUS steps into the sunrise.

PARSLEY leaps out of bed. He turns the "Closed" sign to "Open."

MALUS

Where's your mom?

PARSLEY

Morning! Our latest shipment was delivered to the wrong address. So, she's out getting it.

MALUS

Strange. She's usually out to get me. I kid, you Cilantro. Nevertheless... Cow, Parsley.

PARSLEY

Chào. You Crabapples are always sweet, but you can never sweeten your pronunciations?

MALUS

I'm bisexual, not bilingual.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

No, Malus. / No malice.

MALUS (CONT'D)

Yes, Pyrus!

PARSLEY

Pyrus?

Another Crabapple?

MALUS (CONT'D)

My nibbling.

The pear's in town.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

And I wanna get outta this Dirty City.

PARSLEY

Doing our city dirty? You'll fit in real well.

MALUS

Tanning beds come in all shapes and sizes. And there gotta be one dat matches your body, Pear.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

I don't want nobody to see me around ya, crazy aunty/uncle Apple. Let's go back to FigLeaf!

PARSLEY

I always wanna visit FigLeaf.

MALUS

Now, you may have the spirit of a Fig. But only adult plants are allowed at nightclubs. And, *your mother would lose her freakin' aldehyde.*

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

Ya said ya'd take me to Cantaloupe Outlets, not make this salon my outlet...

MALUS

You will never find me among those hipsters.
How about a trip to Celery Mall?

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

But ya said we could go where I wanted! You're more of an Apple Blossom than a Crabapple. Celery Mall only sells to old houseplants.

MALUS

Take dat back!

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

Per FigLeaf's policy: No returns. No, Malus.

MALUS

Nothing's returnable in a nightclub, Pyrus...
You're digging a deeper hole for yourself.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

Ain't dat what we're supposed to do as plants?!

MALUS

Even plants can get overheated.

PARSLEY

You're all making a mountain out of a molehill.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

Shadeee. Ya can burn us. But, ain't nothing can top a sunburn.

3. "AMOUNT TO ANYTHING"

PYRUS walks in with sunburns and green palms. Their entrance is like a teenage rocker with acne. They knock over the potted herb.

PYRUS

MOUNTAINS OUTTA MOLE HILLS.
NO REST. DISTRESSED. A MESS. CARELESS.

I DELIVERED BRUISES AND I GOT INTO TROUBLE AT SCHOOL.
SO, I'LL SPEND THIS SEASON WITH MY ONE WEIRD AUNTY/UNCLE.
I WON'T KNOW MALUS...

ALL BECAUSE REALLY

I WILL NEVER AMOUNT TO ANYTHING.
I WILL NEVER AMOUNT TO ANYTHING.
I WILL NEVER AMOUNT TO ANYTHING.
ANYTHING!