

FADE IN:

EXT. VACANT LOT - ASTORIA, NEW YORK - MORNING

Abandoned lot. Fenced. Debris and weeds on the ground.

PAUL, mid-20s, tries to enter the gate. It's locked.

He glances around, then climbs the fence, carrying his backpack and a plastic bucket.

He jumps down inside lot, removes his hoodie and finds his rake hidden behind the broken bench.

He rakes, then pulls garden tools out of the bucket. Soon he's on his knees, digging into the rock-hard soil.

ADESH

Hey, you! What - What are you doing there?

ADESH, 40s, dark-skinned, foreign-accent, wearing dress slacks, a button-down shirt and sneakers, quickly unlocks the gate.

PAUL

Oh damn, mister -- you scared me.

ADESH

You should be scared. How did you get inside here?

Adesh enters.

PAUL

What? Oh, wow... I just... okay, easy, man.

ADESH

I asked you a question. How did you get in? I put a lock on the gate.

PAUL

Yeah, I know. What's that about?

ADESH

A lock to keep bums like you out. Collect your things and go. Come on.

PAUL

I'm just... cleaning up.

ADESH

Who asked you to clean up? Who gave you permission?

PAUL

Nobody.

ADESH

Exactly. Goodbye. Enjoy your day. Take your bag... and bucket.

PAUL

Okay. Okay. I'm vacating. Are you the owner?

ADESH

Yes and you're on private property. Go before I call the police.

PAUL

The police? Dude. Seriously.

ADESH

First I'm the man. Now I'm the dude. Let's see what you call the police when they come arrest you.

PAUL

Arrest me for cleaning up some filthy lot? I'm doing you and the city a favor.

ADESH

Hey. Don't be a wise guy. I see you... casing my place... throwing things over my fence.

PAUL

What things? When did I -- oh, wait, you mean like... last week?

ADESH

I saw you do it.

PAUL

No worries, we were just tossing biodiversity projectiles. Covered the entire city. All five boroughs.

ADESH

... Projectiles? Bombs?

PAUL
Bombs? Dude. Where's your head
at? Seed balls.

ADESH
Seed balls? What are those?

Paul opens his bag and taking out seed balls.

PAUL
Seed balls. Clay, mixed with
compost. Take a good whiff. I form
it into balls. Stash seeds inside
and lob 'em on to ugly lots -- like
this one.

ADESH
Why do you do this?

PAUL
Why do you think? To turn lots
like this one into lush green
spaces. Beautify the city.

ADESH
Oh my God. You're growing the pot
here. Is that what you're doing?
Growing the pot on my property?

PAUL
Your mind runs wild.

ADESH
You have a nerve using my land to
grow...

PAUL
Bro, I'm not growing "the pot"
here... or the Wacky Tabacky...or
Maui Wowie. Okay? Relax. Chill.

ADESH
Druggie.

PAUL
I'm not a druggie -- I just sound
like I'm stoned.

ADESH
Get your stuff. Now. I'll walk
you out. Let's go.

PAUL

Why are you mad? I'm volunteering. I pass by here every day on my way to class. This place is nothing but a dumpster for broken bottles and dog shit. It's an eyesore, man... if you ask me.

ADESH

I didn't ask you.

PAUL

You should take better care of your lot.

ADESH

And you should stop breaking into places where you don't belong.

PAUL

I didn't break in, dude, I jumped the fence.

ADESH

A fence with a lock. You're trespassing, young man.

PAUL

My bad, but I don't see it like that. No offense. Seriously. Look -- can we just start over? What's your name? My name's --

ADESH

I don't care what your mother named you.

PAUL

I'm not trespassing. I left you a million notes on your gate asking for permission to come by.

ADESH

That was you? Leaving all those flyers everywhere?

PAUL

Oh. Great. You saw them?

ADESH

How could I not? You wallpapered my entire front gate. It looked like ticket-tape parade.

PAUL

It got your attention, right? And?

ADESH

And what?

PAUL

How come you never responded back?

ADESH

I'm not your pen pal. I'm a busy man.

PAUL

Cool, I respect that. You prefer direct communication. Face to face. Man to man. Bro to Bro? Right on. Hello there -- my name's Paul. What's yours?

ADESH

That's it. I'm done with this nonsense.

Adesh opens his cell phone.

ADESH

You leave me no choice.

PAUL

Don't call the cops, dude. You don't want to do that.

ADESH

Too late. It's already ringing.
(a beat)
Why not?

PAUL

Well, call me paranoid, but, I take it you're not from this country? Authorities and immigrants? Not the best combo these days, dude. Just sayin'.

ADESH

I'm here legally.

PAUL

I'm sure you are... but... eyeballing this lot, you're violating city code.