

SCENE 1

DIRTY CITY

Dirty City is if Grand Rapids was entirely Frederik Meijer Gardens. 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 enters. Her hair is unearthly. Her tan gleams. 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.

RAU collapses on the concrete with her body facing the sunset. She feels her belly.

RAU

Sun... A leaf is not meant to turn from this light.

MALUS enters, opposite of the sunset. They are barely clothed.

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

*Any Fig is a malice!*

MALUS

That's my name: Malus Crabapple. I am a Fig-

RAU

Figment of my imagination.

MALUS

Does your imagination include a better life for yourself here?

RAU

Any plant can imagine. A Cilantro can dream! This city needs its garnishes. Imagine Dirty City's first-ever tanning salon. I *dream* of a better life for my family here...

MALUS

You immigrants have wild dreams. *But imaginations*. You cannot imagine people like me living by your family, let alone amongst yours, wherever you come from.

RAU

You don't know where I come from.

MALUS

Like a leaf, my people are open enough to fly all around the world. Your kind of accent is not like a brussels sprout. It sounds like you took a leave from Southeast Asia? All your last names are like... *Weed (re: Nguyen)?*

RAU

Răm. Rau Răm. There are more family names out there in Vietnam. And no. You don't know the daily life I came from.

MALUS

Well Rau, I won't judge your days if you don't judge my nights.

RAU

I don't know where your nightlife comes from.

MALUS

It stems from birth.

RAU

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

MALUS

You keep this up and your salon stays an imagination.

RAU

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

1. "MOVE THE PLOT FORWARD"

MALUS  
(Repeating)  
MOVE THE PLOT...  
FORWARD...

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

MALUS (CONT'D)  
MAKE YOUR ROOTS AT HOME.

RAU  
THIS IS YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD?

MALUS  
*ROOT FOR ME...*

RAU  
*IM LANG. (translation: "Shut up")*

MALUS  
(Puzzledly)  
MAKE YOUR BED.

A tanning bed rolls out.

RAU  
*SHUT UP.*

MALUS  
I WASN'T BORN WITH LIGHTEARTEDNESS.  
*I HAVE CHOSEN IT!*

NOW YOU CHOOSE:  
MOVE THE PLOT FORWARD...

RAU  
OR...?

MALUS  
LOSE THE PLOT BACKWARD...  
(Repeating)  
MOVE THE PLOT FORWARD...  
LOSE THE PLOT BACKWARD...

RAU reluctantly plants herself next to MALUS.

RAU  
OH...

RAU & MALUS  
MOVE THE PLOT FORWARD...

RAU  
FORWARD!

SCENE 2

TAN SALONTRO

The tanning salon moves forward,  
lightly transforming the heart of  
Dirty City. An Open/Closed sign  
hangs. It faces "Closed."

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

MALUS  
Imagine Dirty City's first-ever tanning salon's  
first-ever customer!

RAU  
*Im lang.* I refuse to imagine you Figs.

MALUS  
I may be a Fig but not a figment of your  
imagination!

RAU  
*Figures...*

MALUS  
We may have different figures and feel  
differently for other figures, but we bleed the  
same eukaryotic cells.

RAU  
You are crazy to think I'd let your kind use my  
tanning bed. You ain't got shit on you!

MALUS  
Wash that mouth out with soap.

RAU  
We Cilantros are soap! I mean... 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

*That's a start.*

MALUS hands a manure-laced bill to  
RAU. They lie in the tanning bed  
and close the lid.

The tanning bed does its magic.

RAU

IT'S MY TURN...  
I WAS HANDED A BAD CARD.  
THIS PLACE HAS NO REGARD.  
THEY TREAT ME LIKE I'M FROM SPACE, AFAR.  
I HAVE LEAVES THAT COULDN'T HOLD WATER.  
I WAS GONNA COME APART.  
BUT YOU HAD A HEART?  
I HAVE A NEW START.

MALUS gets out of the tanning bed.  
They inspect themselves.

RAU (CONT'D)

TURN AROUND.

NICE TAN.

MALUS

NOT A FAN.

RAU

NOTHING FANCY.

MALUS

YOU WILL SEE THAT FANCY GETS THE FANS.

RAU turns the "Closed" sign to  
"Open."

Crickets chirp.

MALUS (CONT'D)

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

MALUS exits.

RAU

IT'S MY TURN...  
I DON'T DESERVE MY GREEN CARD.  
IT IS NOT THERE TO BE ON GUARD.  
I HAVE LEAVES THAT CAME SO FAR.  
BUT NO TREE, ESPECIALLY ME, CAN REACH THE STARS.  
I DON'T HAVE THE HEART.  
I SHOULD STOP...

RAU sits on the tanning bed. She exposes her belly. She pulls out a bottle of body oil.

RAU (CONT'D)  
I DON'T KNOW WHERE WE ARE.

RAU rubs her belly with tanning body oil. It gleams with her tan.

Lights move in and out. Positive whispers are audible.

RAU (CONT'D)  
My body oil? You like this foreign stuff?

Lights are positively responsive.

RAU (CONT'D)  
This ain't from Dirty City. This oil is from my dirty ol' village!

RAU sprays body oil about.

Either animated silhouettes or a colorful light show demonstrate that business is booming with patrons coming in and out. Financial quarters roll by with the rising and setting sun.

RAU (CONT'D)  
TURNOVER!  
THE WORLD IS NOT OVER.  
WHAT GOES AROUND, COMES AROUND.

TURN AROUND!  
I NOW HAVE A NEW BUSINESS VENTURE.  
AFTER GOING THROUGH WHAT I CAN KINDLY PUT: AN ADVENTURE.

I'VE SHED EUKARYOTIC CELLS.  
NO ONE CARED WHAT I HAD TO SELL.  
I WAS STUCK IN THE GREEN CARD PRISON.  
THE ONLY LIGHT THROUGH THE BAR WAS OUR SUN.

I'VE MADE MY BED, BUT NOW I CAN FLIP IT AROUND TO THE COOLER SIDE!

TURNOVER!  
TURN AROUND!

Several tanning beds roll out.

Bullshit rains down on RAU.

MALUS steps in.

RAU (CONT'D)  
(Deceptively)  
THIS IS THE START OF A FLORAL  
FRIENDSHIP.

MALUS  
(Doubtfully)  
THIS IS THE START OF AN  
HERBAL FRIENDSHIP.

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

RAU turns the "Open" sign to  
"Closed." RAU lies in a tanning  
bed and closes the lid.

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

RAU opens the lid. Her belly is no  
more.

Direct sunlight lands on a  
distinct soiled tanning bed.

RAU (CONT'D)  
IS MY SUN!

PARSLEY leaps out of the lit  
tanning bed.

End of "MOVE THE PLOT FORWARD"

RAU (CONT'D)  
Turn around...

PARSLEY turns around.

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

PARSLEY  
Mom... Don't embarrass me in front of the  
sneezeworts!

(to the AUDIENCE)  
Don't ya worry, loyal customers. We'll open up  
the salon again on the first light of dawn.  
Now, try not to fight over our complimentary  
moisturizers!

PARSLEY tosses moisturizers into  
the AUDIENCE. He gets to work  
sterilizing the place.

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

**SCENE 3**

It is night. Dance music distantly  
echoes from FigLeaf next door.

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

PARSLEY perches by the window.

PARSLEY

Mom... Who is out at night?

RAU

A light with no sense of direction, son.

PARSLEY

But the sound sure likes going this way.

RAU

Sounds don't feed us.

PARSLEY

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

RAU

The light is artificial. They chose to not  
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.

PARSLEY

I know... But they—

RAU

He and his customers pay our rent. His bullshit  
is unnatural.

PARSLEY

Artificial is artful. I'm down with it.



RAU

*Artificial is awful.* You sound high.

PARSLEY

Nothing is blunt as you, mom.

RAU

There is no one I need to be more direct with  
than you, son.

2. "A NATURAL"

RAU

NATURE...

NURTURED FROM THE LIGHT OF OUR SUN.

IT'S NATURAL.

PARSLEY nears RAU.

RAU (CONT'D)

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.

PARSLEY eventually gets up, gets  
Tan Salontro ready for the  
morning, and gets ready for bed.  
He opens a tanning bed and plants  
a blanket in it.

RAU (CONT'D)

(Repeatedly)

A NATURAL.

(Eventually)

SON. YOU ARE A... NATURAL!

End of "A NATURAL"

RAU (CONT'D)

Your planter is made. Now go lie in it.

PARSLEY lies in bed.

PARSLEY

*I am a natural at lying.*

RAU tucks PARSLEY into bed.

RAU

You speak the truth, Parsley. *Ngu ngon*  
(*translation: sleep well*), my sun.

RAU exits.

**SCENE 4**

The morning light returns.

MALUS, fully clothed, steps into  
the sunrise this time.

MALUS

Cow, Parsley.

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

PARSLEY

*Chào*. Ya Crabapple sure always sweet, but ya  
can never sweeten your pronunciations?

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

No malice.

MALUS

Yes, Pyrus!

PARSLEY

Pyrus?

MALUS

My nibbling.

PARSLEY

Another Crabapple?

MALUS

Another one in town.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

And I wanna get out of this Dirty City.

PARSLEY

Doing our city dirty, huh?

(Genuinely)

You'll fit in real well.

MALUS

Tanning beds come in all shapes and sizes.  
There are all sorts of tanning beds. There will  
be one that matches your body.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

I don't want nobody to see me around you. Let's go back to FigLeaf!

PARSLEY

I always wanna go to FigLeaf.

MALUS

Now 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)

Would you mind if we go shopping after? You said we would visit Cantaloupe Outlets!

MALUS

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

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

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

MALUS

Take that back!

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

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

PARSLEY

Pyrus. How often are you burnt by Malus?

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

Never as much as our sun.

PYRUS walks in, with sunburns.

PYRUS (CONT'D)

I wanted a good tan...

MALUS

And you can get it here.

PYRUS

But I wanted to get it naturally.

MALUS

We're not the only ones susceptible to sunburns. The Cherrys and Maples are, too.

PARSLEY

Our tanning beds can be set at any level that is comfortable with you.

MALUS

See, Parsley. Always level-headed.

PYRUS looks down at PARSLEY.

PYRUS

I'm gonna level with ya Cilantros. You can spice up my skin, but it won't spice up my life.

(to MALUS)

*Don't look at me...* I'll meet you back at FigLeaf.

MALUS

You seedlings enjoy yourselves!

MALUS exits.

PYRUS

I ain't no seedling anymore!

(to PARSLEY)

Do your thing, little herb.

PARSLEY leads PYRUS around the tanning beds in Tan Salontro.

PARSLEY

Which thing?

PYRUS

No more small talk. Not even from a little herb such as yourself.

PARSLEY

I mean, which tanning bed? Low or high pressure?

PYRUS

No pressure at all.

PARSLEY

Why would you want that? Pressure is fun.

PYRUS

You can say that as a kid.

PARSLEY

I do many things as a kid.

PYRUS

You're not stuck watching plants change colors everyday?

PARSLEY

Well, there's mudwrestling and singing in the rain. Since school's out, there are different things to do. Where do you go to school?

PYRUS

Tetra High Center of Learning.

PARSLEY

I've heard about THC. A high school rich enough to not have a resource officer.

PYRUS

Yeah. But, it doesn't stop other flowers from being fashion polices.

PARSLEY

And I'm here to police only your membrane. And weed out the troubles in your brain.

PYRUS

They police that, too. They get under my membrane.

PARSLEY

Under?

PYRUS

They go beyond the outer body shaming. Their thorns reach my core. My nucleus. The one thing I am.

PARSLEY

Why don't you have two things?

PYRUS

Hold up. Back up.

PARSLEY

Why don't you have a backup nucleus...?

PYRUS

What are you implying?

PARSLEY

Be brave and um...

PYRUS

You be brave and spit it out.

### 3. "GROW A PAIR"

PARSLEY

YOU ARE NOT BEYOND REPAIR.  
YOU DO NOT NEED TO CARE.

YOUR EYES SHOULD STARE.  
 YOUR SMILE SHALL SCARE.  
 YOUR MATES CAN'T COMPARE.  
 YOU NEED TO GROW A PAIR.

PYRUS  
 I NEED TO SUNNILY PREPARE.  
 I LIVE IN A WORLD THAT'S NOT FAIR.  
 MY SKIN WILL JUST FLAIR.  
 MY NERVES WILL GO MEDIUM RARE.  
 MY "FRIENDS" WILL COMPARE.  
 I CANNOT GROW A PAIR.

PARSLEY stops at a tanning bed.

PARSLEY  
 HERE IS YOUR LAIR.  
 PRESSURE IS NOWHERE.  
 A BADGE OF HONOR IS WHAT YOU'LL WEAR.  
 IT WILL BE OKAY, I SWEAR.  
 THAT A GOOD MEMORY YOU'LL SHARE.  
 YOU'RE GONNA GROW A PAIR.

The tanning bed is ready for  
 PYRUS.

PYRUS gets in the tanning bed and  
 closes it.

PARSLEY (CONT'D)  
 (Repeatedly)  
 IT'S IN THERE.

PYRUS  
 (Repeatedly)  
 GROW A PAIR...

PYRUS leaps out.

PYRUS (CONT'D)  
 I AM NOT BEYOND REPAIR.  
 I DO NOT NEED TO CARE.  
 MY EYES SHOULD STARE.  
 MY SMILE SHALL SCARE.  
 MY MATES CAN'T COMPARE.  
 I HAVE TO GROW A PAIR.

PYRUS gets in another tanning bed  
 and closes it.

PARSLEY  
 DON'T WEAR IT OUT.

Pyrus tries all the tanning beds.  
They increasingly resemble a pear.  
They eventually head to PARSLEY's  
side.

PARSLEY (CONT'D)  
YOU'RE LIKE A PEAR.

PYRUS  
WE'D MAKE A GREAT PAIR.

End of "GROW A PAIR"

PYRUS pulls out a glass bottle.

PYRUS (CONT'D)  
Let's test our water.

PARSLEY distances from PYRUS.

PYRUS (CONT'D)  
It's only fifteen percent...

PARSLEY  
I can't drink that.

PYRUS  
Why not?

PARSLEY  
I'm not old enough.

PYRUS  
And so ain't I. But I'm fine. *I feel old  
enough.* And I'm like only a few years older  
than you. Besides, this is worth 72 bullshits.  
You're old enough to count that high?

PARSLEY  
You don't need to spew much. Look, it's on me.  
If you feel bad about it, I'll take a few bull.

PYRUS  
Nah, I need to save every bullshit I can, so I  
can finally cut off my carbon-dated parents.  
You've heard my experience with the flowers at  
school. Now imagine that but 72 times that at  
home.

Just a sip. You'll feel right at home.

PYRUS opens the bottle.

PARSLEY takes a sip. He spits some  
of it out.