

JOE PLANT

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EXT. SIERRA FOOTHILLS - MORNING

JOE SMITH, mid 30's, in field clothes, backpack climbs out of his pickup. His dog CHARLIE, leaps out and follows him across a field toward a strand of shrubs and trees.

Charlie stops in an area of dense shrubs. Joe inspects and handles a bush.

JOE

Thirsty, boy? We'll get you some water soon. Just let me record this stand of Arctostaphylos.

Joe kneels down to inspect some grasses.

Charlie walks around an area sniffing the ground. Stops. A squirrel runs past the dog. Charlie barks and runs after it.

Joe turns to see Charlie run into some bushes and gives chase.

JOE (CONT'D)

Charlie! No! Leave it!

The squirrel disappears into a thick clump of vegetation. Charlie stops in front of the shrubs. Continues to bark.

JOE runs over. Grabs the dog's collar. Pats Charlie.

Joe looks in the shrubbery.

JOE (CONT'D)

What the hell is that?

A STRANGE PLANT in flower growing out of the shrubbery stands out.

It has a long winding tendril growing out of the center of the flower. Joe touches and inspects it.

JOE (CONT'D)

Can't figure out which family this thing belongs to. It has traits of Asteraceae, Apocynacea and Cucurbitaceae.

Joe handles and inspects one of the leaves.

JOE (CONT'D)
Probably an introduced invasive
species.

Joe takes several pictures of it with his tablet. Puts the
tablet in his backpack. Collects a specimen in a baggie.

Looks down at Charlie.

JOE (CONT'D)
Maybe someone back at the office will
have an idea what it is. If not, the
lab will tell us.

Charlie stares at Joe. Wags his tail.

Joe removes the flower as a specimen.

The Strange Plant's tendril extends out like a striking
snake. It stabs Joe on the palm of his hand. He quickly
withdraws his hand.

JOE (CONT'D)
YEEOWW! What the f...

Joe's hand is bleeding. He inspects the wound.

JOE (CONT'D)
Son of a bitch!

Joe glances at the Strange Plant with an annoyed expression.
Pulls out its offending tendril. Examines it.

JOE (CONT'D)
It's an attack plant on top of being
invasive. It's got to have trigger
hairs. But how did it cut me?

Puts the tendril in baggie. Sticks the baggie in his
backpack. Joe stands.

JOE (CONT'D)
C'mon, Charlie.

Joe heads toward his pickup. Charlie follows him.

JOE (CONT'D)
Let's see if I can identify this
thing with more help.

Joe inspects the wound. The blood has dried.

JOE (CONT'D)

Hope it's not toxic. That's all I need is to drop dead driving home.

Joe looks down at Charlie.

JOE (CONT'D)

So, what do you think, boy? Can you drive me to the hospital if I become comatose? Or at least dial 911.

Joe smiles.

JOE (CONT'D)

I really need to teach you to do that.

Charlie emits a couple of short barks in response.

EXT. COMMUNITY GARDEN - DAY

A native plant garden close to a homeless encampment. Volunteers watering and planting.

Joe kneels and digs a hole. MATT is digging next to him.

MATT

Joe, how'd it go this morning? Find anything interesting?

Joe places a shrub in the hole.

MATT (CONT'D)

Joe?

Joe turns.

JOE

Oh, it was let's say... interesting.

MATT

Find something rare?

JOE

Maybe. I collected a voucher of it for ID. I couldn't pin it down to anything I'm familiar with in that area.

MATT

Really! Could it be a new species? Hopefully not invasive.

JOE

Yeah, right? That's all California needs right now. It's already loaded by too many of those. I won't know anything for sure until I see the lab results.

LINDSAY, a bandanna covers her hair. Removes her garden gloves as she approaches.

LINDSAY

Hey, guys. What are you doing later? Katy and I are going to The Merchants Saloon. We'd love your company.

KATY, is working behind Lindsay. Waves and smiles at Joe.

Joe looks down at his injured hand. It now has a reddish to greenish hue. He rubs it on his shirt.

JOE

Uhhh... I don't know. Let me think about it. I'm feeling kind of beat right now.

LINDSAY

Oh, c'mon, Joe. We hardly see you anymore. You work all the time now. It's cool that you're dedicated to your research, but don't you think you deserve a break once in a while?

MATT

Don't worry, Lindsay. I'll work on him. You're absolutely right. He needs to get out more.

Joe appears agitated.

JOE

Don't you think that's for me to decide?

MATT

Sorry, buddy. Meant no harm by it. Just expressing concern. Chill, huh? Lindsay's right, though. The only time we see you of late is here. You used to hang with us a lot more.

JOE

I've got a lot on my mind lately. So, sorry if I snapped.

MATT

What about?

JOE

Oh, those damn real estate developers from Terra Commodities. They've been hanging around like vultures. Told them repeatedly I wasn't interested in selling. But they keep hassling me about it.

LINDSAY

Tell them to take a hike!

JOE

Done that all ready. They won't take "no" for an answer. They stand to make a killing if they sell this lot. For that reason, they keep raising their offer.

MATT

What are we talking about in terms of cheddar?

JOE

Last week the offer was seven hundred grand.

MATT

Dude! That's some serious cash!

JOE

I don't care about the money. This land has been in my family for over eighty years. I promised my dad before he died that I would keep it and care for it. What this town doesn't need is another strip mall.

MATT

Can't argue with your ethics, Joe. I have to respect you for that. So, now that we're cool, how about we join Katy and Lindsay later?

JOE

I guess I can stay for one drink. But not too long. Got an early day tomorrow.

MATT

Great! See you there!

INT. MERCHANT'S SALOON - EVENING

An old neighborhood dive bar. Three or four people sitting at the bar. The BARTENDER pours one of them a drink.

Matt, Katy and Lindsay at a table drinking beer.

KATY

So, you think Joe is going to show up?

Matt downs the last of his beer.

LINDSAY

Who knows. He's so hard to read sometimes.

Matt refills his glass and tops Katy and Lindsay's glasses

KATY

To be honest, I kind of have a crush on him.

LINDSAY

Yeah well, you haven't exactly been subtle about it. The way you stare at him sometimes has been a dead give-away. That's why I suggested we go out together.

KATY

There's something about his detached nature. It gives him an air of mystery. That, a nice bod and his dedication to his research makes for a hot combo. Funny, I've never really noticed him expressing any kind of romantic interest in anyone. He never talks about it. Think he's non-binary?

Lindsay shrugs.

LINDSAY

Don't know. But I do think he maybe sweet on that plant scientist he works with. He's mentioned her a few times. What's her name... uhh... Teresa I think. Yeah. Teresa.

KATY

I don't think those two are an item. I think he admires her intelligence, though. I still might have a shot at hooking up with him.

Lindsay laughs.

LINDSAY

I think you've got your work cut out for you. Just like you gaze at him, that's the way he looks when he talks about Teresa. Those same puppy dog eyes.

MATT

...And look who decided to show up.

Joe arrives at their table.

JOE

I can't stay long. Like I mentioned earlier, I have some work I need to finish at home.

Matt pulls a chair out.

MATT

Take a load off, Joe. Wanna beer?

JOE

No thanks. I'll get a scotch. I don't want to get buzzed. Like I mentioned.

MATT

Yeah. Yeah. We heard you the first time. Work. Work. Work. You damn science types.

Matt chugs his beer.

Joe walks over to the bar. Katy's gaze follows him.

Matt waves his hand in front of her face.

MATT (CONT'D)

Earth to Katy. Could you be anymore obvious? Why don't you just tell him that you want to bang him tonight? Maybe it'll take his mind off work for an hour.

LINDSAY

Matt!

Both women shoot him looks of disapproval.

KATY

You really are a vulgarian. Aren't you?

MATT

Just calling it like I see it.

Matt mocks Katy with the silly expression of a lovesick girl. He looks upward, bats his eyes and displays an exaggerated grin.

MATT (CONT'D)

Oooh, Joey. You are just so fine.

LINDSAY

That's enough, Matt.

Joe returns with his scotch. Sits next to Matt.

JOE

What are you guys joking about? It must be really funny.

MATT

Hey, Joe. When was the last time you got any?

JOE

Say what? Since when is my love life any concern of yours?

MATT

Just asking as a concerned friend.

Matt gives Joe a pat on the back.

Katy glares at Matt.

JOE

Well, if you really must know... I'll humour you. It was Wednesday, December twenty third, twenty twenty at eighteen sixteen hours.

Matt, Katy, and Lindsay stare at him.

LINDSAY

You remember the exact day and time?
You must have a photographic memory.

JOE

An eidetic one, maybe.

Joe peaks at his injured hand on his lap. Appears more green.

MATT

I've heard about that. But what we
really want to know is who was it you
did the nasty with? Surely you
remember that also?

Joe shoots Matt an annoyed look. Downs the last of his
scotch.

JOE

That's enough, man.

MATT

Ah-ha! I bet I know. You did her
didn't you? The plant doc.

KATY

Teresa?

A worried look on Joe's face.

JOE

I need to go home.

Joe stands.

JOE (CONT'D)

It's been a pleasure hanging with you
butt heads. And then you wonder why I
prefer to be alone. Have a good
night, everyone.

LINDSAY

Joe don't go just because Matt's
acting like a jerk.

MATT

Sorry, Joe. I didn't mean to pry.
C'mon, man, Don't take it seriously.

Joe heads toward the door. Katy and Lindsay stand. Both shoot
Matt an annoyed stare.

KATY

Thanks alot, Matt. You're a real gem.
C'mon, Lindsay I've had enough of him
tonight.

They walk away.

Matt downs the last of his beer. Belches.

MATT

Great. Leave. More beer for me. Good
night, ladies.

Matt grabs the picture and refills his glass.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - WORK ROOM - NIGHT

Desk littered with plant specimens, books, papers, a
computer, dirty coffee mugs, shot glasses.

Charlie lays next to the desk. Joe sits at his desk. Peers
into a microscope.

JOE

I just can't figure out what this is.

Joe sits back. Picks up the baggie with the Strange Plant
specimen. Holds it up to the lamp.

Removes the plant pieces from the specimen bag. Places them
on a clean piece of paper. One is the offending tendril that
stabbed him. He probes it with a pen.

It reveals a thorn resembling a raptor's claw pop out like a
switchblade.

Probes it several times. The pops out several times in
succession.

JOE (CONT'D)

Damn! Reacts to touch stimuli. Like a
Venus Flytrap. It's got trigger
hairs, all right.

Joe places the tendril in the baggie. Looks at Charlie.

JOE (CONT'D)

Charlie, I think it's time to call
the boss at the office. Let's see
what he thinks it is.

Charlie looks at Joe. Wags his tail.

Joe picks up his cell phone. Presses speed dial.

JOE (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Hey, Alan... I'm fine... Thanks. Did you see the photos in my report...? I'm just as confused as you are. Maybe even more so... Yeah, I can bring them in with me tomorrow morning... I agree. I think we need the Lab in on this one... Okay, see you then. Bye.

Joe stands in front of his desk. Puts the phone down. Reaches for a half empty bottle of scotch on a shelf. Pours some into a dirty shot glass. Chugs it. Sets the glass and bottle down.

JOE (CONT'D)

(to Charlie)

Yawn, I don't know about you but I'm bushed. Dumb botany humor. I'm calling it a night.

Joe examines the wound. The green hue has worsen. Lowers his arm away. Joe and Charlie walk away.

JOE (CONT'D)

It's weird but doesn't look infected. C'mon, Charlie, let's go to bed.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

Joe sits up at the edge of his bed. Yawns. Rubs his head. His skin is a pale greenish hue.

Charlie sits up at the foot of the bed, yawns, stretch, wags his tail.

JOE

I feel like crap. Like I've been hit by a freight train. Only had one shot. Had some weird dreams, too.

Charlie follows Joe into

INT. BATHROOM

Joe looks at his reflection in the mirror.

Strokes his 5 o'clock shadow. Notices his skin is a different color.

Puzzled look on his face.

JOE
What the...?

Turns on the faucet. Scrubs his face. Looks in the mirror. No change. Looks at his chest, arms and legs. It has permeated his entire body.

JOE (CONT'D)
Charlie! Can you see this? I guess you can't. You can't see color. What the hell did this plant do to me?

Charlie follows Joe back into:

INT. BEDROOM

Joe puts on clothes that covers as much skin as possible. Rushes out of the door and heads into:

INT. WORK ROOM

Joe grabs the Strange Plant specimen. Rushes toward the door. Charlie follows him. Slams the door shut leaving Charlie behind.

Charlie barks at the door.

EXT. GREEN SOLUTIONS BUILDING - DAY

A modern building with a logo and the words, "Green Solutions."

INT. DR. ALAN'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. ALAN WUNDERMANN, 50's, folder in hand, strolls over to the file cabinet. Places the folder inside. Closes the drawer.

Joe enters. Alan turns to him.

ALAN
Hey! There's the man with the goods.

Alan gives Joe a once over.

ALAN (CONT'D)

You look a little green around the gills. You feeling okay, Joe?

JOE

Yeah. I'm fine. Thanks for asking.

ALAN

You sure? I mean you don't have to hide it from me if you hit the bottle too hard last night. I've been there.

JOE

No. I only had one shot. Really. If anything, I didn't sleep well. Had some bad, weird dreams. Here's the specimen.

Joe retrieves the baggie with the Strange Plant from his backpack. Holds it out with his wounded hand.

ALAN

Aha! The mystery beast.

Alan takes the bag, notices the puncture wound on Joe's hand. Appears concerned.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Hey. That looks pretty bad. How'd you do that?

JOE

I didn't... It stabbed me.

Joe points at the tendril specimen.

JOE (CONT'D)

When I grabbed it to pull the tendril off, it lashed out and stabbed me with a concealed thorn.

ALAN

Seriously? Wow! An overtly defensive response. Usually, a reaction to touch stimuli is not so aggressive. Like a Mimosa closing its leaves. Wild!

Alan inspects the bagged specimen.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Now I'm just as anxious as you are to get some sort of classification on this. I'll get it over to Teresa at the Plant Genomics Lab.

Alan gives Joe another glance of concern.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Why don't you take the rest of the day off. You're not looking too well. Maybe a trip to the doctor would do you some good.

JOE

I think all I need is a good night's sleep. As I mentioned, I didn't sleep too well.

ALAN

Whatever it takes, Joe. See you tomorrow.

Alan gives Joe a pat on the back. Joe heads toward the door. Stops. Turns.

JOE

Oh hey, say hi to Teresa for me.

Alan winks and casts a knowing glance at Joe.

ALAN

Sure thing, Joe. I will.

INT. JOE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joe is covered by a blanket and bed sheet. Tosses and turns. Moans.

Charlie is lying on the floor at the foot of the bed. Charlie picks up his head. Looks toward Joe. Whines. Tilt's his head.

Joe's foot is exposed. It reveals stems, twigs and leaves growing out of it.

Joe sits up. Charlie continues to whine. Joe is breathing heavily. Tries to catch his breath and compose himself.

Green foliage has sprouted out of his entire body. Including stems, vines and leaves of varying size and thickness, from the top of his head down to his feet.

Joe reaches over to a nightstand and turns on a lamp. The light reveals his complete transformation.

Charlie barks at him.

JOE

It's Okay, boy. It was just a bad dre...

Joe looks down. Screams repeatedly. Looks at his hands. Eyes wide with terror. Continues to scream.

Charlie barks and growls with fear.

Joe, in boxer shorts, jumps out of bed. Charlie follows him into:

INT. BATHROOM

Joe peers into the mirror, still breathing heavily. Stares wide eyed at his reflection. Slides to the floor with his back against the wall.

Looks down at his whole body. Runs his fingers of both his hands through the foliage on his head. Sobs.

JOE

What's happened to me? I'm a, I'm a fricking plant man...

Charlie props himself on Joe's arm. Whimpers and barks. Licks Joe's face.

Joe walks out of the bathroom and into:

INT. WORK ROOM

Joe heads for his desk. Reaches for the bottle of scotch. Hands are trembling. Drinks heavily from the bottle. Gags and regurgitates all the scotch, coughs violently. Falls to the floor.

His system no longer tolerates alcohol. Crawls over to a side table. Still coughing, pulls a drawer open and picks up a rolled blunt and a lighter. Lights it up. Props himself up against the side table. Takes a long drag of the joint. Sighs.

JOE

That's better. But I'm still a plant man. So, what Family am I?

Joe feels the effects of the Cannabis, laughs and cough.

Charlie sits down next to him. Continues smoking.

JOE (CONT'D)
Asteraceae? Apocynaceae? Fabaceae?
Cannabaceae?

Joe slumps onto the floor. Lies down. Stares at the ceiling.
Continues to smoke and laugh. Pats Charlie.

JOE (CONT'D)
You're a good boy. You're always
there for me... Even if I am a plant
man.

Continues to laugh.

INT. WORK ROOM - MORNING

Light filters through the windows.

Joe, still in his boxer shorts is snoring.

Charlie asleep at his feet, wakes up. Yawns. Looks at Joe.
Sniffs Joe's feet and lower legs. Urinates on Joe's foot.

Joe wakes up. Touches his foot. His feet resemble the woody
root base of a tree. Sits up with a fatigued look. Stares
crossly at Charlie.

JOE
Charlie! What did you do? You peed on
me you bastard! You've never done
this before! What the hell!

Charlie gives him a doggie guilt glance and grumbles.

Joe walks into:

INT. BATHROOM

Joe grabs a hand towel. Wipes Charlie'S mark off his foot.
Stands in front of the toilet as a matter of habit... Looks
down. His arms are akimbo.

JOE
Wait a minute. Damn! Where'd it go?!
Guess it's transpiration from here on
in.

Joe removes his boxer shorts, Tosses them on the floor.

JOE (CONT'D)
Well, I don't need these anymore.

Heads into:

INT. KITCHEN

Charlie follows Joe into the kitchen.

Joe heads for the refrigerator. Opens the freezer. Pulls out a burrito. Nukes it in the microwave.

Charlie looks up at Joe and barks.

JOE (CONT'D)
Hungry boy? Okay.

Joe grabs a bag of dog kibble out of a cabinet. Pours it into Charlie's bowl. Charlie gobbles it down.

Joe sets the dog bag down.

Microwave chimes. Joe removes the burrito, unwraps it. Proceeds to consume it. His body reacts badly. Joe covers his mouth, runs over and retches into the sink. Turns on the water to drain the vomit down the sink.

A disappointed look on Joe's face. He strolls over to Charlie. Pats him on the head.

JOE (CONT'D)
Damn! Looks like I can't put anything in my stomach anymore. Charlie, I think I'll check the garden out to forget about this. I'm still hungry, though. Weed does that to me.

EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - DAY

Front door opens. Joe, a cap, sunglasses, full-length coat peeks out. Makes sure no one is around. Slinks out and closes the door behind him.

He attempts to make it to his truck unnoticed.

Halts when hearing the familiar voice of an old lady living next door.

BETTY (O.C.)
JOEY? Is that you?

Joe cringes, turns.

JOE
Oh, hi Mrs. Weber.

BETTY WEBER, 70's, wears a straw hat, gardening gloves, holding pruning shears. Peers over her privet hedges.

BETTY
I haven't seen you in a while. How are things? Are you okay? Why are you wearing that heavy coat? It's eighty degrees out.

Joe jogs over to his truck.

JOE
I'm fine. Just a bit under the weather. That's all. Sorry I can't stay and talk. I'm in a rush. Late for work.

She watches him enter his truck. The engine start. It pulls out onto the street.

BETTY
(yells)
Okay. You take care now. (She yells at him now). I'll be at the Community Garden later to volunteer.

The truck zooms down the street.

She waves.

BETTY (CONT'D)
Such a sweet boy... wonder why he isn't married yet.

She turns her head.

BETTY (CONT'D)
Arthur... What do you think of the idea introducing your niece to Joey...? Arthur! Do you hear me?

EXT. COMMUNITY GARDEN - DAY

Joe's truck pulls up next to the side of a chain link fence that borders the garden. Climbs out.

Looks around. No one else is in sight.

Takes off his coat, hat, sunglasses. He unlocks the gate.

Walks through the garden. Hear voices. Looks down at a cluster of MUSHROOMS in front of his feet.

MUSHROOM #1

And who are you?

Joe's face shows disbelief.

MUSHROOM #2

Aha! A new sucker I can live off of. Maybe I'll throw in a little root rot while I'm at it.

MUSHROOM #3

You say that to every new plant in the garden. Shut up all ready.

Joe holds his head and shakes it with disbelief.

JOE

I can't believe I am actually hearing this.

Joe hears the voice coming from a MADRONE TREE.

MADRONE TREE (O.C.)

You hungry? Fast food is over here. Help yourself.

Joe turns his head towards the Madrone Tree next to a compost bin. The Madrone Tree points one of its branches at the bin.

JOE

How did you know I was hungry?

MADRONE TREE

We're plants. We sense things. We're like what you humans refer to as empaths. You are now no longer entirely human. So now we understand each other.

Joe strolls over to the compost bin. Lifts the lid and peers into it.

Joe's P.O.V. A moist dark mass of decomposing plant matter with the occasional earthworm wriggling at the surface.

A slight look of disgust.

MADRONE TREE (CONT'D)

C'mon, it ain't bad at all. I just had a few quarts today. And I feel great!

Joe grabs a handful of compost... looks at the clump in his hand. Some earthworms writhing within the material. Holds it over his mouth, tilts his head back and takes the plunge. He inserts it and chews down a bit. Swallows.

JOE

Mmmm... not bad.

Joe continues to consume several more handfuls of compost. A BUCKWHEAT bush starts a conversation with him.

BUCKWHEAT

So, when did you change? You were still a human not too long ago.

Joe continues to eat.

JOE

A few days ago. Some alien plant stabbed me on my hand.

MUSHROOM #2

Alien? You mean like from another planet? Everyone hear that? We've got alien plants visiting us here!

JOE

I don't know where it's from. It stabbed me and then I turned into this. I can't believe I'm explaining this to a mushroom.

MUSHROOM #1

Looks like you have a lot to learn about plant etiquette. And fungi are a very curious Kingdom. We also like sharing information. Right now, thousands of other plants and fungi are hearing this. So, be careful what you say, "Ape Plant".

All the plants in the garden start to laugh hysterically as the Mushrooms chant.

MUSHROOM #1 (CONT'D)

Ape Plant! Ape Plant! Ape Plant! Ape Plant!

MUSHROOM #2

Ape Plant! Ape Plant! Ape Plant! Ape Plant!

MUSHROOM #3

Ape Plant! Ape Plant! Ape Plant! Ape Plant!

Joe shoots them the bird. Starts to walk out of the garden. As he exits, he looks back.

JOE

You seem to forget who first planted you here and cared for you! That's no way to talk to your grower. Ungrateful bastards!

The Madrone Tree manages to silent the taunting plants.

MADRONE TREE

That's enough, everyone. I think we made our point. Leave him alone now. Remember, he's half human. If anything, take pity on him. He'll never be one of us.

The plants watch Joe walks to his truck, puts on his coat, hat, sunglasses. Hops into his truck and drives off.

MUSHROOM #2

Oh , did we make him cry? Did we hurt his ego?

BUCKWHEAT

Shut up, Myco. You started enough trouble all ready. All I need is for him to withhold water from us as an act of retaliation.

EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - DUSK

Joe's truck is parked out front. Joe exits the vehicle without his disguise. Looks around and sets his arborescent feet on the street. Runs in front of the truck.

He heads into:

EXT. JOE'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Opens to a field bordered by a wooded area of mixed trees.

We follow Joe as he walks and talks to himself.

JOE

So, I'm an ape plant... A group of mushrooms calls me an ape plant. And I understand them. I wonder what else they called me while I was still human.

Something yanks on the leaves that cover his back. He looks up... stops, looks behind him.

A deer is browsing on the leaves and twigs on his back. Joe swerves an about face. Holds his hands up.

JOE (CONT'D)

Hey! Knock it off! Shoo!

The deer ignores Joe and continues to browse off his back and arms. Joe continues to wave his arms at the deer.

JOE (CONT'D)

Stop it! Get! Scram!

The deer continues to browse on Joe.

Joe starts to run away. Sees squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, mice, birds and insects of various species. They all stare at him. He comes to a halt.

JOE (CONT'D)

Uh oh...

Joe runs off.

The animals chase after Joe. He runs toward his neighbors house. Leaps over the shrub bordering the backyard of their house.

The animal pack stops at the hedges.

EXT. WEBER'S BACKYARD - SAME

Joe collapses to the ground. He leans up against the shrubbery, lowers his head, groans. Falls asleep.

EXT. WEBER'S BACKYARD - DAWN

The sound of birds chirping, a lawn mower, a jet flying overhead. Soon the sound of manual hedge clippers getting louder and louder and Betty's cheerful humming.

Betty wears a straw hat and garden gloves. She gets closer and closer to Joe. He is still asleep. Her clippers reach the top of Joe's head and trims his foliage.

Joe opens his eyes. Looks up to see the clippers cutting the leaves on his head. Screams. Betty and Joe face each other.

She stops. Screams at Joe. All she sees and and hears is a screaming shrub. They look at each other and continue to scream.

Betty drops the clippers, backs away putting her hand on her heart. Continues to scream non-stop.

Joe stands, hoists himself over the hedge.

EXT. JOE'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

The sound of Betty screaming.

BETTY (O.S.)
(yells)
Arthur! Arthur!

Joe falls and runs.

EXT. WEBER'S BACKYARD - SAME

ARTHUR hurries out from the house. Strolls over to here.

BETTY
Did you see that?

ARTHUR
See what?

BETTY
The hedge! The hedge! It got up and
ran away!

Arthur sighs.

ARTHUR
Oh Lord, Betty I think we need to get
you to the Doc and change the dosage
of those pills.

EXT. FIELD - DUSK

Joe walks towards his house. Doesn't notice a DOG WALKER with four dogs. She unleashes the dogs.

The largest dog stops playing. Sees Joe in the distance. Barks. The four dogs chase toward Joe. Joe stops, looks over his shoulder.

JOE
(moans)
Oh no. Not again.

The Dog Walker chases after them.

DOG WALKER
Hey! Come back!

Joe runs toward his house. Hops over the fence to his backyard just in time.

The dogs stop at the fence. They bark and jump.

The Dog Walker catches up to them. Grabs the large dog and leashes it. Wrangles up the other dogs.

DOG WALKER (CONT'D)
What were you guys chasing? C'mon.

The Dog Walker leads her pack back into the field.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Joe closes the back door behind him. Leans up against it. Tries to catch his breath.

Charlie, tail wagging walks up to him. Sniffs Joe's tree-like feet. Urinates on them. Joe looks down with a look of disgust.

JOE
(moans)
Charlie! Ohhh!

EXT. GREEN SOLUTIONS BUILDING - DAY

Vehicles enter and exit the parking area. People come and go.

Joe hides behind some bushes bordering the building. Peers out from behind them.

TERESA HAYES, mid 30's, climbs out of her car. She walks toward towards the entrance.

Joe watches her. Stems grow out of his shoulder and chest. At the tip of each a bud appears. The buds open and produce flowers.

Joe looks at his chest, shoulders and Laughs.

JOE

So, this is how it's going to be from now on? I guess I can live with that.

A HUMMINGBIRD hovers and circles Joe. A BUMBLEBEE also hovers around him. Joe ducks and dodges them.

Hummingbird appears frustrated.

HUMMINGBIRD

Would you mind staying still! How else are we gonna drink your nectar? You want your pollen spread or not?

Joe reacts with annoyance and stands still.

JOE

You're explaining to me the intricacies of plant sex? I'm a botanist, you know. You're preaching to the choir.

HUMMINGBIRD

Look, pal. I have no idea what a botanist is or what you're talking about. The two of us just got the message that your flowers are available. We've come for a meal. Are you gonna let us drink or not?

The Hummingbird and bee stare him down. Joe responds with open arms.

JOE

Help yourselves.

Hummingbird and the Bumblebee drink nectar from his flowers. Joe's facial expression shows pleasure.

JOE (CONT'D)

Oooh. Aaah.

The Hummingbird hovers in front of one of Joe's flowers. Hummingbird looks up at Joe.

HUMMINGBIRD

It's time for my mid-morning nap. Do you mind if I catch some z's in your foliage for awhile?

JOE

I guess it's Okay. By the way, my name is JOE. What's yours? I mean if you're going to nap in my foliage I should at least know your na...

Before Joe has a chance to finish his sentence, the Hummingbird darts into his head foliage followed by the bumblebee.

Joe looks at his head.

HUMMINGBIRD

Later, Joe.

JOE

I've now become a motel for sleepy pollinators. What the hell. Time to sneak into the Lab to check the analysis report on that specimen.

Joe enters the building.

INT. PLANT LABORATORY - DAY

Located on the second story of the building.

A tidy well lit sterile environment filled with computers, desks, file cabinets, analytical equipment, shelves with plant specimens, glassware.

Joe enters. Reaches into the hopper and grabs a stack of reports. Holds one close. Flips through the pages seeking the analysis of the STRANGE PLANT specimen.

A crash of glassware in the background.

Joe peeks over his shoulder. Teresa is in the doorway.

Her hands are frozen in the position they assumed when they were holding a tray of vials. They shatter into pieces on the lab floor. Teresa appears to be in shock.

Joe takes a small step towards her.

JOE

Teresa.

She runs out of the lab.

JOE (O.C.) (CONT'D)
Wait... it's me, Joe.

Teresa stops. Peers over her shoulder at him.

JOE (CONT'D)
Look at me, Teresa.

She gives him the once over.

TERESA
Is this one of your pranks? I didn't realize the company was having a costume party.

Teresa walks toward Joe. Peers into his face.

JOE
No. It's not a joke. I've mutated.

TERESA
Those are your eyes. That's your voice. But how...

JOE
The strange plant. The one I submitted the samples for analysis two days ago. It stabbed me and caused this.

Teresa touches the foliage on Joe's face. Feels a leaf. Suddenly, a stem grows out of one of Joe's shoulders and a flower blossoms out of it. Teresa emits a chuckle of surprise.

TERESA
Ooh. An inflorescence. I should take a sample. You're not going to try and stab me also?

Teresa reaches for a vial and a pair of tweezers on a nearby table.

JOE
Do you have any results yet?

Teresa continues to take samples. Plucks a few pieces of the flower and places them in the vial.

TERESA

Now you know we don't get results that quickly. Maybe something in a week. Mapping, well that takes a bit longer.

Teresa holds a syringe.

Joe stares at it.

JOE

What's that for?

TERESA

Give me your arm.

JOE

Why?

Teresa stabs Joe's forearm to draw blood.

JOE (CONT'D)

Ow!

A thick translucent green fluid fills the barrel. She holds the syringe up to inspect it.

TERESA

Huh! Looks like sap. You really have changed. Haven't you?

JOE

Certain things about me haven't changed. My feelings for you haven't.

Teresa and Joe look at each other. She sighs.

TERESA

Joe, we talked a long time about this. It just won't work for us. I'm sorry. Anyway, a one-night stand on a desk during an office Christmas party does not constitute a relationship.

Joe looks crestfallen.

JOE

But you know I've felt this way about well before that happened.

TERESA

It was just Pity Sex, Joe.

JOE
Pity Sex!?

A voice from outside the lab.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Dr. Hayes? Teresa? I've got those
archived reports you were asking for.

Teresa looks at Joe.

TERESA
If you don't want anyone else to see
you like this, I suggest you get your
skinny grass ass out of here.

Joe jogs over to a window and jumps out.

He wails as he falls and lands with a thud.

Teresa shakes her head and rolls her eyes.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
Hard to believe sometimes that man is
a plant scientist. I think I've seen
a smarter head on a lettuce.

EXT. PLANT LABORATORY BUILDING - DAY

Joe lying down on the lawn of the building's manicured
landscaping.

A pained expression on his face as he struggles to sit up.

Teresa pokes her head out the second story window.

TERESA
Are you okay?

JOE
I think so.

A small dog sniffs the grass around him. It sniffs Joe's legs
and urinates on them.

Joe groans in disgust and pushes the dog away as he rises.

The dog barks sharply in protest.

EXT. COMMUNITY GARDEN - MORNING

Joe on his hands and knees digging up soil to transplant some young potted plants.

Pushes some of the topsoil away from a hole he dug. Some baby plants suddenly sprout.

Joe is preoccupied with his digging. Gazes at the ground in front of him. Notices the young plants.

JOE

I don't remember planting any seeds there.

The plants continue to grow into a cluster of fully mature buckwheat bushes.

Joe waves his hand over its surface. Again, baby plants pop out of the soil where he holds his hand.

Joe laughs. Sits up. Peers at his hands. Grins.

MUSHROOM #1 (O.C.)

Whoa, Dude that's pretty neat.

MUSHROOM #2 (O.C.)

Yeah! What else can you grow?

Joe stands and walks toward them. Stares down at the Mushrooms. Stretches his arms forward with his hands open, palms down in front of the offending Mushrooms.

JOE

How about some Pacific Coralroot Orchids to suck the life out of you?

A few Pacific Coralroot Orchids spring out of the soil in front of the Mushroom Trio.

They shriek.

MUSHROOM #1

(in unison)

Noooo! Mercy! We're sorry! Make them go away!

MUSHROOM #2

(in unison)

Noooo! Mercy! We're sorry! Make them go away!

MUSHROOM #3

(in unison)

Noooo! Mercy! We're sorry! Make them go away!

The Hummingbird and Bumblebee pop out of the foliage in Joe's head. The Hummingbird hovers in front of Joe's face. He reacts.

JOE

Well good morning to you two. How was your nap?

HUMMINGBIRD

Not the best sleep with you falling everywhere. What are you doing?

JOE

What do you mean?

HUMMINGBIRD

Growing plants to hurt other living things. That's so boringly human of you.

JOE

Well, excuse me for being part human. If you don't like it, you can find yourself another place to sleep.

HUMMINGBIRD

Can you stop being a schmuck for a second?

Joe walks away from the Hummingbird. The Hummingbird follows after him.

HUMMINGBIRD (CONT'D)

I'll bet this has to do with that Babe Scientist rejecting you yesterday. Doesn't it? You're pissed.

The Hummingbird and Bumblebee fly after Joe to his truck. They hover around his head.

JOE

I don't know what you're talking about.

HUMMINGBIRD

Oh yes you do. I was there. I heard it all.

JOE

I'm going tomorrow into the hills way outside of town and try to restore some fire ravaged habitat. Want to come along?

HUMMINGBIRD

Yeah, sure. Sounds great.

JOE

Then you'd better shut up. Or I'll throw you into the compost bin. Got it?

HUMMINGBIRD

Ha! Ha! Ha! You wouldn't do that to a cute little guy like me. You're full of it.

JOE

Shut up. Just shut up.

EXT. HILLS - DAY

Sound of birds chirping. An area burned by A forest fire. Charred remains of trees, gray ash throughout the area. Random piles of remains of fences and cabins.

A gray sky. Drizzle.

Joe and Charlie stand on a cliff. The Hummingbird and Bumblebee hover around Joe's shoulders. Joe assesses the charred remains of the landscape.

He tilts his head up towards the sky. Closes his eyes... looks at the Hummingbird and Bumblebee.

JOE

Looks like conditions are perfect to establish an under story. The soil is damp enough to induce germination. So, what do you say? Shall I proceed?

HUMMINGBIRD

I say all systems go!

Charlie looks at Joe, wags his tail and barks.

Joe stretches his arms out in front of him over the ground.

JOE

Well, here goes nothing.

Joe walks forward with his arms stretched out. The ground around him springs to verdant life as he walks he leaves a cover of plant life around him.

Two FOREST WORKERS with chainsaws cut away burnt logs. Forest Worker #1 notices Joe and stops. Drops the chainsaw with a look of disbelief on his face.

Taps Forest Worker #2 on the shoulder.

FOREST WORKER #1
Did you see that?

Forest Worker #1 points toward Joe. Forest Worker #2 looks.

FOREST WORKER #2
Maybe. It's a hallucination? We're so sleep deprived.

FOREST WORKER #1
Well, if it's happening, there's some reseeded we won't have to do.

FOREST WORKER #2
(chuckles)
Heh, heh, yeah.

Joe stops. Looks at his handiwork.

JOE
I think that will do for now.

HUMMINGBIRD
What about the trees?

JOE
We'll need to wait a bit and let the understory plants mature and establish themselves. Then I'll come back and do the trees. Hopefully by then some of them will have started germination on their own. C'mon guys. Let's go home.

Charlie, Hummingbird, Bumblebee follow Joe back to his truck.

EXT. TERRA COMMODITIES BUILDING - DAY

A modern building located downtown.

INT. ELAINE'S OFFICE - DAY

ELAINE SHUDDERS, mid-40's, tall, striking, impeccably dressed, assertive confidence at her desk.

MYLES FORGER, mid-40's and RANDOLPH COPELAND, mid-40's seated across from her.

Elaine goes over to a window and stares out at the metropolis.

ELAINE

I'm not giving up yet on that Smith property.

MYLES

Have you considered showing the downtown listing to the client as an alternative? The owner is anxious to sell. Smith won't be persuaded. He's told you that repeatedly.

ELAINE

Heck NO! I showed the client the lot you're suggesting and they're not interested. They want the Smith one. It's got much more curb appeal. Right off the freeway ramp with easy, visible access and it overlooks the bay.

RANDOLPH

You've made a very generous offer to Smith. It can't be more obvious that won't change his ethics. He's a tough nut to crack. Could you suggest some sort of compromise between the buyer and the seller?

ELAINE

Meaning...?

MYLES

How about suggesting to the client they look into allocating part of the property to Smith so he can keep his garden and possibly integrate it with the mall's landscaping? Smith might be amendable to that.

ELAINE

What landscaping? Growing roadside weeds and fugly shrubs?

(MORE)

ELAINE (CONT'D)

There's nothing commercially appealing about his garden. This client would never agree to his type of landscaping. They prefer their own contractor that would design the grounds in keeping with their mall project's theme. These are high net worth people. They want rose bushes, oleanders and palm trees.

RANDOLPH

I don't know what else to tell you. It would be disastrous to the company if we lost this client due to some science nerd's eccentricities.

ELAINE

So long as I'm assigned to this project, I'm not going to let that happen!

MYLES

Oh, I have no doubts that you'll figure something out. Anyway, I have an appointment with another client in fifteen minutes so I have to skip. See you at lunch?

Myles exits the office.

Randolph approaches Elaine. Stands beside her with a look of concern on his face.

RANDOLPH

Please promise me that whatever you decide to do that it will be legal. We don't want to deal with anymore citations or boring, time consuming court cases. This company can't afford additional bad publicity right now.

ELAINE

I hear you. Don't worry Randy.

RANDOLPH

I really want to believe you learned your lesson from that previous debacle. Don't disappoint me, Elaine.

Randolph exits the office.

Elaine gazes out the window.

ELAINE

(mutters)

Joe Smith, you haven't won the war...
yet.

EXT. TERRA COMMODITIES BUILDING - DAY

LENNY LYZARD, thin, teenage and homeless, is sitting on the sidewalk. He holds a disposable coffee cup and a small cardboard sign with the words "Need money for food."

A couple of people walk by and ignore Lenny.

LENNY

Spare some change, ma'am? Spare some
change, sir so I can get something to
eat?

Elaine walks out from the building. Turns toward Lenny.

LENNY (CONT'D)

Spare some change ma'am?

Elaine reaches into her wallet and pulls out a dollar bill and places it in his coffee cup.

LENNY (CONT'D)

Thank you ma'am! God bless you!

ELAINE

What's your name, young man?

LENNY

Lenny. Lenny Lyzard.

ELAINE

Nice to meet you, Lenny. My name is
Elaine.

Lenny offers Elaine his hand to shake, she does not reciprocate.

LENNY

Nice to meet you too, Ms. Elaine.

ELAINE

Uh, Lenny would you like to earn some
extra money? It would just be a
little errand I need done. And you
would be well compensated for it. It
would buy you a lot of meals.

Lenny beams.

LENNY

An errand? Sure! I'm real good at running errands.

Elaine smiles back.

EXT. COMMUNITY GARDEN - DAY

Joe sits on the ground with his back propped up against a storage shed holding a machete.

His Hummingbird checks for flowers on nearby plants.

Joe looks at his feet. One foot propped up on his knee. A root system is visibly growing out of its sole.

JOE

These damn roots have started growing out a few days ago. I keep chopping them off but they grow back so quickly.

HUMMINGBIRD

Don't most plants have roots?

JOE

Yeah, well that maybe so... but I'm not all plant. How am I supposed to get around and do the work I want to do if I grow roots?

HUMMINGBIRD

Grow wings and hover like me?

JOE

Hah. Hah. Very funny.

Joe raises the machete and swipes it down across the base of the roots. He winces in pain and groans.

ISAIAH, a senior homeless man walks over from an encampment nestled beneath a freeway underpass. It consists of tents, bicycles, shopping carts, etc... chaotically scattered around.

Joe looks at Isaiah. The Hummingbird dives into Joe's head foliage.

ISAIAH

Hey Joe. What's up?

JOE
How did you know it was me?

Isaiah smiles.

ISAIAH
We all know it's you, Joe.

Isaiah glances at some of the homeless lurking nearby. One nods and waves at Joe while chewing on a cigarette butt.

ISAIAH (CONT'D)
Look man, we don't know how this happened to you. But one thing we know for certain is that the Lord sometimes works in mysterious ways. You're proof of that. He wanted this to happen to you. And he has made you his servant.

Joe continues root removal on the other foot. Looks at Isaiah after completing the painful task.

JOE
Well, I have no empirical evidence that God had anything to do with this. However, I have indisputable evidence that I was stabbed by the thorn of a plant that I have never seen before and I cannot identify. Then suddenly I change into this. Some correlation there?

Isaiah gazes up at the sky. Looks at the power poles surrounding the area.

ISAIAH
Don't matter how he done it. See all them power lines around here? I helped to put those up.

EXT. STREET - DAY - FLASHBACK

An electric company repair truck is parked on the side of the street. Isaiah climbs up a power pole.

ISAIAH (V.O.)
When I was a linesman for the power company for years.

He starts to repair one of the lines.

ISAIAH (V.O.)

Then one day while I was up there, I fell.

Isaiah slips and falls to the ground.

ISAIAH (V.O.)

Hurt my back real bad. Never was the same. Couldn't work no more.

BACK TO PRESENT

EXT. COMMUNITY GARDEN - DAY

Isaiah still gazes at the power lines.

ISAIAH

When I was up there workin' on those cables, I'd often look up at the sky thinkin' the good Lord was watching over me. When I took that fall, I lost all that hope that he was always there.

Isaiah looks at Joe.

ISAIAH (CONT'D)

Then I see you and now I know he never left. Look, Joe, I know you don't like it when we sometimes get a little sloppy and leave trash. But we been looking after your garden when you ain't around. Believe it or not, we like those bushes and trees you planted. And when they have flowers, they sure are pretty.

JOE

And how are you doing that?

ISAIAH

Well, there's been some official lookin' folks in expensive suits sniffing around here for the past few weeks. A coupla guys and a lady.

EXT. COMMUNITY GARDEN - DAY - FLASHBACK

Randolph, Myles, Elaine stand around the garden's fence line, pointing and talking.

ISAIAH (V.O.)
They were talkin' a lot of crap that
we didn't like hearing.

JOE (V.O.)
What were they saying?

ISAIAH (V.O.)
Somethin' about real estate. Building
a mall I think that's what I heard.

JOE (V.O.)
No! You're kidding, right?

EXT. COMMUNITY GARDEN - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Lenny is skulking around the garden fence with a gas can.

ISAIAH (V.O.)
We spot some tweaker kid show up at
the garden with a gas can one night.

JOE (V.O.)
No way!

ISAIAH (V.O.)
That kid started pouring gas all over
your trimmings pile. We figured out
real quick what he was up to.

Isaiah and two homeless men jump Lenny.

ISAIAH (V.O.)
The three of us jumped him and
grabbed the can outta of his hands.
We got him to talk. Told us some real
estate creeps offered him a C-Note if
he would burn your garden down to the
ground.

BACK TO PRESENT

EXT. COMMUNITY GARDEN - DAY

JOE
Hey, thanks, Isaiah to you and your
buddies for doing that. This plot of
land has been in my family for many
years. A lot of time and energy went
into creating this garden.
(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

Everyone involved with it will be grateful for what you and your friends did. I tell you what, as thanks, feel free to use the water here. I will leave a note for the volunteers so they don't get pissed off.

ISAIAH

Hey, thanks, man. We appreciate that.

EXT. SKY - DAY

Hummingbird is hovering in midair. Addressing the audience.

HUMMINGBIRD

So, my pal Joey has been very busy with his habitat restoration mission.

EXT. COMMUNITY GARDEN - DAY

Joe at work performing his plant generating powers at different locations.

The Hummingbird narrates, naming each area they have visited so far.

HUMMINGBIRD (V.O.)

We've been to the Pacific Northwest, the American Prairie, the Florida Cypress Swamps and finally, Michoacan, Mexico.

EXT. SKY - DAY

Hummingbird is hovering in mid air. Addressing the audience.

HUMMINGBIRD

Everything was going great... until Joe decided to work at the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve regrowing Sacred Fir Trees for the butterflies to hibernate in. They were being cut down illegally by loggers. So, Joe being Joe, you can figure out the rest. All hell broke loose...

EST. MONARCH BUTTERFLY RESERVE - DAY

SUPER: MEXICO

Joe generates fir trees with his powers. Joe is surrounded by hundreds of Monarch Butterflies which flutter around him en masse.

Two CANNABIS GROWERS hide behind vegetation observe Joe. A sketchy looking van parked behind them.

Cannabis Grower #1 peers through binoculars with an evil grin. Cannabis Grower #1 and Cannabis Grower #2 face each other, share nods.

They sneak up behind Joe. Joe's arms are raised at a fir tree. Cannabis Grower #1 stands behind Joe. Strikes Joe on the back of his head with his pistol. Joe, unconscious hits the ground with a thud.

The two Cannabis Growers drag Joe toward their van.

CANNABIS GROWER #1

(in Spanish)

I can't wait to put this stupid bush to work.

CANNABIS GROWER #2

(in Spanish)

Yeah! That's cool!

The Cannabis Growers laugh. They toss Joe in the back of their van.

INT. VAN - DAY

Joe is lying face up in the back. Sound of the doors slamming shut. Motor starts up.

INT. VAN - TRAVELING - DAY

The Hummingbird pops out of Joe's head foliage. Hovers over his face. He pecks him on his temple in an attempt to wake him up.

HUMMINGBIRD

Joe! Joe! Wake up! Wake up!

No response.

The van stops. The Hummingbird dives back into Joe's head foliage.

EXT. ADOBE BUILDING - DAY

The building borders a field of tall Cannabis plants. There are farm and garden tools, buckets, a wheelbarrow, irrigation equipment, tethered donkey, chickens.

The Cannabis Growers open the rear doors. Joe is awake. They pull him out.

Cannabis Grower #1 holds a long chain with a metal collar. Locks the collar around Joe's neck. Leads him toward the field.

EXT. CANNABIS FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Cannabis Growers and Joe face the field.

CANNABIS GROWER #2
(in Spanish)
Let's go, bush.

Cannabis Grower #1 holds the chain, points his pistol at Joe's temple.

CANNABIS GROWER #1
(in Spanish)
Grow, idiot bush and no funny stuff.

Cannabis Grower #1 pushes Joe over to a bare patch of land. Joe stretches out his arms and walks forward. New Cannabis plants grow along his path.

EXT. CANNABIS FIELD - LATER

Joe completes about an acre. Cannabis Grower #1 laughs. Cannabis Grower #2 follows. Cannabis Grower #1 stops. Lights a cigarette.

CANNABIS GROWER #1
(in Spanish)
Take a break, bush.

The Bumblebee pops out of Joe's head foliage. Bumblebee talks to the Hummingbird in a buzzing syntax only understandable between them. The Bumblebee flies off.

HUMMINGBIRD

(to Joe)

The bee just told me there's a hive
of honeybees in that nearby tree.
He's going to ask them for help.

JOE

Help? How?

Cannabis Grower #1 appears baffled and annoyed at Joe. He shoves Joe forward with the muzzle of his gun against the back of Joe's head. Joe stumbles forward and continues his growing duties.

CANNABIS GROWER #1

(in Spanish)

Who are you talking to? Are you also
crazy? Let's go plant man!

A Honeybee hive in a tree. Bumblebee flies toward the honeybee hive.

INT. HONEYBEE HIVE

Some WORKER BEES notice Bumblebee land at the entrance. He starts to converse with them rapidly in "bee". More Worker Bees congregate in a semicircle in front of the Bumblebee.

BUMBLEBEE

My friend Joe has been forced into
Cannabis growing slavery. He is able
to grow plants and restore habitat
for us. He was taken against his will
while growing fir trees for the
monarch butterflies to hibernate on
in the Reserve. Can you help him?

The QUEEN BEE appears and hovers forward from the center of the gathered workers.

QUEEN BEE

(to Bumblebee)

We hate that Cannabis. It smells bad
and of no use to us. Of course, we
can help. How many workers will you
need? Will a thousand do?

BUMBLEBEE

Awesome! Thanks! Follow me, ladies!

The Bumblebee does an about face and exits the hive.

EXT. CANNABIS FIELD - DAY

A line of swarming Worker Bees follow the Bumblebee towards Joe and Cannabis Grower #1.

Cannabis #1 still holding the chain attached to Joe's neck and his pistol in the other hand. Audible buzzing of swarming bees grows louder and louder.

Joe and Cannabis Grower #1 look up.

The Worker Bees hover over them and then spiral down to Cannabis Grower #1 and cover his face. Shrieks in pain, waves his arms while he is stung repeatedly by hundreds of bees.

Cannabis Grower #1 drops the chain attached to Joe. The Bumblebee stashes himself back into Joe's head foliage.

JOE

Thanks, Bee! Hey BIRD, can you get the key from him so I can get this collar off?

HUMMINGBIRD

I'll try.

Hummingbird flies over to Cannabis Grower #1 who is surrounded by stinging honeybees and is moving erratically, swatting at them as he cries in pain. Attached to a belt loop on his jeans is a key ring.

The Hummingbird hovers and tries to grab the key ring, but Cannabis Grower #1 movements make it difficult for the Hummingbird to place his beak on the key ring and pull it off.

HUMMINGBIRD (CONT'D)

Damn it! Stand still!

The Hummingbird manages to slip his beak through the key ring and pulls it off the belt loop. Carries the keys over to Joe. He grabs the key ring and unlocks the collar.

The collar drops to the ground on top of the chain.

Cannabis Grower #1 is still trying to escape the bee attack and crying and runs away.

JOE

C'mon! Let's get outta here!

Joe runs toward the adobe building. The Hummingbird follows him.

EXT. ADOBE BUILDING - DAY

Door is wide open. Inside there are stacks of plastic bags filled with cleaned Cannabis.

Joe runs inside and grabs a bag of weed and hurries back out.

HUMMINGBIRD

Put that back! You really want to carry five kilos of that crap with you? It'll be confiscated at the border anyway.

Joe drops the bag.

JOE

You really are a buzzkill aren't you?

A gunshot rings out. A bullet almost grazes Joe's head foliage.

Joe ducks and runs away with the Hummingbird. Cannabis Grower #2 give chase.

Joe climbs into the van. The Hummingbird flies in from a partially opened window on the passenger side.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Joe in the driver's seat. Looks for the key. Finds it in the ignition. After a couple of tries the engine starts.

A bullet smashes through the passenger side window. The Hummingbird dives to evade the bullet's trajectory.

HUMMINGBIRD

Get this tin can rolling!

Joe's arborescent foot slams down on the gas pedal.

EXT. ADOBE BUILDING

Cannabis Grower #2, pistol in hand chases after the van while firing several rounds as the speeding van disappears down the road.

He stops running.

CANNABIS GROWER #2

Pinche pendejo.

Lowers his gun.

INT. VAN - TRAVELING - DAY

Joe sees the boarder crossing ahead. He parks next to a wall lined with shrubbery.

EXT. MAIN ROAD - DAY

Joe climbs out of the van. He skulks along the side of the road. Tries to blend in with ambient vegetation.

EXT. UNITED STATES BORDER CROSSINGS - DAY

Cars advance through the gates. Border Patrol Agents mull about.

An 18 Wheeler truck parked on the side of the road next to the border crossing. Marked on its exterior with "Flores De Mexico". Joe advances toward it.

A young BOY leans out from the passenger side window of a car being driven by his MOTHER. They wait at the gate. The Boy laughs and points at Joe walking along the side of the road.

BOY
(in Spanish)
Mommy! That bush can walk!

The Boy tries to get his Mother's attention but she is busy texting.

Casts her son a look of annoyance.

MOTHER
(in Spanish)
Have you been watching those silly cartoons?

The Boy still looks out the window. Tugs his Mother's sleeve.

BOY
No! No! Look, Mommy, look!

Joe sidles up to the truck. Sees a BORDER PATROL AGENT with a drug sniffing K-9 scanning the truck and freezes. Joe tries to blend in with the vegetation on the side of the road.

The Border Patrol Agent and his K-9 walk the perimeter of the truck. The rear door panels are open to reveal boxed flowers.

Joe looks at the truck and the Border Patrol Agent and K-9.

The Hummingbird pops out of his head foliage and whispers in his ear.

HUMMINGBIRD

You still smell like Cannabis.

The K-9 sniffs around the truck. Looks up and cocks his head at Joe. The K-9 walks and leads the Border Patrol Agent over to Joe.

BORDER PATROL AGENT

Find something, boy?

The K-9 sits next to Joe's legs. The Border Patrol Agent looks at the ground. Scans the ground.

Joe's eyes shift around. The K-9 sniffs around his legs. The Border Patrol Agent is preoccupied with searching. The K-9 lifts its hind leg, pees on Joe's lower leg. Joe closes his eyes and clenches his teeth.

The Border Patrol Agent leads the K-9 away.

BORDER PATROL AGENT (CONT'D)

Good boy, Rebel. Nothing here. Let's go.

Joe runs to the rear of the truck. Climbs in. Pulls the door shut. Truck departs.

EXT. SIERRA FOOTHILLS - DAY

Joe stands in front of a dense group of trees and shrubs. Same site he found the Strange Plant.

He crouches down. Peers through the shrubs. Pushes branches out of the way. Sees the Strange Plant. It appears disheveled, scraggly, no longer in bloom.

JOE

Can you talk? I mean I want to talk to you. I can understand plants now.

Joe waits for a reply.

STRANGE PLANT

What is it that you wish to know?

Joe appears surprised.

JOE

Where did you come from? You don't appear to be a species from this planet. Or at least not from California.

STRANGE PLANT

No. I'm not from your planet. I originated as a seed from what your kind refers to as a 'Goldilocks Planet'. A world very similar to yours that could possibly support Earth based life. Similar atmosphere. Climate. Water availability.

JOE

But how did you get here?

STRANGE PLANT

Our seeds are dispersed by solar winds. These were emitted by the star our planet orbits.

JOE

So, your seeds can withstand the lack of atmosphere and the vacuum of space?

STRANGE PLANT

Yes. We go into a state of dormancy. Little to no metabolic processes. Until conditions become ideal for germination.

JOE

Very similar to many plant species living here.

STRANGE PLANT

While floating around at the other end of our galaxy, I came upon a meteor. So, I embedded myself into one of its fissures. I hitched a ride. Not having any idea where I'd end up. The meteor's trajectory sent it into your Earth's atmosphere. The heat was intense. The meteor blew up into dozens of pieces.

JOE

Yet you survived. Incredible. I can't wait to see the results of your DNA analysis.

STRANGE PLANT

The fragment I happened to be in landed here. I remained undetected and undisturbed for awhile. Gave me a chance to grow without harassment and interference.

JOE

Which brings us to present day. I want to know how you transformed me. And why? Why me?

STRANGE PLANT

I transferred some of my genetic material into you. Not in the same way as sexual reproduction. It's more like a recombinant process. You're not quite a new species. More like a chimera.

JOE

But why did you choose me?

STRANGE PLANT

It was serendipitous. You were the first human I came in contact with. When I matured enough and realized what was happening on your planet, I concluded that your species was the primary cause. It seemed logical to give you the ability to mitigate and reverse the damage. I have the ability of plant generation also but I am rooted. You still have the mobility to use the tool.

JOE

What do you mean by 'still have the mobility'?

STRANGE PLANT

Eventually you will have to allow your roots to grow out and find an area to permanently plant yourself. Being an empath, and having that connection to you, I'm aware you've been cutting them off. If you don't take root sometime in the near future, you will die. Is this why you visited me? You wanted answers?

Joe stands up from his crouched position. Kicks up some dirt with one of his feet in its direction.

JOE

And how am I supposed to continue this project of reparation if I need to root myself permanently? That doesn't make sense.

STRANGE PLANT

You still have time to make an impact. It's not expected that you alone carry the burden of restoring your entire planet. It would help to find others of your species to continue with the project. Even if they don't have your ability. There are other ways they can contribute to make a difference.

JOE

That would take up too much time away from what I can accomplish on my own. Reaching out to the entire population of my species and teaching them habitat restoration? Not practical. In the same amount of time or less, I can generate thousands, even millions of hectares of native plant life by myself.

STRANGE PLANT

Joe, you can't do this by yourself.

Joe appears irate and frustrated.

JOE

No fucking plant is going to tell me what I can or cannot do! There's got to be another solution. Maybe I won't need to root myself...

Joe grabs the withered plant and tears it out of the ground. Holds it up to his face with dramatic confrontation.

JOE (CONT'D)

We have technology now that can alter genetic code. Maybe there's a sequence in my DNA that can be isolated and changed so I won't need to take root. I refuse to just give up and accept this as my fate!

Joe throws the uprooted Strange Plant on the ground. Turns and walks away.

STRANGE PLANT

Good luck to you and your species,
Joe. It was time for me to die soon,
anyway. My work here is done.

As Joe walks away he appears pensive. He looks down, wringing his hands.

JOE

I wonder if there are any other
Strange Plants growing around here.

He looks through shrubs and around dense tree stands.

JOE (CONT'D)

I'll find each and every one of those
bastards and bury them.

Joe walks over to his truck. Unsuccessfully searches for more strange plants.

He gets in his truck and drives away.

EXT. GREEN SOLUTIONS BUILDING - DAY

Vehicles enter and exit the parking area. People come and go.

INT. PLANT LABORATORY - DAY

Teresa is at her desk. Types on her computer. Does not hear a gentle knock on her open office door frame.

Joe walks up to her... She looks up and flinches.

TERESA

Geez, Joe! You scared me. You
could've said something.

JOE

I need your help, Teresa.

TERESA

What do you mean?

Joe crouches down to her eye level. A pleading expression on his face.

JOE

I just found out that I could die soon if I don't allow the roots in my feet to grow out and plant myself permanently somewhere.

Joe and Teresa continue to look at each other.

TERESA

Well, you are a plant... Ehh, sort of. And I don't think you're an epiphyte that lives on trees.

JOE

You don't know the whole story. If I plant myself, I can't complete what I was created to do... restoring the Earth.

TERESA

That sounds pretty ambitious. How do you plan on doing that? A viral Conservation Corps recruitment social media post?

JOE

Not necessary. Watch this.

Joe walks over to a shelf in the lab that has a row of vials containing seeds waiting to germinate. He holds one of his open hands over several of the vials.

The seeds sprout into young plants.

Teresa appears awestruck.

TERESA

Damn, Joe! You're just full of surprises!

Joe walks back to Teresa. Kneels in front of her. Holds one of her hands. Looks at her.

JOE

(pleads)

Can you help me? You can use CRISPR to isolate the DNA sequence that controls my root growth and either alter or remove it. You already have my tissue sample.

TERESA

We 're not equipped to do that here. We only do plant ID for commercial projects. I would have to outsource it to another facility that specializes in that type of research. A meganuclease would need to be created to recognize and identify the sequence and that could take months. The actual manipulation could fail. It would need to be tested to deem it safe for application.

JOE

That's just it. I don't have time. Please Teresa. Please help me. I don't want to die.

Joe and Teresa stare at each other... Joe kisses her on the lips long and slow. A flower blossoms out of his shoulder.

Teresa recoils. She rises out of her chair. Walks over to a specimen refrigerator.

TERESA

No. Don't...

She opens the fridge. Retrieves Joe's sample. Places it into an insulated container.

TERESA (CONT'D)

I will label this a rush and put in a request to have this sent to another lab. I can't promise anything. What I can tell you so far is that Strange Plant sample you submitted is a mess. I can't specifically match it up with any order or family.

JOE

That I already know. It told me it's from another world in our galaxy.

TERESA

The strange plant told you that? Are you sure all these changes in you haven't slam dunked your brain? Can you tell me what the plants here in the lab are saying?

JOE

Look at me, Teresa and believe what you want. Why would I make that up?

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

The plants think you treat them like lab rats.

TERESA

Touché. Guess you got me there. I can't rush the analysis, Joe. You'll need to be patient. And now please. I suggest you leave before you're discovered. Unless you want to pretend to be a topiary that I decided to decorate the lab with.

JOE

Thank you, Teresa. Any way you can help me is greatly appreciated.

Joe dives out of the open lab window.

She watches his exit with amusement on her face.

TERESA

(mutters)

I don't know why, but I've had a soft place in my heart for him. It just won't work. Especially now.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joe is sprawled on his bed. His cell phone on the nightstand vibrates. Its screen lights up.

Joe grunts. Reaches for it. Appears annoyed.

JOE

(into phone)

Yeah.

ISAIAH (V.O.)

Joe! You better get down here!

EXT. COMMUNITY GARDEN - NIGHT

Community garden is on fire. Some homeless people try to extinguish the blaze with jugs of water and a garden hose.

ISAIAH

(into phone)

They did it man! They've burned down your garden! The kid snuck back in tonight. We didn't hear him. We're trying to put it out!

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

Joe springs out of bed. Charlie is at the foot of the bed wakes up.

JOE
(into phone)
Damn! I'll be right there !

Joe runs out into:

INT. LIVING ROOM

With Charlie at his heels. Joe reaches the front door. Stops. Turns to Charlie.

JOE
Stay! Stay here boy! It's too
dangerous for you.

Joe closes the door on his way out. Charlie barks in protest.

EXT. COMMUNITY GARDEN - NIGHT

Joe's pickup pulls up and parks. Joe bursts out of the cab. Runs to the garden's fence line. Stops. Stares at the inferno.

The glow from the raging fire illuminates his body.

Unintelligible screams are heard.

Joe closes his eyes. Cups his hands over where his ears would be. He collapses to the ground.

Screams of the plants being burned alive. Tears well up in Joe's eyes.

The Hummingbird and Bumblebee pop out of his head foliage and stare at the fire.

Joe dodges flames as he runs over to a homeless person with a garden hose. Joe grabs it. Points the hose in different directions in a vain attempt to control the flames.

The sound of approaching fire truck sirens.

Joe drops the hose, cups his ears as he continues to sense the burning plants. He screams and runs off. He passes Isaiah.

Isaiah jogs after him.

ISAIAH

Joe! Joe! Where ya going man?! Fire
truck's coming. Come back!

Isaiah watches Joe run into the distance surrounded by his
pollinator companions and disappears.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - NIGHT

Joe walks along the tracks. The Hummingbird and the Bumblebee
hover around his shoulders.

HUMMINGBIRD

You heard them screaming didn't you?
You listened to your friends dying.

JOE

I couldn't save them. I tried. But
nothing I did helped. I don't
understand how my species can be so
callous and greedy? Just because I
wouldn't sell out to those damn real
estate creeps. This is not the end.

HUMMINGBIRD

What do you plan on doing?

JOE

I don't know. I can't think straight
right now. I need to clear my head.

HUMMINGBIRD

You can grow new plants, Joe.

JOE

Point taken. But I can't regrow
there. That lot of land was my
family's property for over eighty
years. Everything about this is
wrong!

The sound of an approaching train. The Hummingbird turns to
face the source of the noise. Its horn sounds several times.
Its diesel engine rumbles along the tracks.

HUMMINGBIRD

A train is coming Joe! Get off the
tracks!

The freight train travels closer and closer as Joe walks ahead of it. Its headlight illuminates the darkness. Its rumbling and horn blowing getting louder.

Joe continues to walk on the tracks with his head down.

HUMMINGBIRD (CONT'D)
JOE! GET OFF THE TRACKS!

Joe peers over his shoulder and sees the train. The train is getting closer. Horn blowing, rumbling is louder.

Joe swerves an about face and confronts the train with a scowl on his face.

HUMMINGBIRD (CONT'D)
What are you doing? You crazy ape!

Joe faces the train with out stretched arms, hands pointing at the ground.

A tree sapling erupts to the surface within the ballast on the tracks. The sapling grows and expands in supernatural speed.

The tracks bend and tear apart as the massive Sequoia tree pushes them out of the way. The Sequoia reaches its full height, clods of dirt and rocks fall away from its bulk.

The Hummingbird and Bumblebee fly in different directions.

A high-pitched squeal of metallic friction. Bright orange sparks fly off the brakes as they are applied, as the train collides into the Sequoia Tree.

A brief pause as the chaos settles.

Joe gazes at the disaster.

The Sequoia wavers back and forth. The tree falls forward and bounces on top of the wreckage. The tree catches fire and the train burst into flames. Small explosions follow.

Bumblebee and Hummingbird return. They hover around Joe's shoulders and head.

HUMMINGBIRD (CONT'D)
You maybe a new species, but there
still is a lot of human left in you!

Hummingbird and Bumblebee fly away.

Joe stares at the scene. Tears well up in his eyes. He runs toward the locomotive.

The wailing sound of approaching sirens. Joe reaches the cab and peers through the smoke and flames.

Lying supine surrounded by misshapen metal is RON MILLER the engineer. His head has a large gash. Across from the unconscious CONDUCTOR.

Joe carries Ron Miller out. Places Ron Miller on the ground. Kneels over him.

Ron Miller opens his eyes.

RON MILLER
What the hell are you?

Ron Miller passes out again.

Joe heads back to the locomotive. Flashing lights and sirens of first responder vehicles. Joe runs off into the darkness. Hides behind the wall of a building.

Two paramedics run to Ron Miller. Another paramedic heads to the locomotive accompanied by firemen.

Joe leaves.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - MORNING

Local Police, State and Federal Agent vehicles parked outside an area cordoned off with yellow crime scene tape.

Local Police, State and Federal Agents inspect the site. Photographs, collect evidence.

City Police DET. UMBERTO GONZALES, gazes at the tree. Brow furrowed, strokes his short beard.

DR. ALAN WUNDERMANN approaches him.

DET. GONZALES
Any thoughts on this, Alan? As the botanist assigned to this case who would dump a sequoia tree on some train tracks? And why?

DR. WUNDERMANN
Well, to begin with it wasn't dumped.

Dr. Wundermann walks toward the tree. Stand next to the upended root base.

Det. Gonzales joins him.

DR. WUNDERMANN (CONT'D)

It grew out of the ground between the tracks right here.

DET. GONZALES

Grew? Are you kidding me? How?

DR. WUNDERMANN

I'm just as puzzled as you are. It would take hundreds, no, a thousand years to reach this size.

Detective Gonzales shakes his head.

DET. GONZALES

Nothing is making sense of this. Lots of holes in the evidence. Well, keep looking for those fillers. This puzzle is bigger than all of us.

Dr. Wundermann pulls an evidence bag out of his backpack. Waves it at Det. Gonzales.

DR. WUNDERMANN

I found this inside the locomotive.

Det. Gonzales looks at the bag that contains a leaf.

DET. GONZALES

Yeah so it's a leaf.

DR. WUNDERMANN

Not just a leaf. I can't identify it as anything native or familiar.

DET. GONZALES

Maybe it dropped off the engineer or conductor from a plant at their homes?

DR. WUNDERMANN

Not likely. I am familiar with most of the common species of house plants. This doesn't match up with anything I know. I also tried searching for a match on my database. Nothing. I'll have to submit it to the lab for positive identification.

DET. GONZALES

Do what you need to do, Alan. Any answers we can get from this mess is progress.

Det. Gonzales slowly walks off.

DET. GONZALES (CONT'D)

I'm going to talk to the engineer. He's the lone survivor. Maybe he can give us some clues. Time to visit the hospital.

DR. WUNDERMANN

Good luck, Umberto.

DET. GONZALES

Yeah. Thanks. I'm gonna need it.

An FBI AGENT approaches Det. Gonzales.

FBI AGENT

Just got word Ron Miller, the engineer is out of surgery. He's in the ICU recovering. Care to join us?

DET. GONZALES

Thought you'd never ask.

The FBI AGENT and DET. GONZALES walk over to a white van. Agency personnel pile into it and the van drives off.

INT. JOE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

TV is on. Charlie is lying on the couch with Joe. Smokes a joint. Pats Charlie.

JOE

I've done something terrible, Charlie. I've messed up. I don't know what to do. Maybe I should turn myself in and get it over with. I'm screwed.

Charlie moves over and licks Joe's leafy face.

JOE (CONT'D)

Can you just see me in prison? What would they do with me? Put me in a cell with a grow light and watering can?

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)

Or maybe they wouldn't consider me human anymore and just execute me like a rabid dog who bit someone. Oh man. Maybe I should just run away. It would be easy for me to hide. Better that I mostly stay outdoors for photosynthetic reasons, anyway.

Cell phone rings. Joe picks it up. Looks at the screen.

JOE (CONT'D)

Hey...

INTERCUT: PHONE CONVERSATION

TERESA

Joe, we need to talk. And I mean not on the phone. Can you come over here?

Joe sits up.

JOE

Uhh, sure. Where are you? The lab?

Joe stands.

TERESA

No. I'm home. I'll text you my address. Please get here asap.

Teresa appears worried. Holds up the evidence bag with the leaf and inspects it.

JOE

Okay. I'm leaving now.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE ROOM - NIGHT

Ron Miller in bed with a bandage on his head. A NURSE checks the IV and monitors.

Det. Gonzales and the FBI Agent enter.

DET. GONZALES

Mr. Miller, I'm Detective Gonzales from City Police. How are you doing? Surgery went okay?

Ron Miller pauses. Musters the strength to answer.

RON MILLER

I hurt like hell but I'm so doped up, I don't care. The surgery was long.

DET. GONZALES

It's good to hear you have a sense of humor. I am wondering if you could answer a few questions. Any information you could give us to help solve this case would be greatly appreciated.

RON MILLER

What do you want to know? The freakiness of the whole thing?

DET. GONZALES

What was freaky about it?

RON MILLER

I didn't drink any booze that day. You guys can do a blood test on me. I swear I wasn't drinking. I slept good the night before. I wasn't hallucinating.

DET. GONZALES

Mr. Miller, rest assured, you are not considered a suspect in this case.

RON MILLER

I saw in the distance what looked like a guy walking on the tracks. I blew the horn so many times. But he wouldn't leave. Instead, he stopped and turned around to face us. So, my first thought he's some poor guy wanting us to help him end it all. Suddenly, this giant tree just springs up fast right out of the tracks. I applied the brakes but it was too late. Then it all went black. I don't know how long I was out.

Ron Miller pauses to catch his breath and gather his thoughts.

DET. GONZALES

Take a break if you need to. This is all good information, Ron. Continue when you feel like it.

RON MILLER

When I woke up, I was on the ground. Not inside the cab anymore. I saw and smelled things burning. And then I saw him.

DET. GONZALES

Who did you see, Ron?

RON MILLER

I guess he was the guy who rescued me? I don't know if he was the same guy on the tracks. But he really wasn't a guy.

DET. GONZALES

Was it a woman?

RON MILLER

No. No. I don't know. He was looking and kneeling over me. Checking me out. As if to see if I was okay. He looked like a, like a...

DET. GONZALES

Like what, Ron?

RON MILLER

Like a tree. A bush. He had green leaves all over him.

Det. Gonzales casts a sideways glance at the FBI Agent.

DET. GONZALES

You've been very helpful. I think that will do for now. Get some rest. We might come back tomorrow.

Det. Gonzales and the FBI Agent step into:

INT. CORRIDOR

Det. Gonzales and the FBI Agent converse amongst themselves.

FBI AGENT

I think he was in shock and too concussed at the time. That may have distorted his perceptions. A man that looks like a tree? He wasn't seeing things clearly.

DET. GONZALES
Maybe. Maybe not.

Det. Gonzales walks away. FBI Agent follows him.

FBI AGENT
What do you mean by that? Umberto, is there something else you need to tell me?

INT. TERESA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Teresa holds a glass of wine. Sitting on the couch. Looks at the evidence bag with the leaf in it. A knock at the front door. She heads into:

INT. FOYER

Teresa opens the front door to see Joe in the doorway. She heads back into:

INT. LIVING ROOM

Joe follows Teresa in.

She picks up the evidence bag. Shows it to him. He takes it and looks at its contents. Looks perplexed and concerned.

JOE
Where did you find this?

TERESA
Alan submitted it to me today for analysis. He is the assigned forensic botanist on that train accident case. It was found inside the locomotive at the disaster site.

Joe stares at the leaf with grave concern.

TERESA (CONT'D)
You know about the train accident that happened last night, don't you?

JOE
Train accident? Was that why I heard an explosion and saw fire?

TERESA

And that full grown sequoia tree that happened to be on the tracks which they believe caused the disaster?

Joe's expression changes to sadness and looks down at the floor.

TERESA (CONT'D)

What the hell, Joe. Why would you do something like that? Tell me why? WHY?!

Joe sits on the couch. Covers his face with his hands. Sobs.

JOE

I don't know. I don't know. I screwed up. Oh God! It was all too much for me.

TERESA

What do you mean?

Teresa sits next to Joe.

JOE

Everything. The Strange Plant telling me I have to take root or I'll die. And then losing the community garden to arson.

TERESA

Someone set the garden on fire?

Joe looks at her. His eyes filled with tears.

JOE

I heard them screaming. The plants in the garden. They were burning up and crying in pain. They called to me to save them. I tried. But I couldn't. It was more than I could bear.

Joe hugs himself against her. She reluctantly embraces him.

JOE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry for everything I've done.

TERESA

Have you thought of turning yourself in?

Joe sits back up. Holding back his tears.

JOE

I have. It's my only recourse other than just running away. But what would they do to me if I did? Look at me, Teresa. I'm a freak. Would I be given a trial by jury? Or would they execute me on sight like some gothic monster?

TERESA

Why would they execute you? You would be regarded as a scientific anomaly and made to do penance through research and...

JOE

Experimentation? Is that what you were going to say?

TERESA

Look at all the good you could do for the world. It would be downright stupid to kill you. As a scientist, I could provide expert testimony on your behalf and recommend that you be treated fairly and humanely; emphasizing the potential good that could be developed from your powers. From your genetics.

JOE

I am already doing some of that on my own, Teresa. I just haven't announced it to the world.

Teresa takes one of Joe's hands. Holds it in hers.

TERESA

Well, maybe it's time the world knew about it.

Joe stares at her tenderly. A couple of flowers sprout from his shoulders.

JOE

Can I stay here tonight? I just don't want to go back home right now. That would be the first place the cops would be looking for me. I need some time to think.

Teresa thinks for a moment.

TERESA
Sure, you can, Joe.

JOE
Thank you.

Joe hugs her again.

INT. TERESA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Teresa is lying in bed in her underwear. She stretches her arms out and yawns. Sits up and looks to the left side of the bed. The pillow on that side has the impression of someone who has slept on it. There is some light green powder on it. She looks around.

TERESA
Joe? Joe? Where are you?

She gets out of bed and stands up. She looks down at her torso and notices she is coated with light green powder. Some of it falls off as she stands. She picks some of it up. Feels it. Smells it and appears puzzled.

TERESA (CONT'D)
What the... Pollen? Are you kidding me?! Joe? Are you still here?

Teresa checks the bathroom.

INT. KITCHEN

Teresa places her hands on her hips and gesticulates, expressing her exasperation. Grabs her cell phone off the kitchen table. Speed dials Joe's number. It goes straight to voice mail.

She texts him. Slams the phone down on the table.

TERESA
Damn you, Joe! I'm gonna kill that man! Err... Plant. Plant man! Ugghh.

EXT. COMMUNITY GARDEN - MORNING

Burnt remains. Joe kneels. He inspects the remains of some of the plants. Touches one of the blackened shrubs. Another shrub of the same species grows out of the soil next to it.

He appears sad. Looks around. Walks over to the scorched and partly melted shed. Opens the door. Reaches for a machete. Sits next to the shed. Lops off the roots on the bottoms of his feet. Winces with each stroke of the blade.

An unmarked sedan pulls up next to the garden's entrance. Det. Gonzales and a POLICE OFFICER climb out.

Joe looks up. Stops his root cutting. Gets up, opens the lid to the compost bin, climbs in, slams the lid shut.

Det. Gonzales and the Police Officer stroll into the garden. Look for evidence. The Police Officer kneels down and looks at a green bush. It stands out against the blackened soil and burnt shrubs surrounding it.

POLICE OFFICER
Detective Gonzales, look at this.

Det. Gonzales walks over. Looks at the bush.

DET. GONZALES
Now, that's interesting.

POLICE OFFICER
I'd say so, sir.

DET. GONZALES
Would a bush grow back that quickly after a fire from a couple of days ago?

POLICE OFFICER
Don't know, sir. I'm not a plant expert.

DET. GONZALES
Let's bag that as evidence and I'll submit it to Wundermann.

The Police Officer puts on surgical gloves, pulls out a paper bag puts the bush in it.

The lid of the compost bin is slightly raised. Joe watches the Them.

JOE
Oh crap!

Joe is covered up to his chest in compost. The hummingbird pops out of his head foliage.

HUMMINGBIRD

(loudly)

No kidding! YUCK! It stinks in here!
Why are you in here anyway?

JOE

Shhh! You want to blow my cover? And
when did you decide to come back?

HUMMINGBIRD

While you were pollinating your lady
friend. She leaves her bathroom
window open. It smells nice in there
too. Not like here. Who are you
hiding from?

JOE

The cops. Are you some kind of
voyeur?

HUMMINGBIRD

What's a voyeur?

JOE

Someone who likes to watch.

HUMMINGBIRD

Watch what?

JOE

Well, if you don't know what it is,
then I guess I'm okay with it. I'm
hiding from the cops. They're here.

HUMMINGBIRD

You want those guys gone? Me and the
bumblebee can get rid of them. Yo!
Bee!

The Bumblebee flies out of Joe's head foliage. He and the Hummingbird fly out of the partially open lid of the compost bin and into the garden.

They fly over to Det. Gonzales and the Police Officer. Neither one notices them right away.

The Hummingbird pecks at and flies around Det. Gonzales. Hovers around his face. Periodically pecks his head with his beak. Det. Gonzales waves his hands and tries to duck the attack.

DET. GONZALES

Hey! What the hell... You're an aggressive one. I have a feeder in my yard for you guys. They never act like you! Cut it out!

POLICE OFFICER

Maybe he has a nest nearby.

HUMMINGBIRD

Yeah. I have a nest nearby, all right. And there's an ape nesting in crap. Waiting for you to leave.

The Bumblebee hovers around the Police Officer's head and face threatening to sting him. The Police Officer ducks and swerves to avoid contact with the insect.

POLICE OFFICER

I'm allergic to bees! I've got to get out of here!

DET. GONZALES

Okay. I think we got all the evidence we could find here, anyway. I'm right behind you. Let's go talk to Isaiah.

Detective Gonzales and the Police Officer walk over to the homeless encampment next to it.

Joe pushes the lid up higher. Struggles out and lands feet first onto the ground. Clods of brown-black compost cover his body. Some of the lumps drop off as he moves. He brushes them off. He walks over to the garden hose and turns the faucet on. Rinses himself off. The Hummingbird and Bumblebee return to Joe.

HUMMINGBIRD

It's about time you washed that crap off. I can't hold my nose, you know.

Joe appears to enjoy being watered and sticks a couple of compost clods in his mouth at the same time, chewing and swallowing them.

JOE

Actually, I don't mind it. Ah, what more could a plant ask for? Watered and fed at the same time.

Joe looks up. His look of pleasure turns into one of grave concern. He drops the hose. Some compost crumbs drop out of his mouth.

JOE (CONT'D)

Uh oh.

Det. Gonzales and the Police Officer are questioning Isaiah and a couple of other homeless people.

JOE (CONT'D)

It's time for me to leave.

HUMMINGBIRD

Where will you go?

JOE

I don't know. All I know is that I got to get out of here. C'mon.

Joe sneaks across the garden followed by the bumblebee and Hummingbird furthest away from the homeless encampment undetected.

Climbs over the fence. Runs down the street.

Det. Gonzales and the Police Officer are conducting their interrogation with the homeless.

He is chatting with Isaiah.

DET. GONZALES

(to Isaiah)

So, you haven't seen anyone entering the garden since the fire?

ISAIAH

No, sir. At least I haven't. You can ask some of the other folk here. They may have. But so far as I know, not a soul.

Isaiah turns to the other homeless people.

ISAIAH (CONT'D)

Anyone here seen someone in the garden the last couple of days?

A toothless middle aged HADDY, wearing gloves and a raincoat and holding a coffee cup pipes in.

HADDY

Oh, you mean like that plant fella.

Det. Gonzales walks over to Haddy. Isaiah casts a disapproving glance over at Haddy and shakes his head.

Haddy looks at Det. Gonzales.

HADDY (CONT'D)

Nah. I ain't seen no one.

DET. GONZALES

Are you sure, ma'am? It would be really helpful if you could tell us something.

Haddy turns away from Det. Gonzales and goes about her business.

ISAIAH

Detective, Haddy don't have all her faculties. She's been that way since I've known her. Sometimes she wakes up thinkin' she's twelve years old. So, I wouldn't pay her no mind.

DET. GONZALES

Well, I thank you, Isaiah for informing me about her. You probably know these people better than anyone else around.

ISAIAH

Sorry we couldn't be of more help to you. We hope you find who you're looking for.

Det. Gonzales starts to turn around to walk off with the Police Officer.

ISAIAH (CONT'D)

Have you guys caught that kid who burned this garden down?

Det. Gonzales turns.

DET. GONZALES

Yep. He's in custody and being interrogated. All of you were very helpful. Soon all parties involved will be charged accordingly. That's why I was hoping you could help us again.

ISAIAH

Have a good day, detective.

Det. Gonzales and the Police Officer walk back to their vehicle.

DET. GONZALES

They know something. They're usually pretty cool about tipping us off. Don't know why they are so on the hush-hush this time.

POLICE OFFICER

Totally agree. They're protecting someone. And I wish I knew why.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

Joe is sitting next to a dumpster behind an abandoned factory building. The Hummingbird and the Bumblebee hovers around him.

JOE

I can't keep running like this. I have to relocate somewhere. Maybe I should go and live in the Sierra Foothills. Where I found the strange plant.

HUMMINGBIRD

But then your roots would grow out and you won't be able to move around. Do you want to spend the rest of your life standing next to a manzanita tree?

JOE

I'm going to die, anyway. I just don't want to die in prison. That would be horrible. And the genetic manipulation idea is a no go. What do I do?

Joe looks down, scratches his head foliage.

ISAIAH (O.C.)

You could hang with us. We'll watch out for you.

Joe gazes at Isaiah. Smiles.

JOE

Isaiah!

Joe stands up.

ISAIAH

If you have a tent, we have room for you and Charlie. And your little friends buzzin' around your head.

Joe, Hummingbird and Bumblebee smile.

JOE

It never dawned on me to consider that as a solution.

ISAIAH

Cuz you never been homeless. You have a home to go to. But now you can't go back there. Besides, if you stay with us you can be near the garden. You'll be near the food and water you need.

HUMMINGBIRD

And tools to keep your roots chopped short.

JOE

How about an exchange? I'll let some of you guys use my house while I'm hiding. I'll give you a set of keys, but if you lose them, all bets are off.

ISAIAH

I like the way you think, Joe. I don't think the others would object to that. And don't worry about them trashin' your house. I'll keep the m in line and remind 'em to be respectful of your property.

JOE

I'm not so worried about that. Whatever time I have left, I want to spend doing what I was created to do.

ISAIAH

Doing the Lord's work.

JOE

I am in no way a saint or prophet. Believe me. I've done some bad things.

ISAIAH

I hear you. None of us are. And we know what you've done.

JOE

Thank you for not telling the police
I was at the garden.

Joe gives Isaiah a brief hug. Isaiah pats him on the back.
Joe leaves some green powder on him.

ISAIAH

We want you to continue doing your
work.

JOE

I have to go back to my house now and
get Charlie and grab a few things.

Joe walks off with his pollinator companions.

ISAIAH

See you soon, Joe!

EXT. JOE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Teresa stands at the front door. Knocks gently... Knocks
louder.

TERESA

Joe? Are you there? It's Teresa.

She looks around. The door opens.

She faces it and speaks without realizing it is not Joe who
opened it.

TERESA (CONT'D)

Why don't you answer... my texts.

ACE ZERO, one of the homeless, smoking a cigarette and has a
bottle of scotch in his hand.

TERESA (CONT'D)

Is Joe here? And who are you might I
ask?

ACE

Joe's not here. I'm house sitting for
him. My name's Ace, by the way. Ace
Zero.

TERESA

Uh... nice to meet you, Ace Zero. I'm
Teresa. Joe's friend.

(MORE)

TERESA (CONT'D)

He hasn't been answering my texts.
So, I thought I'd drop by and see if
he's okay.

ACE

He seemed fine last time I saw him.

TERESA

Do you know where he is? Is he on one
of his restoration expeditions?

ACE

Restoration expeditions? Whaddaya
mean?

TERESA

Growing plants to restore scenery.

ACE

Oh yeah. Growing plants. So, you know
about that.

TERESA

Yes. Yes, I do. We are old friends.
We work together.

Ace looks upward. Scratches his head.

ACE

Let me think now. Hmmm. He mentioned
some place with an "A". Was it
Australia.

TERESA

Australia?!

ACE

Or was it Austria? Or was it Amazon?
My memory ain't so good anymore.
Yeah, that's it. I think he said
Amazon. He went by boat.

Teresa appears surprised.

TERESA

A boat to the Amazon? That's a river.
What country?

ACE

Don't know. I don't remember.

Teresa stares at Ace.

TERESA

Well, if you hear from him, please tell him to call me? I'm worried about him.

ACE

Uhh... sure thing.

TERESA

Teresa. Teresa Hayes. Here, I'll write it down for you.

Teresa pulls a sticker note and pen out of her handbag and writes it down. Hands it to him. He looks at it.

ACE

Okay, Teresa. I will tell him to call you.

Ace shuts the door in her face.

TERESA

Thank... you?

MONTAGE:

-- Joe regrowing rainforests in Brazil.

-- Joe regrowing the forest in Congo.

-- Joe regrowing the forest in Thailand.

-- Joe regrowing areas of Australia that have been ravaged by wildfires. Joe is growing back eucalyptus and other species.

EXT. AUSTRALIA FORREST - DAY

SUPER: IN AUSTRALIA

Joe sits on a log. The foliage on his head and body is turning yellow. He appears exhausted and sad.

The Hummingbird pops out of his head foliage.

JOE

It's happening. I'm dying, my little friend.

HUMMINGBIRD

Will you be able to make it back home?

JOE

I NEED to make it back. I want to see Charlie and Teresa before I go.

A yellow leaf falls from Joe's head. He catches it in his hand. Stares at it with sadness.

HUMMINGBIRD

Joe, you did good. No other human could have accomplished what you did in the short amount of time you had to do it in.

JOE

I wish I could have done more.

HUMMINGBIRD

Don't sell yourself short, ape plant.

Joe smiles. Rises. Walks off with a somewhat uneven gait.

EXT. CONTAINER SHIP - TRAVELING - DAY

Joe is lying on the roof of a stacked shipping container on the massive ship's deck surrounded by many other containers of varying sizes and colors.

He absorbs sunlight. Holds a container of water. Pours its contents on his body and drinks the rest.

The Hummingbird and Bumblebee hover around him. They appear worried about Joe's deteriorating condition.

HUMMINGBIRD

Maybe you should get out of the sun?

JOE

No. It is helping me stay alive. I need it to make sugars to keep my energy up. Especially now since I am losing some of my chlorophyll.

Joe closes his eyes. Falls asleep. The Hummingbird and Bumblebee appear sad.

EXT. HOMELESS CAMP - DAY

Joe is lying inside a green tent. Charlie is lying next to him with his head resting on Joe's chest. The dog looks sadly into Joe's face.

Joe's leaves are brown and withered. His eyes half closed. The roots on the soles of his feet have grown considerably.

Isaiah and Ace enter --

INT. JOE'S TENT

Charlie looks at Isaiah and Ace. Emits a low growl.

ISAIAH
Easy there, fella. We're friends; not foes.

Joe pats Charlie.

JOE
It's okay, boy. They're friends.

ACE
I have a message for you.

Ace reaches into his pants pocket and procures the sticker note.

ACE (CONT'D)
It's from Teresa. She wrote you should call her.

Joe's fatigued face brightens.

JOE
Isaiah, could you call her for me? I no longer have my phone.

ISAIAH
Sure thing.

Isaiah takes the note. Pulls out his cell phone.

JOE
Thanks, Isaiah.

EXT. HOMELESS CAMP - LATER

Some of the homeless people, including Isaiah, Haddy and Ace are standing around Joe's tent.

Teresa arrives.

TERESA
Is he in here?

Isaiah nods and points to Joe's tent.

Teresa crawls into:

INT. JOE'S TENT

Illuminated by a tent lamp. Joe is still lying in the same position with Charlie beside him.

Teresa kneels next to Joe. She caresses him on his head. A brown, dried leaf falls off.

Joe opens his eyes.

JOE

Hi.

TERESA

Hi. I heard you've been busy.

JOE

You could say that.

TERESA

Very impressive how you managed to travel around in the last couple of months.

JOE

Yeah well, I get around. Hey, can you do me a favor?

TERESA

Anything, Joe. What is it?

Joe looks at Charlie and pats him.

JOE

Could you take care of Charlie for me?

Teresa reaches over and pats Charlie.

TERESA

Of course I will. Oh Joe, I have something to tell you...

She watches him close his eyes and exhales his final breath. She caresses his forehead and face. She is fighting back tears. Plants a kiss on his forehead.

TERESA (CONT'D)

I was going to tell you that you're going to be a father.

Teresa exits Joe's tent.

EXT. HOMELESS CAMP

Isaiah, Ace and Haddy still standing around outside Joe's tent. Teresa is trying not to cry.

ISAIAH

Is he gone?

Teresa nods. Isaiah, Ace and Haddy appear sad.

TERESA

I'm going to call our boss. He'll want to know. Then he can contact the police. Thanks so much, Isaiah for looking after him. Oh, almost forgot Charlie. C'mon, Charlie. C'mon boy.

Teresa looks inside the tent. Charlie looks at her. She turns to the others.

TERESA (CONT'D)

Can someone help me get him out?

Ace climbs into:

INT. JOE'S TENT

Charlie refuses to leave Joe's side. Ace reaches for him, placing an arm under him and cradling his head with the other.

ACE

It's all right, boy. We only want to help you.

Ace picks him up. Charlie balks, howls and barks. Squirms in Ace's grasp. He holds the dog firmly against him as he exits the tent.

EXT. HOMELESS CAMP

Ace stands up. Isaiah places a slip loop made out of rope around the dog's neck to use as a temporary leash.

TERESA

I think you'll need to use this until you get Charlie home. Joe never used a leash on him.

Ace hands Charlie to Teresa. The dog is still whining. Teresa gets a firm hold on Charlie and starts to walk off.

TERESA (CONT'D)

Thanks everyone. I'll be back soon with Alan and the police.

INT. PATHOLOGIST EXAMINATION ROOM AND MORGUE - DAY

Joe's lifeless body is lying on a metal table post autopsy.

The PATHOLOGIST, Det. Gonzales, Police Officer, Alan, Teresa observe Joe's remains with both sadness and amazement.

DET. GONZALES

That poor son of a gun. All this time suffering with this illness but it doesn't excuse what he did. It gives me a clearer idea on his M.O., though.

Teresa casts Det. Gonzales a disapproving glance.

PATHOLOGIST

Okay everyone. This is what I found. Tox screens in progress. Not a trace of blood in his entire body. But not due to exsanguination, though. I DID find in the blood's place --

TERESA

Plant sap? Containing oligosaccharides?

PATHOLOGIST

Why, yes.

Alan looks curiously at Teresa.

ALAN

How did you know that, Teresa?

TERESA

Well, duh, doesn't it seem logical since he's part plant?

PATHOLOGIST

Not just part plant. Cellular ratio indicates about fifty five per cent plant. Major organs in coelom visibly absent. Including kidneys, pancreas, spleen, liver, and intestines. Lungs, heart and brain remaining. No evidence of disease in any of those organs.

Teresa walks away. Alan catches up to her. Taps her on the shoulder. She stops and turns around.

ALAN

So, how long did you know he was like this?

TERESA

About three months.

ALAN

Why didn't you tell me? Especially since you knew I was concerned about his long term absence. I've been calling and texting him for weeks.

Teresa gathers her thoughts before answering.

TERESA

Because I began to realize I loved him in my own way and I was protecting him.

ALAN

I could have helped him, too.

TERESA

And how would you have done that, Alan? By publicizing his condition to apply for research grants? By turning him into a guinea pig or a circus freak for the media? He would have never agreed to your exploits.

Det. Gonzales and the Police Officer walk up to them on their way out.

DET. GONZALES

Well, so far as I'm concerned, this case is closed. Perpetrator deceased. No trial. Do either one of you know if he has any immediate family we can contact?

ALAN

I think he has an aged mother living somewhere.

DET. GONZALES

I'll have a background search done on him when I get back to headquarters. But anyway, I am going to need both of you to come down and answer some questions and sign affidavits So, stick around.

Teresa's gaze follows Det. Gonzales and Police Officer as they leave the room.

TERESA

He'll probably find a reason to file charges against me for not coming forward with information. Wonder what it's like having a baby in prison.

Teresa now walks off and exits building. Alan turns and follows her.

ALAN

You're pregnant? Is it Joe's? That's amazing if it is! Teresa, just think of the scientific relevance of an event like this!

TERESA

Screw you, Alan!

EXT. GREEN SOLUTIONS BUILDING - DAY

SUPER: A BEAUTIFUL SPRING DAY

The landscaping around the building is in full bloom.

Teresa sits on the ground against one of the trees. Reading a book and sips a drink. She is noticeably pregnant.

The Hummingbird and Bumblebee hover down in front of Teresa. She lowers the book and smiles.

The Hummingbird looks down at her baby bump, hovers over it and smiles.

HUMMINGBIRD

Hope to see you soon, Little One. The World is waiting for you. Lots of work to be done!

Teresa watches the two pollinators turn and fly away off into the distance in a spiral formation up into the sky.

FADE OUT.