

Turnover: A New Leaf

A Plant-Based Musical

By David Quang Pham

Contact:

616 818 5413

davidquangpham@outlook.com

512 W 158th St #2 New York, New York 10032



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DAVID QUANG PHAM (he★him)

David Quang Pham is a musical theater science communicator authoring regionally and Off-Broadway-produced science musicals. His notable musicals that personify astrophysics, quantum mechanics, climatology, chemistry, entomology, and botany are respectively: [Ellipses](#) (2024 Syracuse NWNV semifinalist, 2023 Theatre About Science International Conference, 2023 Musical Theatre Factory at Signature Theatre, 2023 MilkyWay Theatre Company at Theatre 71, 2022 Colorado New Musical Festival, 2022 O'Neill Theater Center semifinalist, 2021 Working Title Playwrights), [Tour](#) (2020 Downtown Urban Arts Festival finalist), *The Seasoned Veteran*, *Chemicals in the Water*, *The Bookworms*, and [Turnover: A New Leaf](#) (2024 Queer Theatre Kalamazoo, 2024 Theatre on the Verge at Abington Art Center, 2023 Undiscovered Countries Infinite Festival). He collaborated with Stephanie L. Carlin and Marie Incontrera on *Life After* (2023 NYPL Performing Arts at Bruno Walter Auditorium). He is writing *Parallel University*, an interactive musical, and non-fables: *The Control Freaks* and *The Poster Child*, a TYA fantasy musical.

After finishing 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 Kennedy Center's [BIPOC Critics Lab](#) are published in *The Public* and [TheaterMania](#). Alexis Hauk interviewed him in the *American Theatre Magazine*'s Winter 2024 issue. 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 credit is *BAS* by Janelle Lawrence and Sugar Vendil (2023 JACK). He is a moderator at [LMDA](#); a screenwriter for the We Forgot the Title sketch group; 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](#).

His moonbase is in Washington Heights. His earth is Wyoming, Michigan. Be up to lightspeed at [sciencetheatre.us](#) and [@sciencetheatre](#).

PLOT SUMMARY

Turnover: A New Leaf is a plant-based 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 (ramen), herbal preteen Asian American boy, Rau's son
Intelligent, Naïve, Zealous

RAU (roar-ow) RĂM (ramen), herbal Asian woman, Parsley's mother
and the owner of Salontro
Invasive, Calculative, Contentious

PYRUS (π-rus) CRABAPPLE, older pear-like teen, Malus's nibbling
Self-loathing, Indulgent, Mischievous

MALUS (malice) CRABAPPLE, apple-like adult, Pyrus's uncle and
the owner of FigLeaf
Grandiose, Wise, Dubious

Orchestra

DJ CAULIFLOWER, the alias for the production's music director,
who briefly interacts with the performers /// *Malus may double*
Funny, Observant, Malicious

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

✿ Queer 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, Parsley
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

"Bullshit" ❀ American currency represented by manure-laced bills

"Crap" or "Poop" ❀ Obscenities

"Photos" on display or taken in a photo booth ❀ Potted plants and literal fruits or vegetables

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. She faces her belly towards the sunset.

RAU

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

MALUS enters, opposite the sunset. 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

Dat'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 beauty salon. I *dream* 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, my kind of people are open to floating around the world. Your tone ain't a *brussels* sprout's.

RAU

Klootzak (Dutch: An insult).

MALUS

Watch your language.

RAU

Pardon my Dutch. 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. 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, 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.

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 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...?

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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, DAY

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 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 cleaning.

RAU

Greens! It's not greed for us Cilantros to have good tastes! 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 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

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."

Crickets chirp.

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.

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 potted herb. She sits
on the tanning bed. She pulls out
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 greatest maternity gifts a mother could
receive are the turning leaves.

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, this is no fertilizer! This oil is not
found here in Dirty City. This oil is 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.
RAU lies in another 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 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.

PARSLEY turns around.

RAU (CONT'D)
But son, do you shine...

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!

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. Organic. American.

SCENE 3

SALONTRO, NIGHT

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

RAU
But your trichomes getting unnaturally long.

RAU (CONT'D)
(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 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?

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

Ngu 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 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.
Their entrance intersects a rocker
and an acned teenager's presence.
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 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!

PYRUS (CONT'D)
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 you can get it here.

PYRUS (CONT'D)
A natural tan!

MALUS (CONT'D)
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 most
comfortable with you.

MALUS
See, Pyrus. Parsley's 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 ya
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. 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 with ya *lower peninsula mindset*...
Trolls under the bridge. Right, it ain't stop
other flowers from being fashion polices.

PARSLEY

What did these upper peninsula Yoopers do?

PYRUS

They get under my membrane. They overreacted.

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. It's all dandy.

PYRUS

Wow, rich coming from a middle school poop head.

4. "GROW A PAIR"

PYRUS

YA NEED TO GROW UP.

PARSLEY

TWO CAN PLAY AT THAT GAME!

PYRUS

YA AIN'T SHIT.

PARSLEY

I AM THE SHIT.

PYRUS

YA 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.

I AIN'T THICK. PYRUS

PARSLEY
HIGH SCHOOL *AIN'T* SHIT.

I NEED PYRUS

PARSLEY & PYRUS
TO FACE THE HEAT.

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                                PYRUS
STOP  COMPARING...

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GROW A PAIR. PARSLEY

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

HERB... THIS AIN'T NATURAL.
DUDE... I FEEL POWERFUL.

PARSLEY
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)
Alcohol'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 dat 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 dat but 72 times dat 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 barley piss.

PYRUS
Dat's the name of the liqueur!

PARSLEY
Barley piss?

PYRUS
Ewwwww, no. Miracle! Well, looks like our friendship is gonna go against the grain.

PARSLEY
Friends?

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

PARSLEY
Can Miracle tag along?

PYRUS
Miracle needa stay a no-show or we'll be tagged as criminals 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
(Repeating)
Glucose is clear...

End of "TEST THE WATER"

SCENE 5

SALONTRO, LATE NOON

RAU enters with a box of body oil.
She goes and helps PARSLEY up.

RAU
Have you got any pride, son?! Get up, it's
"pride" month! Today 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. And
speaking of infection...

RAU dons on some rainbow gear. She
stops PARSLEY from wearing them.

There is an influx of multicolor
lights, representing the PATRONS.

PARSLEY
Fun guys all around! Happy Pride!

RAU and PARSLEY throws out body
oil left and right. In return,
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
Made from the 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...

(to the PATRONS)

I need kids to know that they are to be treated as adults. Discounts are handouts. And we're not like other businesses who refuse to serve you and take your bullshit. Although, *it is allowed under national law*. Here at Salontro, we'll always support your unnatural lifestyles.

The lights flicker in disapproval.

PARSLEY

You were born this way!

The multicolor lights move about.

RAU

That line always work on them. Happy Pride! Love your fit. Happy Pride! So floral. 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. The root cause of any issue!

RAU

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

PARSLEY

They got nothing better to do than to bully my classmates and ban our books... *Poop heads!*

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 (CONT'D)

That is a model.

RAU (CONT'D)

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

PARSLEY

My uncle?

RAU

He would have laid off the booze...

PARSLEY

Booze?

RAU

His addiction to Figs led to the booze which laid him off from work and society. He was the light of our lives that went dark too soon.

PARSLEY

Did my grandparents do anything to stop it?

RAU

They did their darneest to protect him from the unnatural. He was a person 'til 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

Okay. 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 and grab 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

Why can't you be friends with the Cruciferous?

PARSLEY

Ew... Those family of Broccolis are lame.

RAU

What is your two's plan at Cantaloupe Outlets?

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 bullshits for *VeggieTales*.

PARSLEY

Shucks. You are so corny-

RAU

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

(Quoting a VeggieTales song)

"GIVE ME THAT OLD TIME RELIGION."

PARSLEY

God, you don't even believe in a higher farmer-

RAU

Well, the gospel music...

"IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME."

Gravity created the Universe. Godspeed with Pyrus. Now, go get yourself ready as a plum.

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

SCENE 6

CANTALOUPE OUTLETS, DAY

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

PARSLEY sits inside a photo booth
as PYRUS enters.

6. "PHOTOSYNTHESIS"

PARSLEY
GET YOUR BUTT IN THE PHOTO BOOTH.
WE'RE GONNA TAKE A LITTLE BREATHER.

PYRUS
BREATHE IN, BREATHE OUT.

PYRUS sits alongside PARSLEY.
PARSLEY and PYRUS drink water.

PARSLEY
MAKE SURE THAT YOU STAY HYDRATED.
WE'RE GONNA DRINK LOTS OF WATER.

PYRUS
H 2 O.

PARSLEY
NOW GET YOURSELF SITUATED.
WE'RE GONNA MAKE TONS OF SUGAR.

PYRUS
SWEET MEMORIES.

PARSLEY
SIX CARBON DIOXIDE!

PYRUS
AND PLUS...
SIX WATER MOLECULES.

PARSLEY & PYRUS
PUT IT UNDER LIGHT.

PARSLEY
C 6
H 12 (TWELVE)
O 6...
PLUS 6 O 2.

PYRUS
SUGAR,
SUGAR,
SUGAR,
AND STARCH.

PYRUS downs the water while
PARSLEY pulls many ingredients.

PYRUS (CONT'D) 6 CARBON 12 HYDROGEN 6 OXYGEN... PLUS 6 OXYGEN MOLECULES. CARBOHYDRATE!	PARSLEY (CONT'D) GLUCOSE, GLUCOSE, GLUCOSE, AND STARCH. THIS IS PHOTOSYNTHESIS. PHOTOSYNTHESIS.
---	---

PYRUS (CONT'D)

YOU'RE OVERREACTING.

PARSLEY

I WANNA GOOD PRODUCT.

PYRUS

YOU'LL GET BYPRODUCTS.

PARSLEY

BI...?

PYRUS C 6 H 12 (TWELVE) O 6... PLUS 6 O 2. YOUR CELLULOSE. YOUR CELLULOSE. WE WRITE: PHOTOSYNTHESIS. PHOTOSYNTHESIS.	PARSLEY (CONT'D) SUGAR, SUGAR, SUGAR, AND STARCH. 6 CARBON 12 HYDROGEN 6 OXYGEN... PLUS 6 OXYGEN MOLECULES. CARBOHYDRATE!
--	--

The space displays the equation:
 $6CO_2 + 6H_2O \rightarrow C_6H_{12}O_6 + 6O_2$.

PARSLEY & PYRUS

C 6
 H 12 (TWELVE)
 O 6...
 PLUS 6 O 2.
 6 CARBON
 12 HYDROGEN
 6 OXYGEN...
 PLUS 6 OXYGEN MOLECULES.
 PHOTOSYNTHESIS.
 PHOTOSYNTHESIS.
 PHOTO!

The photo booth flashes. It prints out a literal cilantro and pear in a pot.

End of "PHOTOSYNTHESIS"

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

PYRUS

We needed dat breather. Redoing the photo scene in that movie was so much fun! 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 (CONT'D)

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

PARSLEY

Can I have another sip of Miracle...?

PYRUS tucks away a hidden liqueur bottle deeper in their clothes.

PYRUS

Drink in moderation. It was hard enough passing it in a dark movie theatre. Don't expect me to do it in broad daylight.

PARSLEY stays put with a sour face.

PYRUS (CONT'D)

Quit the sour face, sour grapes. No whining about wine either.

PARSLEY

You're as square as diced tomatoes...

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

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

PARSLEY (CONT'D)

Huh?

PYRUS

Looks like ya might be the square.

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

A party where everyone smells like Asparaguses.

PARSLEY

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

PYRUS

It'll be the summer solstice. Malus will be going on their annual camping trip.

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

I know that raves are for me!

PYRUS

I'm gonna lay down some *ground rules*.

PARSLEY

"Ground rules" sounds like another song!

PYRUS

No time. Rule number one: no kids allowed.

PARSLEY

How come?

PYRUS

Ya bedtime's at dusk. No kid can handle an all nighter.

PARSLEY

The night is short during a summer solstice!

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 DAT IS FASHION.
NO SHIRT CAN EVER TOP THIS!

PARSLEY

A CROP TOP...?

PYRUS tries on various crop tops.

PYRUS

WHERE TO FIND ONE DAT FITS?
WEAR ONE DAT 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 it slips out of their grasp.

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!

PARSLEY and PYRUS suit up in their
crop tops.

End of "CROP TOP"

SCENE 7

CANTALOUPE OUTLETS, DAY

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 from grassroots organizations!

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

MALUS
You pick data like a Cherry.

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

MALUS
Why don't you appreciate what's afforded to
you, you transplant!

RAU
I'm no trans, Fig.

MALUS
*Let's transition away from the topic. It ain't
the end of the world like dat disaster movie,
Soil and Green. What we just watched: Popcorn.
Ah, such cinema! Nothing can change my mind
about that foxy eggplant cameo, oh honey.*

RAU

Don't honey me, *honeycrisp critic*. And please,
I invited you to see if my son snuck in there.

MALUS

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

RAU

Someone's got to pop the thought in your aldehy-

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 dat reminder dat 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 dat 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 told me that a seedling stopped by to try out all our tanning beds. *It was one of your species.*

MALUS

Horseshit!

RAU (CONT'D)

They tanned and dashed.

MALUS (CONT'D)

I loaned- I mean gave them enough to cover seven appointments? You sure your Parsley didn't stash the bullshit?

RAU

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 dat crop top, Parsley.

PYRUS

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

RAU

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

MALUS

Parsley, whatcha 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)

Look at you foaming at your stomata mouth!

PYRUS

(Laughing)

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

*RAU slaps PARSLEY across the face.
They drag away PARSLEY.*

PYRUS (CONT'D)

You bitch...

RAU

(Heartbroken)

*Thang chó đê (Vietnamese: "Son of a bitch")...
Uh, Malus is the bitch whose family tree is
shaped like a circle. End this scenery at once!*

PYRUS

I'm rooting for ya, Parsley!

PARSLEY

*Mom. As you've said: "A natural is true to
themselves."*

RAU

(Nearly singing "A Natural")

*A natural?! You're not true to yourself. What
you and Pyrus are doing... It is unnatural!*

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!*

RAU (CONT'D)
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!

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"), "gay."

PARSLEY
*Young men cannot stay grounded! Thanks for the
validation. I am no longer a seedling. Gay.
Happy. I don't want it any other way.*

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...

MALUS
(Repeating)
IN THE NAME...

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!

PARSLEY hides in the photo booth.

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

End of "SOILED (THE FAMILY NAME)"

RAU

We're soiled inside...

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

PYRUS

Quit invading his personal space, ya invasive species-

RAU

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

PYRUS

Malus says ya are who ya are.

PYRUS exits.

RAU

(Soliloquizing)

This Dirty City needs to know: I love my seed. I love what the future will stem more than anything my past roots have offered me. That's why I wither witnessing my son be a daisy rather than staying sturdy.

Parsley sees freedom more and more with each passing dawn. My brother had the same sights. His free will quenched his insatiable thirst, then drowned him during his final dusk. His so-called "brothers in branches" encouraged this. Our family's natural garden could have shocked him out of his truth that no other therapy and their biochemicals could have!

This time, I am taking care of it as a sister-turned-mother. I don't got to worry about how my life will play out because I'll play games night and day. But my son, playing with these creatures of the night, will soon find himself never again seeing the light of day. Unlike his uncle, I will save him from the Fig life style full of pain and heartache. I'm sick to my stoma, thinking about a life so unnatural.

This Dirty City wishes for me to stop being invasive. Only if your Figs would stop invading me and my son's mind. Now pay no mind.

RAU exits.

SCENE 8

SALONTRO, NIGHT

9. "FERTILE"

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 AND ANYWHERE SO SURREAL.

PYRUS tosses a crop top to PARSLEY.

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)
WEAR THIS BEFORE IT GOES OUT OF STYLE.
YOU HAVE MADE ME REALIZE: IN LIFE, IT IS NEVER FUTILE...

PARSLEY trashes his nightlight.
They climb out of the window.

PARSLEY
I AM FERTILE!

End of "FERTILE"

SCENE 9

FIGLEAF NIGHTCLUB

PARSLEY lands by PYRUS on the
dirt.

DJ CAULIFLOWER
We got a Cilantro in the yard!

PARSLEY
And we got a Cauliflower... on guard?

DJ CAULIFLOWER
Not just a Cauliflower. *The*. DJ...

DJ CAULIFLOWER holds a microphone
towards the AUDIENCE.

PARSLEY
(Whispering to PYRUS)
Holy sneezeworts. It's DJ...

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
WE THE BEST...

PYRUS
WE ARE BEST...

DJ CAULIFLOWER
WE THE BEST...

PARSLEY & PYRUS
WE ARE BEST...
FRIENDS!

DJ CAULIFLOWER (CONT'D)
WE THE BEST...
HOUSEPLANTS!

PARSLEY
IT'S DJ...?

PARSLEY & PYRUS
IT'S DJ...

DJ CAULIFLOWER
DJ CAULIFLOWERRRR!

PYRUS
I love this song!

PARSLEY
Which one? DJ Cauliflower starts every song like-

PYRUS
Don't make me squash you into pesto, Cilantro.
LET'S GET DIRTY!
LET'S GET DIRTY, PARSLEY?

PARSLEY
YOU GET DIRTY, PYRUS.

PYRUS
PLEASE GET DIRTY WITH ME.

PYRUS drags PARSLEY to the dance
floor.

PARSLEY & PYRUS
LET'S GET DIRTY!

DJ CAULIFLOWER
YOU: I GOT, I GOT DIRT
ON YOU, ON YOU.
YOU GOTTA LOTTA NERVES COMING HERE.

PYRUS hands liqueur to PARSLEY.

PARSLEY
WITH YOUR BULLSHIT!

DJ CAULIFLOWER
YOU: I GOT, I GOT DIRT
ON YOU, ON YOU.
YOU... I'M KEEPING MY EYES ON YOUR

DJ CAULIFLOWER (CONT'D) PARSLEY & PYRUS
DIRTY BULLSHIT! FILTHY/FUCKING BULLSHIT!

PARSLEY
LET'S GET DIRTY!

PARSLEY incrementally drinks.

PYRUS
YA SO DIRTY TO ME!

DJ CAULIFLOWER
Y'ALL GET DIRTY!

PARSLEY & PYRUS

YOU: I GOT, I GOT DIRT
ON YOU, ON YOU.
YOU... I'M KEEPING MY EYES ON YOUR DIRTY BULLSHIT!

The lake forms. The tides rise.

DJ CAULIFLOWER

DO NOT FUCK AROUND BECAUSE MY ROOTS ARE IN THE UNDERGROUND.
IF YOU STUCK AROUND, WE'LL HAVE YOUR STEMS MAKING MUDDY WET
SOUNDS.

PARSLEY & PYRUS

ROOT FOR ME
AND WATER ME!

DJ CAULIFLOWER

SOIL ME!

Give me that motherfucking bullshit!

PYRUS makes bullshit rain.

PARSLEY

Bullshit fucked over my mom!

PYRUS

We are also fucking over every adult in Dirty
City!

PARSLEY

What's dirty?

PYRUS

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

PARSLEY

I never felt so aliveeee!

Sunshine reigns.

DJ CAULIFLOWER

That little herb is on their own little island!

Rainstorms brew. The stormy ocean
descends. A lighthouse appears and
washes PYRUS away.

PARSLEY literally breaks his sea
legs. His fears swallow him.

PARSLEY

Can a, can a plant drown?

DJ CAULIFLOWER
IF WATER REACHES OUR STEMS, WE IN TROUBLE.
WHEN THE BAR AIN'T YOURS, TIME BEHIND BARS IS DOUBLED!

PARSLEY
DOUBLED?!

PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)
I NEED YOU...
YOU NEED TO...
I NEED TO...
I NEED TWO BARS OF REST!

DJ CAULIFLOWER stops the music.

PYRUS searches in blinding light.

PYRUS (CONT'D)
Parsley! Parsley!

PARSLEY
(Vomiting)
Py- Pesto-

DJ CAULIFLOWER resumes the music.

DJ CAULIFLOWER
That's real dirt, did someone get that on tape?

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

PYRUS
(to DJ CAULIFLOWER)
Malus is my uncle! Ugh. You're good as dirt,
hanging out with all the grapes.

DJ CAULIFLOWER
Excuse me. All my hype men are homemade! Now,
someone compost that on all social medias!
DO NOT FUCK AROUND BECAUSE MY ROOTS ARE IN THE UNDERGROUND.
NOW YOU STUCK AROUND, WE'LL HAVE YOUR STEMS IMPOUND, IMPOUND,
IMPOUND!

PYRUS swims to PARSLEY.

The camera flashes morph into
ambulance lights and sirens.

PYRUS
DIRT'S ON YA...

PARSLEY
AND DIRT'S ON YOU...

DJ CAULIFLOWER
CALL THE COPS!

PARSLEY & PYRUS
COPS?!

DJ CAULIFLOWER
YOU: WE GOT, WE GOT DIRT
ON BOTH OF YOU.
YOU GOTTA LOTTA NERVES DRINKING HERE.

PYRUS
THIS IS BULLSHIT!

PYRUS throws money at DJ
CAULIFLOWER. They drag away
PARSLEY.

The ambulance lights morph into
police lights and sirens.

DJ CAULIFLOWER
YOU: WE GOT, WE GOT DIRT
ON YOU, YOU, YOU...
TWO... ARE NOT ABLE TO BULLSHIT

DJ CAULIFLOWER (CONT'D) PARSLEY & PYRUS (OFFSTAGE)
YOUR WAY OUTTA THIS! THERE'S DIRT ON US.

Handcuffs are audible.

End of "DIRT ON YOU"

SCENE 10

FIGLEAF NIGHTCLUB, PAST

11. "FIG LEAF"

Shadow play and puppetry appear
around the space, reminiscent of
the Vietnam War era.

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

Dat 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 this nightclub. Figs flocked from round
the world to meet this miracle named Malus.

(MORE)

MALUS (OFFSTAGE) (CONT'D)

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 swarms of herbs stood their ground despite the chemical fires. Orange gave me their deed and left into the moonlight.

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

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

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

End of "FIG LEAF"

SCENE 11

FIGLEAF NIGHTCLUB, DAY

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

MALUS

Thang chó đê (*taun cha deh; Vietnamese: "Son of a bitch"*)...? Dat's what I am.

RAU

(Admittingly)

I'm the bitch here.

MALUS

I read dat. You're invasive and always in our faces. Your face is as red as the Cherries.

RAU

Invasive?! Whatever. 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, you shrinking *violet*.

RAU

The *greens*. Doesn't that solve everything?

MALUS

Don't put it on me to answer anything 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 pumping 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 you ain't ever earned any of yours!

RAU

I get it: my earnings are zero-

MALUS

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

RAU

Parsley will wither as my brother and I have.

MALUS

You bring him up every time you want to pretend to relate to Figs cause you had a gay brother. There ain't a thing you can do for the dead.

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... But, I do recall a *young Fig* who once sang me: *move the plot forward*.

MALUS

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

RAU

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 on me to pass on to you the card up my sleeve. We're 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 ("eem laung")!
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.

End of "GREEN CARD"

MALUS

You took away my rights.

RAU

They almost took my son's life.

MALUS

Pyrus gave your son life.

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

RAU

Malus, you gave me life.

MALUS

You 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 you saying?

RAU

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

MALUS

Save your 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 Salontro. When they get
comfortable, they'll tell me anything.

MALUS

Politics be nasty. You Cilantros are indoctrina-

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 you do.

RAU

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

MALUS

When did you get wise?

RAU

When my baby got dumb.

MALUS

When did you see the light?

RAU

When my kid played at night.

MALUS

When were you 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)

Your mind is disordered, but your heart is in the right place...?

RAU hugs MALUS.

RAU

A real friend is here when bullshit hits the fan.

MALUS

Hey. Where did this olive branch come from? You hug like a tree hugger. Dat is like the gayest thing ever.

RAU humorously detaches.

RAU

Have I earned my green card?

MALUS

Dat'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.
YOU ARE... A NATURAL.

SCENE 12

SALONTRO, DAY

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

RAU takes a look inside the cash 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 "well."

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 "*đo vô học*" ("*dough vo how*"; Viet: "*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... Stop being the root cause. Be the root effect.

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

What you're saying is a load of bullshit.

RAU

Well, you're old 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 *dat*? I'll clean dat dirt
in ya mouth, ya sweetgrass.

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.

13. "TURNOVER (A NEW LEAF)"

RAU opens a colorful tanning bed,
where PYRUS sits.

MALUS gets out of another tanning
bed. They watch as PYRUS gleams.

MALUS

TURN AROUND!

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

PARSLEY & PYRUS

WE HAVE CHANGED THEM.
TURN OVER PAIRS OF FRESH EYES.
NEW LEAVES, COLORS.
TURN OVER TO THIS STRANGE LIGHT.

PARSLEY, RAU, PYRUS, MALUS, DJ

THIS DIRTY CITY IS OUR HOME.
THE NEIGHBORS, THEY'RE KNOWN
TO HELP US TO SOW
OUR SEEDS AND GROW...
TURN OVER AND CHANGE FOR THE BETTER.

Water rains down.

PARSLEY & RAU

THIS IS THE SPARK OF...
A FLORAL PARTNERSHIP.
A FRIENDSHIP WHERE I CAN REST
OUR GARDEN.

PYRUS & MALUS

THIS IS THE SPARK OF...
AN HERBAL PARTNERSHIP.
A FRIENDSHIP THAT LEAVES THE
BEST SHARED GARDEN.

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

PARSLEY, RAU, MALUS, PYRUS, DJ

BUT THE BEST TURNOVER WE'VE HAD IS THE SUN!

A tanning bed opens with sunlight.

End of "TURNOVER (A NEW LEAF)"

END OF THE PLOT