

TURNOVER: A NEW LEAF

A Plant-Based Musical

By David Quang Pham

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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](#), [CHEMICALS IN THE WATER](#), 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 Wyoming, MI. 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, preteen Vietnamese American boy, Rau's son

Intelligent, Naïve, Zealous

RAU (roar-ow) RĂM, adult Vietnamese woman, Parsley's mother and the owner of Salontro

Apprehensive, Calculative, Contentious

PYRUS (π-rus) CRABAPPLE, older teen, Malus's nibbling

Self-loathing, Indulgent, Mischievous

MALUS (malice) CRABAPPLE, 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

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. She faces her belly towards the sunset.

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

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

RAU

Figment of my imagination.

MALUS

Does ya imagination include a better life for yaself 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 floating around the world. Ya accent ain't a *brussels* sprout's.

RAU

Klootzak (Dutch: An insult).

MALUS

Watch ya language.

RAU (CONT'D)

Pardon my Dutch. I do not have an accent!

MALUS (CONT'D)

Okay, well ya *look* like ya took a leave from Southeast Asia? All ya 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 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. 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. Over
time, a seedling grows nearby.

RAU

SHUT UP.

MALUS

I WASN'T BORN WITH LIGHTHEARTEDNESS.
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
Ya got a dirty mind dat 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

Dat'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 themself.

RAU (CONT'D)

TURN AROUND.

NICE TAN.

MALUS

NOT A FAN.

RAU

NOTHING FANCY.

MALUS

YA 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 ya
own in this soil. It is all ya 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

It is night.

RAU takes out a pair of scissors.
She has PARSLEY sit on a tanning
bed. She clips PARSLEY's hair.

RAU

But your trichomes getting unnaturally long.

RAU (CONT'D)

(Repeating)

I love you. I love you lots.

PARSLEY

(Repeating)

I love you. I love you more.

RAU (CONT'D)

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 your last 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 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 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-

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)
(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,
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

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

Where's ya 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, ya Cilantro. Nevertheless... 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 (CONT'D)

My nibbling.

PARSLEY (CONT'D)

Another Crabapple?

MALUS

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 dat 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 dat 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 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)

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. DISTRESSED. 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 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, *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

YA NEED TO GROW UP.

PARSLEY

TWO CAN PLAY AT THAT GAME!

PYRUS

YA AIN'T SHIT.

PARSLEY

I AM THE SHIT.

YA ARE
 A NUMBER TWO.
 GROW UP, HERB.
 GROW UP, PEAR!
I NEED TO GROW ONE?
 YOU GOT SKIN IN THEIR GAMES.
 I AIN'T THICK.
 HIGH SCHOOL AIN'T SHIT.
 I NEED
 TO FACE THE HEAT.
 STOP COMPARING...
 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

AND CRABAPPLES.
PARSLEY

WE DO MAKE A GREAT
PARSLEY & PYRUS

TEAM.
PARSLEY
SMOOTHIE.
PYRUS

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

LET'S GET SOME FOOD!
PARSLEY

PARSLEY shares fertilizer
popsicles with PYRUS.

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

FERTILIZER NEVER...?
PYRUS

GETS TOO OLD!
PARSLEY

DEFINITELY!
PYRUS

YOU KNOW WHAT IS COOL IS THAT
PARSLEY

WE'D MAKE A GREAT PAIR.
PARSLEY & PYRUS

End of "GROW A PAIR"

PYRUS pulls out a glass bottle.

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

I can't drink that.
PARSLEY

Why not?
PYRUS

I'm not old enough.
PARSLEY

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 osmosis.

PYRUS

Dat'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 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
(Repeatedly)
Glucose is clear...

End of "TEST THE WATER"

SCENE 5

SALONTRO

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! 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.
Speaking of infection...

RAU dons on some 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 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... 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. The root cause of any issue!

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 the 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 darneest 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 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 do you two plan to do 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 *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

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

PYRUS

BREATHE IN, BREATHE OUT.

PYRUS sits alongside PARSLEY.

PARSLEY

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

PARSLEY and PYRUS drink 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.

<p>PARSLEY</p> <p>C 6 H 12 (TWELVE) O 6... PLUS 6 O 2.</p>	<p>PYRUS</p> <p>SUGAR, SUGAR, SUGAR, AND STARCH.</p>
--	--

<p>PYRUS (CONT'D)</p> <p>6 CARBON 12 HYDROGEN 6 OXYGEN... PLUS 6 OXYGEN MOLECULES.</p>	<p>PARSLEY (CONT'D)</p> <p>GLUCOSE, GLUCOSE, GLUCOSE, AND STARCH.</p>
--	---

<p>PARSLEY (CONT'D)</p> <p>THIS IS PHOTOSYNTHESIS. PHOTOSYNTHESIS.</p>	<p>PYRUS (CONT'D)</p> <p>CARBOHYDRATE!</p>
--	--

PYRUS downs the water while
PARSLEY pulls many ingredients.

PYRUS (CONT'D)
YOU'RE OVERREACTING.

PARSLEY
I WANNA GOOD PRODUCT.

PYRUS
YOU'LL GET BYPRODUCTS.

PARSLEY
BI...?

<p>PYRUS</p> <p>C 6 H 12 (TWELVE) O 6... PLUS 6 O 2.</p>	<p>PARSLEY (CONT'D)</p> <p>SUGAR, SUGAR, SUGAR, AND STARCH.</p>
--	---

PARSLEY (CONT'D)
6 CARBON
12 HYDROGEN
6 OXYGEN...
PLUS 6 OXYGEN MOLECULES.

PARSLEY (CONT'D)
YOUR CELLULOSE.
YOUR CELLULOSE.

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

PYRUS
WE WRITE: PHOTOSYNTHESIS.
PHOTOSYNTHESIS.

PYRUS
CARBOHYDRATE!

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. 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

Can I have another sip of Miracle...?

PYRUS tucks away the 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

Who knew you can be such a square like diced
tomatoes?

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

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

Kids cannot handle all nighters.

PARSLEY

There's no shorter all nighter than 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 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!

PARSLEY and PYRUS suit up in their
crop tops.

End of "CROP TOP"

SCENE 7

CANTALOUPE OUTLETS

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
Ya pick data like a Cherry.

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

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

RAU
I'm no trans, Fig.

MALUS
Let's transition away from the topic. The world ain't 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 (CONT'D)
You've done nothing for anyon!

MALUS (CONT'D)

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

They tanned and dashed.

MALUS

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

RAU
(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 dat 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, 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)
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 slaps PARSLEY across the face.
They drag away PARSLEY.

PYRUS (CONT'D)
You bitch...

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

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!

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 man... Thank you for the validation, mom. Young men cannot stay grounded! 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 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 address 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.
They climb out of the window.

PARSLEY
I AM FERTILE!

End of "FERTILE"

SCENE 9

FIGLEAF

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 on DJ
CAULIFLOWER.

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

11. "FIG LEAF"

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

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 pear named Malus.
(MORE)

MALUS (OFFSTAGE) (CONT'D)

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.

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. 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 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...? Dat's what I am.

RAU

(Admittingly)

I'm the bitch here.

MALUS

I read dat. Ya invasive and always in our faces. Ya 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, ya 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 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.

End of "GREEN CARD"

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 Salontro. 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. 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.

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 "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 "*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... 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

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 *dat*? I'll clean dat dirt in ya 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.

PYRUS sits in that tanning bed.

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 DAT 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 see a gleaming PYRUS.

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 DAT 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

WE HAVE MADE IT.

TURN OVER TO OUR NEW LIFE.

NEW LEAVES ARE MADE.

TURN OVER TO THIS STRANGE LIGHT.

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 FOR OUR GARDEN.

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 THE PLOT