

INT. DAY - TAJ MAHAL PLUMBING SECTION

Two women in their sixties stroll down a canyon of plumbing fixtures. In a pink cardigan and jeans with rolled cuffs, ANGELA THURSTON is a silver fox. SARA MARTIN is short, serene and earthy wearing overalls and a men's flannel shirt with a bright scarf wound around her head. Both wear blue buttons with logos screaming "LABOR DAY: FLOWFEST!"

SARA

Shower, towel dry and go! I wish I had back half the hours back I've spent fixing my hair in this life.

ANGELA

You're brave, Sara.

SARA

I'm terrified. But a cancer diagnosis gives you clarity and no time for BS. We say life is short, but having your goodies microwaved really underscores things. Jesus, these stores are huge.

ANGELA

And bigger every year. I'm happy to push if you're getting tired.

SARA

We're close. I'm getting... green onions and star jasmine.

INT. DAY - TAJ MAHAL GARDEN STORE

A shiny blue tractor topped by a inflated maharajah gleams at the entrance of an indoor-outdoor nursery. SHOPPERS gather flora, dragonflies hover over a koi pond; inside a tent, a HORTICULTURIST instructs a SMALL CROWD on bonsai care. Near a bank of potted rosebushes, signs and banners herald the coming of "LABOR DAY FLOWFEST: ROSE-MANIA!"

Sara squints at a notebook while Angela drops seed packets into a shopping basket. Sara's cart is loaded with a tall fern, bags of soil and several planting containers.

SARA

Chemo's killing my memory, but it's enhanced my sense of smell.

Sara shoves aside overflowing planters marked "LAVENDER" and "MINT" to reach a slimy-looking barrel, then pries off the lid and takes a large whiff. Angela bends and sniffs before pulling away and making a face.

SARA (CONT'D)

I'm gonna use this to grow my own mushrooms! Thanks for coming.

ANGELA

I'm sorry we're here. The cold snap hit your Barbara Bush hard. And when I saw how shriveled your Heavenly Rosalind was --

SARA

Don't remind me. This whole year, I don't know what I would have --

ANGELA

We're neighbors 23 years, Sara. Your kid broke my kid's nose. Our dog knocked up your dog.

SARA

You stood with me through divorce, aphids and frost.

ANGELA

And cancer.

SARA

... and cancer. See? Chemo brain! Not to get all Old Testament on you, but counting divorce and the cancer, that's four plagues on my house. Excuse me! Yoo hoo!

Sara seeks the attention of a chubby TEENAGED EMPLOYEE with a Bieber cut who's wearing iPod earbuds. He yanks them out after Sara rolls her cart into his shins.

SARA (CONT'D)

Chicken shit.

The teen looks at Sara, then to Angela, who is aghast.

ANGELA

She's been sick --

Sara spins the "crazy finger" next to her temple.

SARA

Meant to say "guano," but that's  
not how I wrote it on the list.

TEENAGED EMPLOYEE

Aisle four.

He starts to slink away.

SARA

All that's left are 30-pound bags,  
and I struggle with the 15-pound  
ones! Wanna see how I lost my hair?

Sara begins unwinding her scarf and the boy skedaddles.

ANGELA

Oh, my God! It's not nice to make  
the kid run around like that.

SARA

He needs exercise. When did they  
start sweetening soda with gravy?

ANGELA

(laughing)

Stop it! Oh, jeez, I'm glad I wore  
my Depends this morning!

Sara tries to balance several tiki torches on her cart;  
Angela gives her a hand.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

Aphids and frost never killed  
anyone, Sara. But a divorce and  
cancer --

SARA

Lew left before I knew I was sick.  
The roses, they had roots. If I  
didn't have that garden and  
FlowerFest, I'd just be waiting to  
die. Divorce and illness a person  
could expect, but sapsuckers and  
cold weather are something to fear.  
You've been lucky, though.

Angela secures the tiki torches with a macrame plant holder.

ANGELA

Lucky? How?

SARA

You live on the next block, but  
your roses have done well this  
year. Extremely well.

ANGELA

You know how much hard work goes  
into --

SARA

I know exactly how hard you've been  
working. You were there when the  
aphids killed the roses I'd raised  
inside last winter. We sprayed,  
pulled them, put the next batch in,  
and don't you know, frost in May!

Huffing and sweating, the teenaged employee sets down two  
bags on Sara's cart.

TEENAGED EMPLOYEE

If you're Mrs. Martin, your plants  
are in the greenhouse.

He turns to reveal half-moons of sweat under his arms and  
more perspiration running down his spine.

SARA

You'll want to see this.

INT. DAY - TAJ MAHAL GARDEN STORE GREENHOUSE

A glass-enclosed area in a corner of the nursery. Stout,  
bearded, and in a blue apron, BILL GARRY, 58, grins when he  
sees Sara and goes stone-faced when Angie waves.

BILL

Angela. Sara! You look great!  
Aren't they beautiful? Aren't they  
gorgeous!

Bill parts a black plastic curtain to reveal several racks of  
short, squat rose plants under bright grow-lights. He puts  
his arm over Sara's shoulder.

ANGELA

Sara, you can't enter commercial  
plants in FlowerFest, only your  
own.

BILL

These are cuttings we took of  
Sara's surviving roses. 100% hers.

SARA

The toughest of the lot. Some old  
bitches just don't know how to die.

Angela looks at the plants and back at her friend.

SARA (CONT'D)

Now, what was I gonna say? I know!  
Your cousin's medical supply  
business. A few gallons of liquid  
nitrogen makes a nice, late frost.

BILL

We were too far north for those  
bugs. I made some calls; someone  
stole two colonies of aphids from a  
lab at UC Santa Cruz last month.

SARA

From the look on your face, I'd say  
those Depends are coming in handy.  
You're out, Angie. You're done.

EXT. DAY - TAJ MAHAL PARKING LOT

Scurrying with her keys in hand, Angela stops dead in her tracks. Blocking her path is VICTORIA STAPLES, a smiling wisp of a woman in her early seventies. Behind her stands daughter MISSY STAPLES, a large, stern woman who favors her father's side of the family.

MISSY

Excuse me, Angela.

She steps forward and removes Angela's FLOWERPEST pin.

ANGELA

Huh? Victoria, wait. Vicki -- can  
you get me off the hook? For old  
time's sake?

VICTORIA

Can't do it, Angie.

Missy opens a door for her mother and walks around the vehicle, wrapped completely in vinyl advertisements promoting FlowerFest. Angela watches as their car drives away.

ANGELA

Ow! Dammit!

Angela swats her arm and pulls up her sleeve - a bee flies away; a CLOSE-UP reveals the pulsing stinger left behind.

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