

TURNOVER: A NEW LEAF

A Floral-Herbal Musical

By David Quang Pham

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turnovermusical.com

THANK YOU

[Queer Theatre Kalamazoo](#) 2022-2024

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DAVID QUANG PHAM (he★him)

David Quang Pham is a musical theater science communicator. He writes science musicals and consults on stories that explore STEM. His notable musicals personifying astrophysics, quantum physics, chemistry, and botany are respectively: [ELLIPSES](#), [TOUR](#), [•OH: BENZENE AND VINYL LIVE IN OHIO](#), and [TURNOVER: A NEW LEAF](#). [Queer Theatre Kalamazoo](#) is producing [TURNOVER](#) to close out their tenth season from May 9-19, 2024.

After completing an astrophysics and theatre education at Michigan State University, he studied playwriting as the 2020-2021 New Play and Dramaturgy Apprentice of [Working Title Playwrights](#), Atlanta. He was the 2021-2022 Literary Fellow of [Playwrights Foundation](#), San Francisco. Composer [Janelle Lawrence](#) mentors him, helping to forge his broad range of musical styles including pop, punk, tango, and quan họ. [Harriet Tubman Effect Institute](#) commissioned his music. His interviews with composers for The Kennedy Center and Public Theater's [BIPOC Critics Lab](#) are published in The Public and [TheaterMania](#). He also consults on stories that explore STEM. His recent dramaturgical credits are [Millennials are Killing Musicals](#) by [Nico Juber](#) (2022 29-hour reading, [Open Jar Studios](#)) and [Allies](#) by Michael McGoldrick (2022 [PPADC](#) Hamilton Arts Festival). His recent stage management credits are [BĀS](#) by [Janelle Lawrence](#) and [Sugar Vendil](#) (2023 [JACK](#)). He is a moderator at [LMDA](#); founding member of [CreateTheater](#) and the International Dramaturgy Lab; member of [ΣΠΣ](#), [ASCAP](#), and the [Dramatists Guild](#). He plays trombone in the [Queer Big Apple Corps](#) Marching Band. His moonbase is in Washington Heights. His earth is in Wyoming, Michigan. Be up to lightspeed at [davidquang.com](#) [@sciencetheatre](#)

PLOT SUMMARY

TURNOVER: A NEW LEAF is a floral-herbal musical about how two business-owning families, who are rooted in prejudice, overturn their views when their queer kids start rooting for each other.

In Dirty City, a Cilantro arrives. Rau Răm is an Asian immigrant and expectant mother hoping to start a salon business. When no one can spare a plot of land, Malus Crabapple welcomes her with a neighboring open plot. Rau is a bit hesitant due to Malus's gay nightclub, FigLeaf. But FigLeaf patrons have a liking for Rau's body oil that spices up their skins. Rau happily takes their money yet cannot support their "lifestyles." But the major turnover would be Rau's son: Parsley ("[Move the Plot Forward](#)").

This teen operates Salontro's day-to-day business and spends the nights with his mom ("[A Natural](#)"). As summer starts, Malus introduces Parsley to their teenage nibbling Pyrus ("[Amount to Anything](#)"). Parsley helps Pyrus with issues they have with the other flowers ("[Grow a Pair](#)"). Pyrus invites him to hang out and pays him with a beverage called Miracle ("[Test the Water](#)").

Parsley asks Rau to go with Pyrus to the movies. She reluctantly lets him go. At Cantaloupe Outlets, Parsley and Pyrus pose in a photo booth ("[Photosynthesis](#)"). Pyrus then takes him clothes shopping. He discovers a liking for different floral styles, especially crop tops ("[Crop Top](#)"). Nearby, Rau picks a fight with Malus over finances. They soon bump into Parsley and Pyrus. Rau's world turns upside down when she sees Parsley's crop top. Malus explains Rau's prejudice to Pyrus ("[Soiled](#)").

Parsley is grounded ("[Fertile](#)"). Soon, Pyrus helps Parsley sneak out. With their guest DJ Cauliflower, they have the time of their lives ("[Dirt on You](#)"). However, herbs are not accustomed to the nightlife and this one is especially underaged. Parsley blackouts and ends up in the hospital, getting his stoma pumped.

Malus revisits FigLeaf's founding. FigLeaf closes down due to underage drinking laws violations ("[Fig Leaf](#)"). Rau and Malus introspects. Rau feels that Malus's "lifestyle" is as natural as the greens around, whereas Malus sees Rau less as invasive and more invested in the community as Rau agrees to help Pyrus ("[Green Card](#)"). Pyrus visits Parsley to part ways before they return to school. Rau offers Pyrus a job if they are ever around again. After all, it is a family business ("[Turnover](#)").

TURNOVER plants coming-of-age themes of family dynamics, immigrant assimilation, performative activism, body image, and the duality between nature versus nurture.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

PARSLEY RĂM, preteen, Rau's son

RAU RĂM, adult, Parsley's mother and the owner of Salontro

PYRUS CRABAPPLE, older teen, Malus's nibbling

MALUS CRABAPPLE, adult, Pyrus's uncle and the owner of FigLeaf

Orchestra

DJ CAULIFLOWER, the alias for the production's music director, who briefly interacts with the performers

✿ Androgyny Botany: Each character resembles the androgynous nature, with open-ended vocal requirements

✿ People of the Global Majority most represent the experiences of these flowers and herbs; cast accordingly

MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. "Move the Plot Forward" Malus, Rau
2. "A Natural" Rau
3. "Amount to Anything" Pyrus
4. "Grow a Pair" Pyrus, Parsley
5. "Test the Water" Parsley
6. "Photosynthesis" Parsley, Pyrus
7. "Crop Top" Pyrus, Parsley
8. "Soiled (The Family Name)" Rau, Malus, Parsley
9. "Fertile" Parsley, Pyrus
10. "Dirt on You" DJ Cauliflower, Pyrus, Parsley
11. "Fig Leaf" Malus
12. "Green Card" Rau, Malus
13. "Turnover (A New Leaf)" Parsley, Rau, Pyrus, Malus

Notes for Audience Engagement

Before the doors open, the production team passes out fresh leaves and pens to audience members. The team would choose one of these prompts or questions below for each audience member to briefly answer on their leaf:

- ✿ Say something fabulous about one of your plants.
- ✿ Write a poem about one of your plants. The queerer it is, the merrier.
- ✿ What questions would you have for one of your plants?

The production team collects the fresh leaves. Then, they pass around rotten leaves. The team would choose one of these prompts or questions below for each audience member to briefly answer on their rotten leaf:

- ✿ Say something rotten about one of your plants.
- ✿ Write an essay about one of your plants. The queerer it is, the more thoughtful.
- ✿ What makes your plant stand out unlike the others?

The production team collects all the leaves. The team would curate the answers best for Rau Răm to read. She will read the leaves. Hence, like a plant, she reads the room. She is to read the fresh leaves in Scene 1 and the rotten leaves in Scene 11.

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

Hell! Any Fig is a malice!

MALUS

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

RAU

Figment of my imagination.

MALUS

Does ya imagination include a better life for ya-self here?

RAU

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

MALUS

Ya immigrants got wild dreams. *But imaginations*. Ya cannot imagine people like me living by ya family, let alone amongst yours, wherever ya come from.

RAU

You don't know where I come from.

MALUS

Like a leaf, my kind of people are open to flying all over the world. Ya accent ain't like a brussels sprout.

RAU

Klootzak (Dutch: An Insult).

MALUS

Watch ya Dutch.

RAU

Watch what you say. I do not have an accent!

MALUS

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

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 ya days if ya 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.

(MORE)

RAU (CONT'D)

You are not natural. I cannot imagine a life without light.

MALUS

Ya keep this up and ya salon stays an imagination.

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? 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 (Vietnamese: "Shut up").

MALUS

(Puzzledly)

MAKE YA BED.

A tanning bed rolls out.

RAU

SHUT UP.

MALUS

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

NOW YA CHOOSE:

MOVE THE PLOT FORWARD...

RAU

OR...?


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

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RAU reluctantly plants herself next to MALUS.

WHOLE . . . RAU

RAU & MALUS
MOVE THE PLOT FORWARD...

FORWARD! RAU MALUS YOU'RE WHOLE!

SCENE 2

SALONTRO

The plot grows thick. The tanning salon magically 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 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
(Sarcastically)
*Shut up. I cannot take more of your deep
gratitude, foreigner.*

RAU
We bleed the same eukaryotic cells...

MALUS
Indeed, then treat me like I do.

RAU
Blood does not mean you got poop on you!

MALUS
You got a dirty mind that needs soaping.

RAU

We Cilantros have good tastes! I meant to say:
do you have bullshit on you?

MALUS

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

RAU

That'd be ten bullshits, please...

MALUS

That's a start of a plot.

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

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.
They inspect themselves.

RAU (CONT'D)

TURN AROUND.

NICE TAN.

MALUS

NOT A FAN.

RAU

NOTHING FANCY.

MALUS

YA WILL SEE THAT 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."

Crickets chirp.

MALUS (CONT'D)

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

MALUS exits.

RAU
THIS PLACE PLOTS AND LEAVES ERROR...
I CAN'T EARN MY GREEN CARD
IF I DO NOT STAY ON MY GUARD.
MY LEAVES HAVE COME SO FAR.
YOU CAN'T MAKE ME LEAVE!
I DO NOT HAVE THE HEART TO BELIEVE...
I KNOW MY ROOTS, BUT...
STEM!
IT DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO PLOT FOR-
I MISS YOU, BROTHER.

RAU hugs the potted herb. She sits on the tanning bed. She pulls out a bottle of body oil and rubs her belly with it. It gleams with her tan.

Audience Engagement: The crew blows in fresh leaves that AUDIENCE MEMBERS wrote on.

RAU reads the fresh leaves aloud.

RAU (CONT'D)
The best maternity gifts a mother could receive are the turning leaves.

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 is no fertilizer! This oil is not found here in 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.

RAU (CONT'D)

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!

Business is booming. Several tanning beds roll out. Bullshit rains down on RAU.

MALUS steps in. They do not seem too happy about RAU's success.

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.

A seedlike object transfers from RAU's tanning bed to another.

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.

PARSLEY leaps out of the lit tanning bed.

RAU (CONT'D)

IS MY SUN!

MOVE THE PLOT FORWARD!

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

Me (Vietnamese: "Mom")... Don't embarrass me in front of the sneezeworts!

(to the AUDIENCE)

Don't you 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.

RAU (CONT'D)

But your trichomes is getting unnaturally long.

PARSLEY sits on a tanning bed.

RAU takes out a pair of scissors.

RAU (CONT'D)

(Trimming away and repeating)

I love you... I love you not...

PARSLEY

I love you... I love you more...

RAU

What numbers of trims is needed for me to love you?

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

We've got thirty seconds left. What is the square root of a boxwood tree?

PARSLEY

I'm learning square roots when I start middle school in the fall.

RAU has PARSLEY facing a mirror.

RAU

Is this cut 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

Speaking of Apples, how was your last class before the ceremony?

PARSLEY

Fruitful! Ms. Red's partner visited.

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 last 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 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 is like the legendary tale of the bird and the bee.

RAU

Kids fall for so many rumors these days. Plus, that's does not add up. Birds and bees don't go together. It's bird plus bird. Bees and bees.

PARSLEY senses the irony.

Dance music distantly echoes from FigLeaf next door.

PARSLEY

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 perches by the window.

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.

PARSLEY

I know... But they—

RAU

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 is still dependent 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. A son in
their lives.

RAU (CONT'D)

The sun is what grooms all things nature.

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)

(Repeatedly)

A NATURAL.

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?

PARSLEY

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

RAU

The moon sounds unnatural... Anywho like you, 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

Ngu ngon (Vietnamese: sleep well), my son.

RAU exits.

SCENE 4

The morning light returns.

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

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

MALUS

Cow, Parsley.

PARSLEY

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

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

No malice.

MALUS

Yes, Pyrus!

PARSLEY

Pyrus?

MALUS

My nibbling.

PARSLEY

Another Crabapple?

MALUS (CONT'D)

Another pear 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 will be one that matches your body.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

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

PARSLEY

I always wanna visit FigLeaf.

MALUS

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

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

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

MALUS

Ya 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 that back!

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

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

MALUS

You're digging a deeper hole for ya-self.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

Ain't that 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)

Shadeeee. Ya all add to my sunburns.

3. "AMOUNT TO ANYTHING"

PYRUS walks in, with sunburns.
Their entrance intersects a rocker
and an acned teenager's presence.

PYRUS
MOUNTAINS OUTTA MOLE HILLS.
NO REST. DISTRESS. A MESS. CARELESS.

PYRUS knocks over the potted herb.

PYRUS (CONT'D)
I DELIVERED BRUISES AND I GOT INTO TROUBLE AT SCHOOL.
SO, I'LL SPEND THIS SEASON WITH MY ONE WEIRD 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!

SUNBURNS. PIMPLES. ACNE. BIG DEAL.

I AIN'T ALWAYS THIN-SKINNED, BUT MY THICK SKIN HAS NOT LOOKED
REAL COOL.
SO, I'LL WASTE MY SUMMER NEXT TO A CILANTRO.
I CAN'T GIVE A MORSAL...

ALL BECAUSE IN LIFE,
I CARE NOT TO AMOUNT TO ANYTHING.
I CARE NOT TO AMOUNT TO ANYTHING.
I CARE NOT TO AMOUNT TO ANYTHING.
I DON'T CARE!

ANYTHING!

End of "AMOUNT TO ANYTHING"

PYRUS (CONT'D)
I just wanted a good tan...

MALUS
And ya can get it here.

PYRUS
But I wanted it naturally.

MALUS
We're not the only families 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

I'm gonna level with ya Cilantros: ya can spice up my skin, but it ain't ever spice up my life.

(to MALUS)

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

MALUS

Ya seedlings enjoy yourselves!

MALUS exits.

PYRUS

I ain't no seedling anymore, Malus! Do your thing, little herb.

PARSLEY leads PYRUS around the tanning beds in Salontro.

PARSLEY

High pressure tanning beds?

PYRUS

I ain't letting no middle schooler pressure me.

PARSLEY

No pressure at all, it is then. Where do you go to school?

PYRUS

Tetra High Center of Learning.

PARSLEY

THC, in the U P? The school's rich enough to not have a resource officer.

PYRUS

Eat poop, *inferior lower peninsula*... Yeah, it ain't stop other flowers from being fashion polices.

PARSLEY

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

PYRUS

They police me. They get under my membrane.

PARSLEY

What did they do?

PYRUS

They reacted.

PARSLEY

To...?

PYRUS

Me shutting down the school's power grid... So they ain't look at me no more.

PARSLEY

My classmates would think you're loads of fun!

PYRUS

What do middle schoolers even do for fun?

PARSLEY

Mudwrestling and singing in the rain!

PYRUS

I'm not sure what to make of it. Fun or not, in the end, I'm the one who shuts the party down.

PARSLEY

A rose and thorn for you.

PYRUS

Don't get me started on the roses. They are mean and the brighter fashion police.

PARSLEY

How?

PYRUS

They go beyond outer body shaming. Their thorns reach my core. My nucleus.

PARSLEY

Your nucleus needs to toughen up.

PYRUS

My nucleus needs to grow thorns, like them.

PARSLEY

You pears need to stop comparing yourself to others.

PYRUS

Easy for you to say. You haven't gone through puberty yet, little herb.

PARSLEY

You'll grow out of anything.

PYRUS

Wow, rich coming from a middle school poop head.

4. "GROW A PAIR"

PYRUS
YOU NEED TO GROW UP.

PARSLEY
TWO CAN PLAY AT THAT GAME!

PYRUS
YOU AIN'T SHIT.

PARSLEY
I AM THE SHIT.

PYRUS
YOU ARE

PARSLEY & PYRUS
A NUMBER TWO.

PYRUS
GROW UP, HERB.

PARSLEY
GROW UP, PEAR!

PYRUS
I NEED TO GROW ONE?

PARSLEY
YOU GOT SKIN IN THEIR GAMES.

PYRUS
I AIN'T THICK.

PARSLEY
HIGH SCHOOL AIN'T SHIT.

PYRUS
I NEED

PARSLEY & PYRUS
TO FACE THE HEAT.

PYRUS
STOP COMPARING...

PARSLEY
GROW A PAIR.

PYRUS chooses a tanning bed, gets
in it, and closes it. After it
does its magic, they get out.

PYRUS
HERB... THIS AIN'T NATURAL.

PARSLEY
DUDE... I FEEL POWERFUL.

PARSLEY (CONT'D)
YOU PEARS.

PYRUS
I AM STILL GROWING.

PARSLEY
WE *BOTH* NEED TO GROW UP.

CILANTROS. PYRUS

PARSLEY
AND CRABAPPLES.

PARSLEY & PYRUS
WE DO MAKE A GREAT

TEAM.	PARSLEY	SMOOTHIE.	PYRUS
-------	---------	-----------	-------

NOT SO SMOOTH... PYRUS (CONT'D)

PARSLEY
LET'S GET SOME FOOD!

PARSLEY shares fertilizer
popsicles with PYRUS.

PARSLEY (CONT'D)
HERE'S TO GROWING UP!

PYRUS
FERTILIZER NEVER...?

PARSLEY
GETS TOO OLD!

PYRUS
DEFINITELY!

PARSLEY
YOU KNOW WHAT IS COOL IS THAT

PARSLEY & PYRUS
WE'D MAKE A GREAT PAIR.

End of "GROW A PAIR"

PYRUS pulls out a glass bottle.

PYRUS

Let's test our water.
(Scaring PARSLEY)
It's only fifteen percent...

PARSLEY

I can't drink that.

PYRUS

Why not?

PARSLEY

I'm not old enough.

PYRUS

I ain't either. 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 heard my life 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.

PARSLEY

It's a miracle I got any taste of osmosis.

PYRUS

That's the name of the liqueur: Miracle! Well, I'll let ya and one of ya new friends be.

PARSLEY

Friends?

PYRUS

Miracle and I, silly herb! And now that we're friends, friends go shoppin' together!

PARSLEY

Can Miracle come along?

PYRUS

Miracle needs to stay a no-show or we'll be shown the door by the po-po. Don't start poop!

PARSLEY

Wash your mouth out with soap!

PYRUS

Wash yours with Miracle! I'm rooting for ya, Parsley.

PYRUS takes the bottle. They exit.

5. "TEST THE WATER"

PARSLEY enters a newfound state that is akin to being introduced to alcohol for the first time. The lake forms. The tides rise. PARSLEY wobbles. They stay put and yet also journey to far-off lands. They break in their sea legs. They slowly pass out.

PARSLEY

(Repeatedly)

Glucose is clear...

End of "TEST THE WATER"

SCENE 5

RAU enters with a box of distinct body oil. She towers over PARSLEY. She helps PARSLEY up.

RAU

Have you got any pride, son?! Get up, it's "pride" month! This evening is our pride special!

PARSLEY

(Dizzily)

Did you get the goods, mom?

RAU

Good grief, son.

PARSLEY

(Dishonestly)

I may have caught a fungal infection.

RAU

I dabbed anti-fungi oil on you everyday... Now's not the day to sell yourself short. Speaking of infection...

RAU puts on rainbow gear. She stops PARSLEY from wearing them.

There is an influx of multicolor lights, representing patrons.

PARSLEY

Fun guys all around! Happy Pride!

RAU and PARSLEY throws out body oil left and right.

Bullshit is thrown all about.

RAU

Happy Pride! Get thirty-one percent off your order when you wear Salontro merch at checkout! Buy our rainbow gear! Parsley... Upsell these by sixty-nine percent. Sell sell sell!

PARSLEY places stickers on the body oils.

PARSLEY

Made from bees' knees, these body oil will do more for you this Pride Month. At just several bullshits more than our plain oils, your knees will be buzzing in no time.

(Leveling with a lower light)

Kids and short knees like me get a discount!

RAU

You're indoctrinating the kids?!

The multicolor lights stop moving.

RAU (CONT'D)

Don't count your blessings, Parsley... Um... I want kids to know that they are to be respected as adults. Discounts are handouts.

And we're not like other businessowners who refuse to serve you and take your bullshit. Although, it is allowed under national law. Here at Salontro, we will always support your unnatural lifestyles.

The lights flicker in disapproval.

PARSLEY

You were born this way!

The multicolor lights move about.

RAU

That phrase seems to always work on them. Happy Pride! Love your fit. Happy Pride! You're so floral today. Happy Pride! Tis the season for a gay apparel. Happy Pride! Thank you for supporting small business owners. Happy Pride! Immigrant family-owned business. Happy Pride! That looks so natural on you!

Once the body oil runs out and the light fades, PARSLEY turns the "Open" sign to "Closed."

RAU (CONT'D)

These Figs and their bullshit are unnatural!
Happy Pride... Hahahaha!

RAU counts bullshit before she trashes her rainbow gear.

PARSLEY

Rest assured, money is the most unnatural thing about this world...

RAU

I do not pocket it all! I donate bullshits to meaningful organizations, like Moms for Canopy.

PARSLEY

Those poop heads got nothing better to do than to bully my classmates and steal our books...

RAU

Where did you learn to say those foul words?!

PARSLEY

You need to lower the volume whenever you watch your boring tv show at night.

RAU

Don't you say that about *Lotus*. By the way, why were you sleeping on the job? I'm going to garnish your wages.

PARSLEY

You're gonna make my allowance fabulous?

RAU

No... Though, *your joke is a garnish in itself.*

RAU notices the knocked over potted herb.

RAU (CONT'D)

Is this some kind of joke?! No no no... Why is my brother knocked over?

PARSLEY

That is not a person...

RAU

Yes, he was!

PARSLEY

That is a model.

RAU

Yes, he was a modelled plant, until he hung out with Figs.

PARSLEY

My uncle?

RAU

He would have laid off the booze and his tools.

PARSLEY

Booze?

RAU

His addiction to Figs led to the booze which laid him off from work and society.

RAU (CONT'D)

The light of our lives that went dark too soon.

PARSLEY

Did my grandparents do anything to stop it?

RAU

They did their darrest to protect him from the unnatural. He was a person... until he became a Fig.

PARSLEY

There's nothing your parents can do.

RAU

But I can. I'll do better than they ever could.

PARSLEY

A better parent would let me get some rest.

RAU

Alright. You've been laid off.

PARSLEY

I need a vacation.

RAU

Where would you like to go?

PARSLEY

Cantaloupe Outlets.

RAU

An American shopping center? Well, we can stop by grabbing some ingredients at their intimate Vietnamese supermarket.

PARSLEY

You like the butcher?

RAU

Someone's got to split water into oxygen. Besides, he and I are just old friends.

PARSLEY

I made a new friend...

RAU

Is it a classmate from Ivy League Junior High? Son, you're finally making friends! Name?

PARSLEY

Pyrus.

RAU

A relative of Malus...?

PARSLEY

You actually listen to Malus's spiels?

RAU

Yes. Unnatural pears are most appealing. How did you two meet? Isn't Pyrus *not from here*?

PARSLEY

They are in town. One of the first things Malus introduced them to was our salon.

RAU

Did *they* try out a tanning bed? Ooh, which one?

PARSLEY

All of them.

RAU

Wow. In town for a day and already our number one customer.

PARSLEY

Yes. And I wanna get to know our number one customer at the business of all businesses: Cantaloupe Outlets.

RAU

What are you two going to be doing there?

PARSLEY

We're gonna go see *Popcorn*.

RAU

Oh no. That movie is for adults. And besides, I don't need you to have nightmares about what heat does to corn. It's not a pretty sight...

PARSLEY

There's no kernel of truth in what you said.

RAU hands bullshit to PARSLEY.

RAU

Here's twenty bullshit for *Veggie Tales*.

PARSLEY

Shucks. You are so corny-

RAU

Their fanbase may be annoying to tolerate. That documentary is like a religion to them. But, they know what's natural and not.

PARSLEY

God, no they don't-

RAU

Godspeed with Pyrus. Now, go get yourself ready as a plum.

PARSLEY gets in a tanning bed and closes it. The other tanning beds disappears.

SCENE 6

CANTALOUPE OUTLETS

A tanning bed tilts up and transforms into a photo booth. Clothing racks scatter about.

PARSLEY sits inside a photo booth.

PYRUS enters.

6. "PHOTOSYNTHESIS"

PARSLEY

PHOTO?!

PYRUS

(Repeating)

TAKE A BREATHER.

PYRUS sits alongside PARSLEY.

PARSLEY & PYRUS
(Harmonically repeating)

PHOTOSYNTHESIS!

PYRUS
 $6\text{CO}_2 + 6\text{H}_2\text{O} \rightarrow \text{C}_6\text{H}_{12}\text{O}_6 + 6\text{O}_2$
FOCUS.

PARSLEY
FOE?

PYRUS
SIX CARBON DIOXIDE MOLECULES PLUS SIX DIHYDROGEN MONOXIDE
MOLECULES EQUALS...?

PARSLEY
SUGAR!

PYRUS
AND SIX OXYGEN MOLECULES!

PARSLEY & PYRUS
 $6\text{CO}_2 + 6\text{H}_2\text{O} \rightarrow \text{C}_6\text{H}_{12}\text{O}_6 + 6\text{O}_2$
(Harmonically repeating)
PHOTOSYNTHESIS!
A CHEMICAL REACTION!

	PARSLEY		PYRUS
GLUCOSE.		CARBON	
OXYGEN.		DIOXIDE.	
SUGAR!		WATER.	
OSMOSIS!		GROSS SHIT!	

PARSLEY & PYRUS
DIRECT SUNLIGHT!

The photo booth flashes. It prints
out a potted cilantro and pear.

End of "PHOTOSYNTHESIS"

PARSLEY and PYRUS exit the photo
booth. They hold film merch.

PYRUS
We needed that breather. Good thing it was
rated PG-12, little herb.

PARSLEY & PYRUS
Rotten Tomatoes is the all-time greatest movie!

PYRUS

It deserves to win the Raspberries.

PARSLEY

I'd certify that it was *freshhhh*.

PYRUS

Well, I'd mark it down for the scene where despite the kids' fruits of labor they ended up diced tomatoes.

PARSLEY

Who knew tomatoes can be such squares *like you*?

PYRUS bumps into a clothing rack.
They fixate on the clothing aisle.

PARSLEY appears bewildered. He walks about until a floral crop top catches his eyes. He holds the crop top like a talisman.

PARSLEY (CONT'D)

Huh?

PYRUS

Ya might be the square, Parsley.

PARSLEY

I'm no square...

PYRUS

Just checking. Boobs come in all shapes and sizes. Go ahead. Milk this moment, little herb.

PARSLEY

Aren't these for...?

PYRUS

They're not just for flowers like me. But these would be perfect for our summer solstice rave!

PARSLEY

What's a rave?

PYRUS

It's a party where tomatoes are not invited, given their bad views.

PARSLEY

I wanna go! But Malus is gonna be there...

PYRUS

Malus is going on their annual camping trip during the summer solstices. Trying to get their tan on.

PARSLEY

Who's in charge?

PYRUS

Mari, our security guard.

PARSLEY

Oh Juana, haha. They always sleep on the job.

PYRUS

They know better than anyone else how to get through the day.

PARSLEY

Well summer solstice is my all nighter!

PYRUS

I still don't think ya can, little herb.

PARSLEY

You're not so big either.

PYRUS

Well, the music is gonna be for little big flowers like me. We have a famous guest DJing.

PARSLEY

What's their name?

PYRUS

It's a secret. But the DJ certainly loves shouting their name at the top of their stomata to start a song. Such a weird vegetable.

PARSLEY

Pyrussss. Is this half-shirt the key to being allowed in?!

PYRUS

Only if ya can top mine!

7. "CROP TOP"

PYRUS wears a crop top.

PYRUS

(Repeating)

NOW, IT'S YA TURN.

PICK A PATTERN.

PARSLEY soon picks a t-shirt.

PYRUS snatches the shirt from PARSLEY. They toss the shirt away.

PYRUS (CONT'D)

NO NO. RETURN!

THE CREAM OF THE CROP THAT IS FASHION.
NO SHIRT CAN EVER TOP THIS!

PARSLEY

A CROP TOP...?

PYRUS tries on various crop tops.

PYRUS

WHERE TO FIND ONE THAT FITS?
WEAR ONE THAT SUITS YA PERSONALITY.

PYRUS's belly flops out.

PARSLEY

THERE GOES YOUR BELLY.

PYRUS puts a crop top on PARSLEY.

PYRUS

YA CANNOT BE STOPPED WHEN YA PUT YA-SELF IN THIS CROP TOP!

PYRUS puts on a crop top. They nab
another crop top.

PARSLEY

(Adapting)

IT FEELS SO WARM YET SO COOL...

PYRUS

IT CUTS TO YA HEART'S BOTTOM.
IT HAS YA FEELING ON TOP!

PARSLEY dances a crop circle. They
are rocking the crop top.

PYRUS (CONT'D)

YA CANNOT BE STOPPED WHEN YOU'RE DANCING IN ROCKING CROP
TOPS!

PARSLEY snatches the crop top from
PYRUS's hand.

PARSLEY

I TOP YOURS!

PYRUS

YA BOTTOM FEEDER!

PARSLEY

I'M ON TOP!

PYRUS

I'LL CROP YOU!

PYRUS chases PARSLEY around,
displaying an allegory of what it
means to crop tops off in life.

PARSLEY spreads moisturizer on one
end of the crop top.

PYRUS nabs the moisturized end of
the crop top and does a tug-of-war
until PYRUS slips their grasp and
it is securely in PARSLEY's hand.

PYRUS (CONT'D)

YOU'RE THE TOP OF THE CROP TO TOP IT ALL OFF!

PARSLEY

(Blushingly)

NO ONE PULLS THEM OFF LIKE ME...

PARSLEY & PYRUS

CROP TOPS!

End of "CROP TOP"

SCENE 7

MALUS marches in from the other
side of Cantaloupe Outlet.

RAU tails MALUS. She is holding a
popcorn bucket, filled with water.

RAU

You cropped my profits!

MALUS

It ain't more than 72 bullshits. Apply for some
seed funding!

RAU

Surveys find local-owned small businesses are
twenty percent more likely to be approved for
seed funding over immigrant-owned businesses.

MALUS

Ya pick data like a Cherry.

RAU

I am not cheery about the maintenance cost of
all my tanning beds!

MALUS

Ya treating this like the disaster movie, *Soil and Green*. I'm gonna maintain our enjoyment of *Popcorn*.

RAU

Please, I invited you to see if my son snuck in there.

MALUS

Ya took me to the movies to spy on your son and talk business?

RAU

Someone's got to pop the thought in your aldehyde.

MALUS

I ain't done nothing!

RAU

You've done nothing... for anyone!

MALUS

Then explain how you've been here this long.

RAU notices the potted cilantro
and pear by the photo booth.

PARSLEY

Nothing can top this moment. So, I shouldn't really go to that rave...

PYRUS

But we're gonna give ya anything ya want there. Fine... Perhaps, next year.

MALUS

Love that reminder that I've done everything?

RAU & MALUS

We've been neighbors for years in...

RAU

Business.

MALUS

Home.

RAU & MALUS

(Disingenuously)

I trust you.

RAU

(re: the potted cilantro and pear)

Looked like my brother...

MALUS

Don't bring up that tragic story again. Things should have stayed homogenous.

RAU

This is new. Is this Pyrus...?

MALUS

Aww... A photosynthesis of Pyrus and Parsley.

RAU

Parsley said there was a seedling who tried out all our tanning beds. *It was one your species.*

MALUS

Horseshit!

RAU

They tanned and dashed.

RAU (CONT'D)

(Hoarsely)

How could you frame my son?

MALUS

Picture this: they're about a teenager now, growing into adulthood, and their top priority is bullshit. Like all teenagers!

RAU notices PARSLEY and PYRUS. She heads towards them.

RAU

Im lang. I'm gonna crop your top off!

PARSLEY

Me (Vietnamese: "Mom")?!

RAU

The plants around this outlet are watching a Cilantro make a scene. Pull it off now!

MALUS

You're the Cilantro always making a scene, Rau.

(Complimentary)

You're pulling off that crop top, Parsley.

PYRUS

This little herb is on top of the world. His plot is going places.

RAU

(to PYRUS)

Im lang, *đồ vô học (Vietnamese: uneducated person)!*

MALUS

Parsley, what ya mom say? I ain't heard this insult before.

PYRUS nods to PARSLEY.

PARSLEY

Me... (Vietnamese: "Mom") You're the ignorant one. Con đĩ (Vietnamese: "Bitch")!

MALUS

(to RAU)

Not only did ya moisturize ya skin, but ya mouth too. Cause ya mouth be foaming!

PYRUS

(Laughing)

Whatever ya said. I can't believe ya said it. Ya son of a bitch...

RAU

(Heartbroken)

Thang chó đê (Vietnamese: "Son of a bitch")...
End this scenery at once.

RAU drags away PARSLEY.

PYRUS

I'm rooting for ya, Parsley!

8. "SOILED (THE FAMILY NAME)"

RAU

ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR ALDEHYDE?
WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE THE PUBLIC'S EYE?
WILL YOU LEARN YOU'RE NEVER RIGHT?
DON'T YOU EVER EVER LIE!

PARSLEY

CAN I LIVE WITHOUT HAVING TO HIDE?
MAY I MAKE A BED WHERE I DECIDE?
DO I HAVE ANY SORT OF RIGHTS?
TIL THEN, I WILL ALWAYS LIE!

RAU

(Mad as a Vietnamese mom)

I won't let you lie six inches under like your uncle!

YOU ARE GROUNDED FOR LIFE!

TOY WITH ME
AND I WILL FEED YOU TO PESTS.
BURY THE FAMILY AND OUR NAME
AND YOU WILL MEET OUR ANCESTORS
IN DEATH!

RAU (CONT'D)

SOIL OUR NAME
AND I WILL RAIN HELLFIRE!
YOU HAVE NO ONE ELSE TO BLAME.

ARE YOU LISTENING, PARSLEY RĂM?
I'M SO TIRED...

MALUS hugs PYRUS.

MALUS

I AM SO PROUD!

NO RESPECT.
SHE HAS NONE AS SHE IS FAKE.
SHE'S THE ONE WHO SOILED HER NAME,
MAKING EVERY IMMIGRANTS LOOK LIKE SNAKES!

PARSLEY

How did "Parsley" slither into your mind?

If you did not want me to conform to the
ecosystem, why did you name me something
American like "Parsley?!"

Me, *soil the family name*... Who was it that
didn't give me a foreign name like you, Rau?!

RAU

Anh thanh niên (Vietnamese: "Young man")...

PARSLEY

Young man... Thank you for the validation, mom.
Young men cannot stay grounded! I am no longer
a seedling.

RAU

YOU ARE A CRIME.
DON'T MAKE ME CRY.

PARSLEY (CONT'D)

I'M AT MY PRIME.
I FEEL LIKE DY-

RAU (CONT'D)

(Repeating)
YOU SOILED THE FAMILY'S...

MALUS

(Repeating)
IN THE NAME OF...

PARSLEY

(to RAU)
IN THE NAME OF FAMILY, I GAVE
YOUR LIFE SOIL!

MALUS (CONT'D)

(to PYRUS)
IN THE NAME OF FAMILY, YOU
GAVE OUR LIVES SOIL!

MALUS purchases the crop top and
hands it to PYRUS. They exit.

RAU

WE'RE SOILED INSIDE...

PARSLEY hides in the photo booth.

The photobooth bed tilts back and transforms into a tanning bed. The outlet transforms into Salontro.

RAU walks by PYRUS.

PYRUS

Quit invading his personal space, ya invasive species-

RAU

You've got some xylems calling me that. Who told you to respect me this way?

PYRUS

Malus says ya are who ya are.

RAU and PYRUS exit.

End of "SOILED (THE FAMILY NAME)"

SCENE 8

SALONTRO

9. "FERTILE"

It is night. A tanning bed holds a soiled blanket.

PARSLEY pops out from underneath the blanket.

PARSLEY

THE WORLD REVOLVES AROUND MORE THAN YOUR SON.
WHY CAN'T YOU SEE THAT?
AN HERB WHO NEEDS THEIR PLANT FRIENDS.
PLANET, TOPPED OFF WITH CROPS AND VEGETABLES.
YOU DON'T SEE MY PRODUCE-
IT IS TRULY FUTILE.

IN THIS "SOILED" FAMILY,
I AM MEANT TO GET DIRTY, REAL DIRTY.
HOW ELSE WILL I EVER BEAR FRUIT?
I AM FERTILE.
VOLATILE!

FIGLEAF WOULD NEVER DEFER MY SMILE.
A CLEAR COMMUNITY WHO WOULD ACCEPT ME AND ALL...
THE WHILE MOM KILLS ME TO PUT IT MILDLY.
THIS WILL BE MY TRIAL.
I'M WILDER THAN A CHILD.

AM I TO SNEAK OUT?
MY MAMA...
THIS WILL NOT HELP ME COME CLEAN, WITHOUT MEANS.
MY DROP WILL NOT BE SO FRUITFUL.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)
IT AIN'T FUTILE!

PARSLEY looks out the window.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE) (CONT'D) PARSLEY
LET'S GET WILD! RECONCILE!

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE) (CONT'D)
YOU BELONG IN AN OPEN FIELD.

PARSLEY
I LONG FOR WHAT'S QUEER ANYWHERE SO SURREAL.

PYRUS tosses the crop top to
PARSLEY.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)
WEAR THIS BEFORE IT GOES OUT OF STYLE.
YOU HAVE MADE ME REALIZE:
IN LIFE, YOU CAN BE FERVENT.

PARSLEY trashes his nightlight.

PARSLEY
I AM FERTILE!

PARSLEY climbs out of the window.

End of "FERTILE"

SCENE 9

FIGLEAF

PARSLEY lands by PYRUS on the
dirt.

DJ CAULIFLOWER
We got a Cilantro in the yard!

PARSLEY
And you are?

DJ CAULIFLOWER
A Cauliflower. The Cauliflower. DJ...

DJ CAULIFLOWER holds a microphone
towards the AUDIENCE.

PARSLEY
(Whispering)
Holy sneezeworts. It's DJ Cauliflower...

DJ CAULIFLOWER

What are you all, houseplants?! You know who I am, Dirty City! We gotta act like weeds all up in this cement. Me, I'm a godsend...

10. "DIRT ON YOU"

DJ CAULIFLOWER

DJ CAULIFLOWERRRRR!

PYRUS

I love this song!

PARSLEY

Which one? DJ Cauliflower always start their song like that-

PYRUS

Don't make me squash you into pesto, Cilantro.

PYRUS & DJ CAULIFLOWER

DO NOT FUCK AROUND
AS MY ROOT'S IN THE UNDERGROUND.

PARSLEY

FIGLEAF'S THE UNDERGROUND?

PYRUS & DJ CAULIFLOWER

JUST STICK AROUND
WE'LL HAVE YOUR STEMS MAKING SOUNDS.

PARSLEY

(Repeatedly beatboxing)

EH. OPE. EH. OPE. EH. OPE. EH. OPE.

PYRUS & DJ CAULIFLOWER

PLAY ALONG AND YOU'LL TEND TO A GARDEN.
PRAY ALONE THAT YOUR CROPS ALWAYS GET DONE.

PARSLEY

CAUSE...?

PYRUS & DJ CAULIFLOWER

I GOT DA DA DA DIRT ON YOU.
DA DA DA DIRT ON YOU.
ROOT FOR ME.
WATER ME.
WATER ME. WATER ME.
SOIL ME. SOIL ME.

GRAVEL BELOW MY ROOTS.
THERE IS DIRT ON YOU.
GRAVE DANGER.
BURIED UNDER.

PYRUS hands liqueur to PARSLEY.

PARSLEY incrementally drinks.

The lake forms. The tides rise.

DJ CAULIFLOWER

WHAT ARE WE?

PYRUS

DIRTY!

DJ CAULIFLOWER

DIRTY, BABY...

GIVE ME THAT MOTHERFUCKING BULLSHIT!

PYRUS makes bullshit rain on DJ
CAULIFLOWER.

PARSLEY

Mother... Bullshit fucked over my mom!

PYRUS

We also are fucking over every adult in this
Dirty City!

PARSLEY

I see... Dirty.

PYRUS

Dirty City... Where ya live? Are ya drunk?

PARSLEY

I never felt so alive!

Sunshine reigns.

DJ CAULIFLOWER

That little herb is on their own little island!

Rainstorms brew. The stormy ocean
descends. A lighthouse appears.

PYRUS gets washed away.

PARSLEY literally breaks his sea
legs.

PARSLEY

Can a plant... Can a plant drown...?

DJ CAULIFLOWER

IF WATER GETS PAST OUR ROOTS, WE IN TROUBLE.
WHEN THE BAR AIN'T YOURS, TIME BEHIND BARS IS DOUBLED.

PYRUS searches for PARSLEY.

PYRUS
I need two bars of rest!

DJ CAULIFLOWER stops the music.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE) (CONT'D)
Parsley! Parsley!

PARSLEY
(Vomiting)
Py- Pesto-

DJ CAULIFLOWER resumes the music.

DJ CAULIFLOWER
THAT'S SOME REAL DIRT, DID SOMEONE GET THAT ON TAPE?

The lighthouse morphs into camera
flashes, akin to the photo booth.

PYRUS
(to DJ CAULIFLOWER)
YOU'RE GOOD AS DIRT, HANGING OUT WITH ALL THE GRAPES.

PYRUS searches for PARSLEY in the
blinding light show.

DJ CAULIFLOWER
Excuse me. All my hype men are homemade! Now,
someone compost that on all social medias!

DO NOT FUCK AROUND
AS MY ROOT'S IN THE UNDERGROUND.

DO STICK AROUND
WE'LL HAVE YOUR STEMS IMPOUND.

The camera flashes morph into
ambulance lights and sirens.

PYRUS swims to PARSLEY.

PYRUS
THERE'S DIRT ON YA...

PYRUS drags away PARSLEY.

The ambulance lights morph into
police lights and sirens.

PARSLEY (OFFSTAGE)
THERE'S DIRT ON YOU...

PARSLEY vomits.

PARSLEY & PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

TWO.

Handcuffs are audible.

End of "DIRT ON YOU"

SCENE 10

11. "FIG LEAF"

It is day. Shadow play and puppetry appear around the space.

MALUS (OFFSTAGE)

A tree's lifetime worth of generation ago, in the suburb of Dirty City by the banks of Lily River, there birthed a young pear named Malus. Their birthday was on the shortest day of the year. The winter solstice. A day also known as the founding of FigLeaf.

That day was special. My parents kicked me out. I laid naked on the concrete, freezing to death. An Orange found me. They sheltered me here in their nightclub. Figs flocked from around the world to meet this miracle named Malus.

But something stark happened: a Cilantro walked into the bar. A post traumatic memory revisited the Orange. The Orange was an agent who fought in the war on the Cilantro's home turf. Orange faced endless horrors as swamps of herbs stood their ground despite the chemical fires. Soon, Orange gave me their deed and left into the moonlight.

I used to eclipse my light. I once hid my life. But FigLeaf gave me the might to show my light. I require the cross pollinations of the bees and bees... They bequeath me peace. FigLeaf let me piece together my queer-

I believe in the science of FigLeaf. With a stomata filled with sugar and water, I took over the tradition and honored the two other elements: earth and air, which symbolized the life-giving forces of nature. However, I did not teach Pyrus these traditions.

As was the winter solstice being the birth of FigLeaf, the summer solstice is the end of FigLeaf.

End of "FIG LEAF"

SCENE 11

RAU drags in MALUS. She slaps MALUS across the face. She cannot find the words.

MALUS (CONT'D)

Thang chó đê...? That's what I am.

RAU

(Admittingly)

I'm the bitch here.

MALUS

I read that. Ya face is as red as the Cherries.

RAU

I'm annoyed as an orange... Where was my son?

MALUS

Pyrus told me he was as yellow as the sun. Luckily, the hospital says he ain't ending up in the sky like it.

RAU hands some bullshit to MALUS.

MALUS (CONT'D)

This ain't fixing the blues.

RAU

This will at least fix the bill for all the indigo cocktails my Parsley didn't pay for.

MALUS

This is some bullshit, ya shrinking violet.

RAU

The greens. Doesn't that solve everything?

MALUS

Don't put it on me to answer anything for you anymore.

RAU

Then put it on the house-

MALUS

There won't be a house.

RAU

Not FigLeaf...

MALUS

Dirty City is shutting us down. They got the proof.

RAU

In the liqueur getting pumped out my son's
stoma...

MALUS

Underage drinking... Perpetrated- Encouraged by
my blood. Why didn't my nibbling card your kid?

RAU

That pear hasn't earned their adult card, yet.

MALUS

And ya ain't ever earned any of yours!

RAU

I get it: my earnings are zero without your
Figs' credit cards-

MALUS

Get it to ya aldehyde: look beyond the green
bullshits and bullshit cards.

RAU

Parsley will wither... as my brother and I
have.

MALUS

This is the moment to finally say: there ain't
nothing ya can do for ya dead sibling. Ya bring
him up every time ya want to pretend ya relate
to us Figs cause ya had a gay brother.

RAU

Hmm. What do you have to say for your sister?

MALUS

FigLeaf was the chance to get her child out of
trouble and make their plot feel whole.

RAU

Now, FigLeaf ends up a plot hole.

I remember this *young Fig who once sang me:*
move the plot forward.

MALUS

Move the plot forward, not move other plots far
away. You took my job away. Invasive species-

RAU

Finish the sentence. What's left to say,
houseplant?

MALUS

Dirty City's verdict was right. Immigrants come
here to take away our jobs, homes, and lives.

RAU

They got dirt on both of us!

MALUS

Being queer or foreign ain't the same struggle.
Do not plant us in the same patch of soil.

RAU

You Crabapples did it first for us.

MALUS

Spare me the details.

RAU

It is now on the Cilantros to share with you
our best cards.

We will have more in common than you can ever
imagine. It comes with revoking our greens...

12. "GREEN CARD"

MALUS

YOU WERE LAYING ON MY YARD...
THEY HAD LEFT YOU STARVING.
I SHOULD'VE KEPT MY GUARD
BEFORE YOU KILLED MY GREEN CARD!

RAU

I hold a real green car-

MALUS

IM LANG!

YOUR WORDS WILL NOT GO SO FAR...
THEY SHOULD HAVE JUST BARRED YOU.
I USED TO STOP SPARS.
NOW, THEY WENT AND CLOSED MY BAR!

RAU

SORRY.

RAU (CONT'D)

I DESERVE NO GREEN CARD.
I HAVE SERVED YOU ENDLESS
SCARS.
WHICH IS BY FAR NATURALLY
QUEER AS YOU ARE.

MALUS

YOUR HAND DESERVES A BAD CARD.
THEY SAW YOU AS JARRING.

YOU ARE UNNATURAL.
YOU'LL NEVER CHANGE WHO YOU
ARE!

MALUS (CONT'D)

'SCUSE ME?

RAU feels the potted herb.

RAU

BROTHER...

Audience Engagement: The crew
blows in rotten leaves that
AUDIENCE MEMBERS wrote on.

RAU reads the rotten leaves aloud.

RAU (CONT'D)

The best lesson I could ever receive is to turn
the leaves.

RAU (CONT'D)

YOU AND PYRUS CAME SO FAR...
THEY CAN STILL GET STARTED.
I NEED TO GROW SMART.
IT'S MY TURN TO HAVE A HEART.

MALUS

YOU ARE GOING TOO FAR.
MY PYRUS IS A REAL STAR.
IMMIGRANTS NEVER SETTLE
FOR LOW MARKS.

RAU (CONT'D)

REPORT CARDS, BUSINESS CARDS,
DON'T GET ME STARTED ON CREDIT CARDS.
TAKE IT A-
THE TAKEAWAY IS THAT GREEN CARDS ARE EARNED...
I MUST WATER OUR COMMUNITY.
IT'S THE LEAST I CAN DO.

MALUS

Ya took away my rights.

RAU

They almost took my son's life.

MALUS

Pyrus gave ya son life.

MALUS pulls out the potted
cilantro and pear. They hand it to
RAU.

RAU

Malus, you gave me life.

MALUS

Ya took away my livelihood.

RAU

You can start over.

MALUS

The queer community I built?!

RAU

It carries over. The love.

MALUS

I thought...

RAU

You can always hide it underneath your soil.
And wait to reveal yourself when the light is
right.

MALUS

So hide in the soil again is what ya saying?

RAU

Many plants want the chance to start over. To
turn back into the seeds.

MALUS

Save ya false wisdom in the closet.

RAU

I have every politician in my closet.

MALUS

More like skeletons- Wait, what?

RAU

Same thing. Representatives from across the
nation come to Silantro. When they get
comfortable, they'll tell me anything.

MALUS

Ya Cilantros are indoctrinating-

RAU

I've built relationships with the investor and
management community, and groomed returns based
on the size of their emotional transactions.

MALUS

Sick? What about the council in our hometown?

RAU

Dirty City did me dirty. They already lined my
pockets with tax cuts for small businesses.
They cannot do more. But I got neighboring
cities in my pockets for you.

MALUS

I don't matter. Pyrus does. Pyrus is going to
be in bigger trouble without me in the plot.

RAU

I'm moving Pyrus's plot forward.

MALUS

There's the usual backwards reasoning ya do.

RAU

I'm giving back to a lost soul what you've gave this lost immigrant.

MALUS

When did ya get wise?

RAU

When my baby got dumb.

MALUS

When did ya see the light?

RAU

When my kid played at night.

MALUS

When are ya okay with his "disorder?"

RAU

The most I did was stop this for Parsley as my parents barely my brother. I realize punishment is not the answer for this lifestyle.

An olive branch hangs above RAU and MALUS.

MALUS

(Dumbfoundedly)

Ya mind is disordered, but ya heart is trying to find its focus? Close enough...?

RAU hugs MALUS.

RAU

A real friend is here when bullshit hits the fan.

MALUS

Hey. Where did this olive branch come from?

MALUS embraces RAU.

MALUS (CONT'D)

Ya hug like a tree hugger. That is like the gayest thing ever.

RAU humorously detaches.

RAU

Have I earned my green card?

MALUS

That's not for us geezers to decide.

RAU
That's for the...

RAU & MALUS
Second generation of seedlings.

RAU
Malus, go out there and save another Cilantro!

MALUS floats off into the sunrise.

RAU (CONT'D)
I knew it, I knew it: Figs are angels.

End of "GREEN CARD"

SCENE 12

SALONTRO

RAU remains planted in the space.

Business is dead. The place is an
allegory for a dead houseplant.

RAU looks inside the bullshit
register. They pull out a single
bullshit bill.

PARSLEY (OFFSTAGE)
Can I turn the sign to "open?"

RAU
I'm open for business. You are not.

PARSLEY (OFFSTAGE)
Me (Vietnamese: "Mom")...

RAU
Me (Vietnamese: "Mom") as in "meh" or "me?"

PARSLEY (OFFSTAGE)
Vietnamese words are funny.

RAU
Especially Vietnamese plants.

PARSLEY (OFFSTAGE)
Mostly the Cilantros's musical taste.

RAU
Hey. Wash your mouth out with soap.

PARSLEY enters with soap.

PARSLEY

(to the AUDIENCE)

Raise your hand if you think we taste like soap?

If an audience member raises their hand, PARSLEY throws the soap at them.

PARSLEY (CONT'D)

This is your next meal. Let me know if we really taste like that.

RAU

You talking to nobody and wasting our soap does not make a good case for you being not sick.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)

And I have a bad case ahead of me.

PYRUS enters. Their skin holds minor burns.

RAU

Pyrus... In the flesh.

PYRUS

I certainly don't look fresh, Ms. Răm.

RAU

Summer's coming to an end. But there's light at the end of the tunnel as you return to school.

PYRUS

I need school, so I don't end up a "*đô vô học*" (Vietnamese: an uneducated person).

PARSLEY

Me (Vietnamese: "Mom"), you're the one who needs to be educated.

RAU nods in agreement.

PYRUS

Sorry for calling ya an invader.

PARSLEY

I'm sorry to invade your space.

PYRUS

Enlighten me.

RAU

There is more to darkness than meets the eyes.

PYRUS

FigLeaf was the only light in the nightlife.

RAU

I'm sorry that your uncle has to start over.

PYRUS

I'm glad he helped you get started. It's ya turn to give Malus the tips.

RAU gives PYRUS the last bullshit.

RAU

I'll give you one: to my son, say good-

PYRUS

Goodbye. I know... *Good riddance?*

RAU

I don't know. Just have something good to say to him this time...

PYRUS

Little herb, as I stared into ya eyes... Ya were seeing the light... I hope ya realize...

PARSLEY & PYRUS

I will always root for you.

PYRUS

I will never amount to anything. I won't mount a proper apology. But for once, I do care. This is despair. Don't look at this pear.

PARSLEY

You always amount to everything.

PYRUS hands a crop top to PARSLEY.

PYRUS

Don't puke on this one, okay?

PARSLEY

And don't let the flowers bully you!

PYRUS

Ah, another school year at THC. I'll climb high on a mountain.

RAU

I'm sorry things didn't work out the way they did. But you can.

As MALUS had done for RAU, RAU moves a plot of land for PYRUS.

RAU (CONT'D)

Make sure you grab a tax form on your way out!

PYRUS

Taxes?

RAU

You must pay the government bullshit to work.

PYRUS

You're referring to adulthood?

RAU

You're experienced enough to intern. And that bullshit you pocketed is your first paycheck.

PYRUS

Why?

RAU

I owe your uncle.

PYRUS

I'd probably get the salon shut down.

PARSLEY

Oh shut up, poop head.

PARSLEY hugs PYRUS.

PYRUS

I'd be supervised by *that*? I'll clean that dirt in your mouth.

RAU

Finally, someone else up for the task.

PYRUS

I cannot thank you enough, Ms. Răm.

RAU

It's my turn to help you start over.

PARSLEY

You're welcome back any time!

RAU

With Malus's intent, there's a plot of land for you here.

RAU opens a colorful tanning bed for PYRUS.

13. "TURNOVER (A NEW LEAF)"

PYRUS

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 another tanning
bed. They inspect themselves.

RAU

TURN AROUND.

NICE TAN.

MALUS

BIGGEST FAN.

RAU

NOTHING FANCY.

MALUS

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...

Either animated silhouettes or a
colorful light show demonstrate
that business is booming with
patrons coming in and out.

PARSLEY

TURNOVER!
THE WORLD IS NOT OVER.
WHAT GOES AROUND, COMES AROUND.

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

I'VE SHED EUKARYOTIC CELLS.
NO ONE CARED IF I FELT SO WELL.
YOU CHOSE TO SING A DIFFERENT TUNE.
THE OTHER LIGHT THROUGH IT ALL WAS OUR MOON.

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

PARSLEY (CONT'D)

TURNOVER!
TURN AROUND!

Water rains down.

PARSLEY & RAU
THIS IS THE SPARK OF A FLORAL
FRIENDSHIP.

PYRUS & MALUS
THIS IS THE SPARK OF AN
HERBAL FRIENDSHIP.

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

PARSLEY, RAU, MALUS, PYRUS, DJ
BUT THE BEST TURNOVER WE'VE EVER HAD...

A tanning bed opens with sunlight.

PARSLEY, RAU, MALUS, PYRUS, DJ (CONT'D)
IS THE SUN!

End of "TURNOVER (A NEW LEAF)"

END OF PLAY