

# **plantasia**

## **a romance**

draft 5  
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for al and rochelle: for lunch  
and for mike: for advice

“Year after year  
on the monkey’s face  
a monkey’s face.”  
-Basho

“Even in Kyoto—  
Hearing the cuckoo’s cry—  
I long for Kyoto.”  
-Issa

“The world of dew  
is the world of dew.  
And yet, and yet—”  
-Issa

**CHARACTERS**

2 old jews:

ROSE, 67, annoying, painful, beautiful, a painter

GARTH, 65, an open space surrounded by a fence, an old hippy

the others:

PAULA, 41, Rose's daughter, or maybe her friend, quiet

TUBA JOHNSON III, probably late 40s, tuba johnson iii

**SETTING**

San Francisco

**NOTES**

continuous and sincere

real dirt, real rain

**PROLOGUE: A TREE GROWS TO MORT GARSON'S *PLANTASIA***

darkness

then

soil

a sapling pushes out of the dirt

it is small, fragile

it dances to the light

it sprouts one leaf

then two

it spirals upwards and grows more leaves

the stalk becomes a trunk

the leaves become branches

the branches grow more leaves and branches

the tree grows and grows

it blooms into a beautiful, sturdy, strong tree

as tall as the stage will allow, ideally 100ft

bigger than life

it does not stop growing until Mort Garson's *Plantasia* ends

just the first song

## 1: TOMATOES

*The tree is now the centerpiece of a tiny community garden tucked between two apartment buildings. The tree blocks the entrance, so that to reach the rest of the garden, you have to walk around it. The walls of both apartment buildings are covered in ivy. A few planter boxes with cobblestone pathways between them. Gardening tools are strewn around, maybe a little shed.*

*GARTH and ROSE sit in the sun, in cheap white plastic chairs that are covered in dirt. They both have their eyes closed, heads tilted towards the sun, palms facing up, in silence.*

*They look like they have been there forever.*

*They sit in silence for a very very long time.*

*GARTH looks down and opens his eyes.*

*He looks at one of the planter boxes.*

*He realizes something.*

GARTH

*soft*

tomatoes

rose

tomatoes

ROSE

*stirring*

hm?

GARTH

you could grow tomatoes

ROSE

*looking down*

no

GARTH

I'm telling you Rose, you / could

ROSE

NO

.

.

.

you think so?

GARTH

yes  
look  
see?  
your box gets so much sun  
and it's late, it's like  
what,  
one?  
*checks his watch*  
it's two, woah, it's two  
yeah, you get lots of sun midday  
and you get sun all morning  
*gestures to some tree (not the big tree)*  
usually that tree blocks the sun /  
but if you get—

ROSE

could you trim the tree?

GARTH

no—

ROSE

Could *I* trim the tree?

GARTH

no, Rose / it's—

ROSE

why?

GARTH

it's not your tree.  
it's Autumn's tree.  
but it doesn't matter /  
because it doesn't—

ROSE

why doesn't it matter?

GARTH

I'm telling you, because it doesn't block the light on your box  
yours gets so much sun  
all morning  
so that's—

say the sun comes up at 7  
and look how high it is now,  
light's been out for a while,  
and it probably hits your box around 9  
so, so that's  
*counts on his fingers and mutters to himself*  
at least, at least like 6/7 hours of sun,  
tomatoes will like that, that's good sun for them.

so yeah, tomatoes are a definite possibility

ROSE  
I don't know Garth  
I just.  
no  
no tomatoes

GARTH  
*giving up*  
ok

ROSE  
*lost in herself*  
hmmm  
I do love tomatoes though

*a long silence*  
*they both look at the sun again*

ROSE  
OH

*she hops out of her chair and goes to her planter box*  
*she grabs a trowel and digs a little hole*  
*GARTH goes over and stands behind her*  
*she reaches into her pocket and grabs a folded paper towel*  
*she opens it and empties the contents into her palm: lemon seeds*  
*she places them in the ground with great care*  
*she covers the hole with dirt and waters it from a green plastic watering can*

ROSE  
There!

GARTH



whatcha planting Rose?

ROSE  
my *tree!*

*she beams*

*lights shift*  
GARTH

**interlude: we're not married***an introduction*

GARTH

We're not married.

Me and Rose.

Everybody thinks we're married but we're not.

we've been best friends for over

uh

*he tries to count*

a long time

we run this garden together

for 35 years

*the big tree lights up somehow*

I planted that tree thirtyfiveyearsago

it was just a tiny sapling

now it's grown so big

things like to grow here

and we like to help them

like

that ivy?

*the ivy lights up somehow*

I didn't even plant that

it just grew

it just keeps growing

(can't get rid of it actually)

but I love it

it wraps the world into a warm, green embrace

you feel taken care of when you walk in

and see the ivy all around

you know, there's actually two types of ivy, one is english ivy and the other is boston, I don't remember which one this is, but one of them (I think it's english) doesn't die in the winter, but ours do, which is funny because we don't have winter in san francisco, but first sign of snow on

the east coast, they just shrivel up and die. It's like they know, like they know when the weather changes back home, like they miss it. plants are smarter than people think. and a lot more sensitive. before they die, though, they get big, huge, bigger than my head, these massive ivy leaves.

um

yeah, not many people notice this place  
 (sort of blinkandyamissit!)  
 but we like when someone finds it  
 when someone stumbles onto our world  
 like  
 some kids came in here the other day  
 they brought some sandwiches  
 I think they kinda found it by accident  
 but you could tell they liked it here  
 they liked the green

that box is Rose's  
 that one is mine

I've been living in this neighborhood for over 40 years, I think 41 in a couple weeks.  
 I've spent most of that time in this garden,  
 just sitting here,  
 caring for my plants  
 can't really complain, sort of got the perfect thing going on here.

the neighborhood's changing though  
 city's changing I guess  
 My favorite place, this old italian place, Lucca's, everybody loved it, it closed.  
 A few weeks ago.  
 I don't know why it had to go.  
 And I  
 I keep thinking, like, what if I went more often? You know?  
 Like I could have gone there just once a week,  
 just one more quart of ravioli or something  
 and maybe they would have made it.

*the stage gets a tiny bit smaller*  
*lights shift*  
*the empty garden*

**2: BUTTERFLY**

*TUBA P. JONES III wanders in  
no one is there  
he sits in one of the chairs  
he tests it out  
pause  
he sings a little  
he doesn't like the chair  
he gets up and moves to the next one  
he does the same routine  
a butterfly lands on a flower in one of the planter boxes  
TUBA goes over to it and watches intently  
PAULA enters*

PAULA  
Hey Tuba

TUBA  
hey

PAULA  
watchu watching

TUBA  
Butterfly

PAULA  
mm

*she joins him and watches the butterfly*

PAULA  
pretty

TUBA  
yup

*they watch the butterfly until it flies away  
lights shift*

**3: SHIT DAVID**

*GARTH and ROSE next to Rose's planter box. PAULA is sitting in a chair off to the side, watching them. The tree ROSE planted has just begun to sprout. ROSE is bending over her box, pulling weeds and moving junk to see if there's any room for a tomato plant. GARTH is standing next to her. TUBA wanders in and out throughout the scene.*

ROSE  
ow

GARTH  
what?

ROSE  
I can't bend down like this anymore

GARTH  
Then don't do it, Rose

ROSE  
I think I'll throw out my shoulder if I keep doing this—

GARTH  
stop doing it / Rose, let me help—

ROSE  
No I'm fine  
It's fine

...

*After some weeding/moving of junk*

I can feel it hurting already

it just—

*then:*

OW

oooooo

*she grabs her shoulder*

owie! oh ow!

GARTH  
Rose, you ok?

ROSE  
Gawd  
My shoulder hurts so bad  
I think it threw it out or something /

Jesus oh gawd

GARTH

Christ, Rose, sit down. You need / anything?

ROSE

i'm fine

I'm fine, thank you

*pause*

*ROSE sits on the planter box, rubbing her shoulder*

GARTH

I should build you a bench

ROSE

a what?

GARTH

a bench!

ROSE

...

GARTH

I'll build it!

ROSE

Garth no.

GARTH

No Listen

Like a—a little seat

*he demonstrates*

It would just come up from the side of the planter box,  
just swing up from the side

and you could put it down when you don't need it

Yeah that's what I'll do, I'll build you a bench

*a pause. ROSE considers this*

ROSE

No

I don't like it

GARTH  
What? Why not?

ROSE  
Garth, I just don't—

GARTH  
How can you not like it? You haven't even seen it yet, it's in my mind—

ROSE  
Garth, one of the biggest things about me is my imagination, and I don't like it.

GARTH  
Your imagination?—I'm telling you, it will be great, it's gonna help you / immensely—

ROSE  
NO—

GARTH  
*holding court*  
in your *imagination*, the bench—  
you're seeing a turd.  
A turd!  
But I'm,  
I'm Michaelangelo!  
And I am going to take that turd  
And I'm gonna,  
I'm gonna make it  
*he strikes a greek pose*  
you know!  
*he strikes another pose*  
I'm gonna make it the  
*he strikes another pose*  
I'm gonna take your *turd* and make it into the, the, you know, the, uh,  
*he strikes the most glorious pose of them all*  
DAVID!  
I'm gonna make a Shit David!

*a beat*

ROSE  
*calming him down and also shutting him down*  
Garth,  
I know you're very creative,  
you've got a lot of great ideas

this is not one of them

*GARTH sighs. He goes over to PAULA and sits down.*

ROSE

maybe you could put the gravel back in?  
the cobblestone hurts my knees

GARTH

hm

ROSE

then I can kneel next to my plants

GARTH

I'll think about it Rose.

*silence*

*birds and the breeze*

*(which have always been there we can just hear better now)*

*ROSE sits down at the other side*

ROSE

Paula?

PAULA

Hm?

ROSE

paula, what are you doing friday night?

PAULA

I don't know / I

ROSE

wanna go see that play with me?

at that theatre?

the one that's shutting down?

*she closes her eyes to picture it*

*(I can't remember what it's called)*

It's the one with the green and red stripes painted on the outside...I..

I hear they cover themselves with paint onstage and run around naked in the lobby during intermission



PAULA  
Oh yeah, I been hearing about that

GARTH  
What? Where's this?

ROSE  
So, you wanna come with me?

GARTH  
Wait, where is this?

ROSE  
Green and white stripes, you know!  
What Paula?

PAULA  
Rose—

Rose.  
I'm very theatred-out at the moment.  
We've been going to a lot of plays and I think I  
want a friday alone this week.

ROSE  
oh  
*she is very disappointed but does not let them see it*

PAULA  
Next week though!  
I do want to see it before it closes.  
say goodbye

ROSE  
*happy*  
ok!

GARTH  
Where is this?

*the stage gets a little smaller*  
*lights shift*