

SEEDS

22-DE03-W15

Teenage girl comes to live with her great uncle who is angry with grief and through his wife's garden finds love and healing.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - 2022 - DAY

MARIA, 16 years old, is wearing a simple sundress, her long, wavy dark hair is pulled back into a tight braid and she isn't wearing any makeup. She is clutching an old, overstuffed backpack on her lap. She's staring out the window at the buildings and concrete as they pass.

MARIA  
(to herself)  
Are we there yet?

Sitting next to Maria is BETHA a sweet-looking 80 year old WOMAN who is focused on her knitting. However, she isn't very good at knitting as the thing on her lap is a mess. She smiles and looks at Maria.

BETHA  
Ah, she speaks! You've been quiet since I got on in LA. I don't think its too much further. You in a hurry, child?

Maria looks back at the lady and shakes her head. But holding a beat, she notices the misshapen ball of yarn and raises one, quizzical eyebrow.

MARIA  
Ok, I'm sorry, but I can't ignore that.

Maria points at the ball of yarn and smiles.

BETHA  
I have always wanted to knit my granddaughter a scarf. Its the simplest thing to do but nope. Apparently God has other plans for these hands.  
(she winks)  
Ever once in a while I give it a whirl just in case He thinks its time. Now you. Where you headed?

MARIA  
(perking up a bit)  
I'm going to San Diego to live with my Great Uncle. I've never met him - he was always at sea. I love, uh, loved, spending time with my Aunt. So he can't be so bad, right?

BETHA

Oh, well lets see. Tell me about  
*her*. What do you miss?

Maria sits back in her seat then looks out the window but now see sees luscious, green trees and smiles.

FADE TO:

EXT. FARM - SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CA - 2014 - DAY

Through the leaves of large orange trees, we see 8 YEAR OLD MARIA underneath laughing. Next to her is a small basket of oranges and next to that is a flat basket with fresh-cut vegetables. She is surrounded by lush, pregnant plants.

Nearby we see MARGARITA, a Latina woman in her 60's dancing in a greenhouse. She is wearing a colorful gardening hat, gardening apron and clogs. She has some fresh-cut long, stem roses in her hands and one between her teeth. She dances out towards a smiling Maria and offers her the mouth-rose.

AUNT MARGARITA

Pthtt. For you, mi Corazon.

Young Maria squeals with delight.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - 2022 - DAY

Maria turns to Betha, fully engaged.

MARIA

Aunt Mags had a secret drawer with her best seeds. They were from all around the world and some were very old. She was waiting for God to tell her when He needed them.

Betha pats Maria's arm and looks at her lap-mess.

BETHA

I don't think God needs this -  
maybe I need to get me some seeds.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY

UNCLE BOB, a late 70's gentlemen dressed in his casual Navy pants, white dress shirt, pocket-protector and hat. He is pacing back and forth. He has white hair and white mustache and very thick 50's style framed glasses.

The train arrives, Maria exits first, followed by Betha. They look around and spot Bob standing with a large sign that reads, "Maria Nelson". Betha sees him first and taps Maria.

BETHA

Yikes. I think the first seeds you plant are daisies. They make anyone smile. That man, he needs a daisy.

Maria takes a deep breath, nods to Betha and walks toward the man holding the sign. Bob sees her approach and gives the sign a hearty shake.

BOB

You?

MARIA

Me.

Not offering to take her large bag, Bob tucks the sign under his arm and walks away. Maria is left standing there for a moment, then she quickly catches up.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - PARKING LOT - DAY

They arrive at an ancient Station Wagon. Maria recognizes the beast right away and runs to the passenger door to touch him.

MARIA

(excited)

No way! Bubba!!

Bob looks at Maria with surprise. Off his look she teases.

MARIA (CONT'D)

(to the car)

Do you still like your belly rubbed?

Looking disturbed and rolling his eyes, he barks and points.

BOB

Backseat.

(beat)

Safety first

MARIA

(in surprise)

I'm not 8.

EXT. FARM - SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CA - DAY

They pull into the driveway of a small, neat home. The yard is maintained but with no hints of feminine touch. Instead of walking through the front door, Bob leads Maria around the side of the house to the backyard which has a very different look. The grass has gone to seed, the rose bushes look dead and the fruit trees seem barren. The once vibrant gardens that she remembered are now full of bare, brown limbs.

EXT. FARM - BACKYARD

Bob motions to the Barn.

BOB

This is where you'll be staying.  
You can fix it up as you like. If  
you want more stuff - you'll find  
things in the attic. Oh, I have a  
list of chores.

(off her look)

I'll give you an allowance.

Maria gestures even more dramatically with arms fully extended out as if to say, "are you insane?".

BOB (CONT'D)

This is San Diego, you won't  
freeze.

He turns away and leaves her at the barn. Inspecting the door, she gently pushes it open to peek inside.

INT. FARM - BARN - DAY

So, not a horrible inside of a barn. Maria's face shows a little relief. She walks around poking at things and picking up others. Dust flies up and she sneezes. She stands in the center and spins around. She smiles to herself.

MARIA

This'll work.

INT. FARM - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Maria tiptoes into the kitchen to inspect the contents of the cupboards, drawers and fridge to find only fast-food, frozen meals and salty snacks. She picks up a bag of pork rinds, sniffs, then walks over to the trash and plops it in.

MARIA  
(repulsed)  
Nope. Gotta find those seeds.

INT. FARM - KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Uncle Bob is standing in his kitchen, holding his coffee mug, staring at a "ceiling to floor" curtain that covers what we'll learn is a large sliding glass door that overlooks the backyard. It looks like this curtain hasn't moved in years. With his free hand, he pokes at the curtain to open it a sliver but dust flies and he sneezes. He shakes his head then turns to walk away.

INT./EXT. FARM - BARN - DAY

The Barn is looking livable. Maria is covered in dirt but looks pleased. Suddenly Maria hears voices just outside.

PAMELA (V.O.)  
Robert J. Cobley, you old coot. Why  
did you put her out here?

Maria looks up from where she's sweeping not realizing that both her Uncle and the loud woman are standing just outside looking in at her with curiosity. PAMELA, Vietnamese, 60's, neatly coiffed but wearing a kitchen apron over a housecoat.

BOB  
She's fine.

PAMELA  
She's a teenager.

BOB  
So she needs space.

Maria walks over to them still holding the broom.

PAMELA  
(tilts her head)  
She needs a shower.

Maria now standing only a few feet away from them.

MARIA  
"**SHE**" is right here.

Maria takes a moment, sniffs herself.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
And I do need shower.

Maria hands Pamela the broom and walks towards the front of the house leaving Bob and Pamela standing together.

BOB  
(sheepishly)  
See, she's fine.

INT. FARM - KITCHEN - DAY

Pamela has laid out a lovely Vietnamese dinner for the three of them. Uncle Bob is wearing a tie at the table, but it is covered by a napkin bib. Once they are settled, Pamela takes Maria's hand then tries for Uncle Bob's hand but he pulls away. He hesitates then offers one hand. Pamela smiles at him then looks toward Maria who is grinning.

PAMELA  
Dear Lord, our heavenly Father.  
Thank you for the nourishment we  
are about to receive and bless the  
hands who made them. Thank you for  
bringing Maria home and allowing  
Robert to open his heart again to  
family and love. We give thanks, in  
your name.

ALL TOGETHER  
Amen.

MARIA  
Wow, thank you. That was super  
cool.

PAMELA  
They didn't pray at the, um, uh  
(looking uncomfortable)  
At the place you were?

Bob clears his throat and looks at his plate. Still uncomfortable, Pamela changes the subject.

PAMELA (CONT'D)  
I knew your mother. Beautiful girl.

BOB  
She married an idiot.

PAMELA

MARSHA

RJ

Hey

Not looking up, Bob tries to fork a rolling vegetable on his plate like a toddler. He stabs one but it flies to the floor.

BOB  
Well she did.

He tries a green bean and triumphantly plops it into his mouth. Then he looks over the floor and shrugs.

Maria, sees this, mouth open and points at Bob.

MARIA  
He ate a vegetable?

Pamela ignores both of them and continues.

PAMELA  
She loved that boy with all her heart. And with that love...

Pamela glares at Bob.

PAMELA (CONT'D)  
God blessed us with you, my dear. She was never more radiant than when she held you to her heart. Uh, I think she'd say, "corzoon"?

	BOB	MARIA
Corazon		Corazon

Bob looks up from his plate, stiffens up.

BOB (CONT'D)  
(harshly)  
Maria, I loved your mom. I'm sorry she's gone.

Bob pauses then waives his knife around in the air.

BOB (CONT'D)  
**Him** too, even.  
(more harshly)  
But people die. Good people die.

Bob returns his attention to his plate.

Turning to Pamela, Maria holds up the bowl of green beans.

MARIA  
What's in these beans? He ate one!

PAMELA  
Want me to show you?



Maria stares at her Uncle then over to the side table where he keeps his glucose records. She nods to Pamela and smiles.

MONTAGE BEGINS

EXT. FARM - BACKYARD - DAY

There is a single snail on the ground and Uncle Bob is holding a canister of salt over it.

MARIA

You can't kill it - its a  
defenseless snail!

BOB

(gruffly)

You know they'll eat all of your  
plants. Its you or them.

Maria stands firm. Uncle Bob returns to the house with his salt shaking his head.

BOB (CONT'D)

I tried.

INT. FARM - KITCHEN - DAY

Uncle Bob pulls back the dusty curtains to reveal a large glass sliding door to the backyard. Dust is everywhere and he starts to wheeze and exits the kitchen.

INT./EXT. FARM - GREENHOUSE - DAY

Once again covered in dirt, Maria is tossing dried, brown dead plants into a trash bag. She ties it up and takes it outside where we see many similar bags lined up. Walking back to the greenhouse, she face-plants into a fresh spider web. She freaks out and runs in circles around the yard screaming.

EXT. FARM - BACKYARD - DAY

Bob is standing at the dirty sliding door, curtains partially open. He is gnawing on a slim Jim watching his Niece. He shakes his head, chuckles, and turns back to the kitchen.

BOB

I wonder where she stands on Raid?

INT. FARM - KITCHEN - DAY

Bob, now wearing a dust mask, is armed with a hand-vacuum and is running it up and down the curtains. Maria walks up behind him and hands him a fresh carrot. He smiles, nods and takes the carrot but sticks it in his pocket-protector.

INT. FARM - GREENHOUSE - DAY

Maria has planted rows of seeds. Behind her are some clay pots with new growth. She happily inspects some of the new plants but sees a snail. She follows the snail trail outside and sees another snail and another snail. She screams and runs towards the front of the house.

INT. FARM - KITCHEN - DAY

Maria runs in the kitchen from the living room, grabs the canister of salt and notices the sliding doors are available. She opens them and runs out, motioning to the salt.

MARIA

Don't say one word.

Non-pulsed, Bob, still wearing his mask, is sitting at the kitchen table. There is a huge pile of dirty paper towels and some Windex in front of him. The curtains are open, the glass windows are clean and we see Maria with the salt hunched over some plants behind him.

Bob is celebrating with a cup of coffee and a donut but forgets he's wearing a mask and spills hot coffee on himself. He jumps out of his seat where we see Maria in the backyard.

EXT. FARM - BACKYARD - DAY

Waiving the salt in the air, Maria talks to the snails.

MARIA

The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh  
away.

She is oblivious to Bob's running around behind her.

MONTAGE ENDS

INT. FARM - KITCHEN - DAY

Uncle Bob is at the kitchen table checking his glucose. He pulls out an old record book that appears to have hundreds of entries logged. Maria walks into the kitchen, sees what he's doing and stops to watch. She waits for him to finish.

MARIA

How are the numbers today?

BOB

As good as they'll ever be. I'm alive, aren't I?

Maria walks over to the fridge and pulls out one stalk of celery and hands it to her uncle. He looks at it, shrugs, then scratches his neck with it.

MARIA

I'll have lunch for you soon. The lettuce and Brussel sprouts are up.

Bob scrunches up his face, sticks out his tongue.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Fine. No sprouts for you. I'll make Pamela's spring rolls. That ok?

Bob looks relieved. As she starts to exit through the sliding glass door, he holds up the celery to stop her.

BOB

(choking on words)

I uh, wanted, uh, to tell you... the yard looks nice.

MARIA

You know I miss her too.

She takes his hand and sits next to him. With this gesture, his stoic appearance melts. He puts his head in his hands.

MARIA (CONT'D)

For everything there is a season. A time to weep and a time to laugh. And dance. Hey, wanna help me plant my last seed?

Maria half-hugs her Uncle who seems to allow and appreciate the gesture. Maria stands and moves to the sliding doors and motions for him to join her.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I like these open. Come on out.

Composing himself, he nods, but waves for her to go ahead. He waits her to leave then walks to the pork-rings cupboard. He opens the door to find a few small bags of almonds with a post-it note showing a hand-drawn heart. Rolling his eyes, he shuts the door, sighs and bites into the celery stick.

INT. FARM - GREENHOUSE - DAY

Bob arrives at the greenhouse but stops before entering. He looks up, down, all around and sighs. He takes a breath and steps inside the transformed garden. There's a variety of flowers, vegetables and rows of new growth. There are torn seed packets scattered on the counter and to the right is a wastebasket overflowing with piles of empty packets.

Maria sees her Uncle, picks a daisy and hands it to him. He takes it, but continues to stare at the torn seed packets.

MARIA

Someone told me you might need this.

Bob looks at her expressionless, then his face changes from stoic to angry. He throws the daisy on the ground, moves to the seed-drawer and pulls it open. Its empty.

BOB

Where are they? Where are her seeds? What have you done?

Maria, wide-eyed, and a little afraid, motions to the plants all around them. Bob takes the trashcan and dumps the torn seed packets onto the stand.

BOB (CONT'D)

These were hers. You ruined them.

MARIA

They're alive, Uncle Bob. That's what she wanted.

Maria picks up a fruiting habanero pepper plant and goes to a small drawer. She takes an un-torn, seed packet that has handwritten lettering: **Habanero, Guatemala, 1962** with 5 penciled hearts across the bottom. She stands in front of her Uncle with the plant in one hand and the envelope in another.

MARIA (CONT'D)

She wanted the seeds you brought her to see God's light - to grow in the sun. Aunt Mags wanted to share this.

BOB

But she...

Maria motions to all the plants. Bob follows her gaze.

MARIA

She told me this pepper plant meant something, so I grew it first.

Bob gently taps a heart-shaped pepper with his finger. Then, hands slightly shaking, he reaches out for the single seed packet. He lovingly traces his hand over the writing.

BOB

Why her?

MARIA

But she's here; all around us.  
Because of your seeds, they'll always  
be food and drink and new growth and  
**life** in this home. You did this.

From the upturned pile of envelopes, Maria picks one that is completely covered with hearts and shows it to Bob. He reads the label, smiles and wiggles his eyebrows.

BOB

Mm. Chilean limes. Oh boy.

Maria leaves her uncle to dig through the stash. At the door, she pauses to look back at him and touches her heart.

INT. FARM - BARN - SUNSET

There is a sweet Lawrence Welk-era song playing and we see Uncle Bob and Maria dancing around the furniture in the barn. Maria has several daisies in her long, flowing hair and Bob is sporting one through his pocket protector.

BOB

Did you know this was her favorite song?

MARIA

You say that about every song,  
Uncle Bob.

(a beat)

Tomorrow you are trying tofu.

BOB

(eyes closed, smiling)

Mmm hmm.

They continue to dance as another song begins. Both are smiling/laughing amidst a tear or two. Behind them, through the open barn doors, the sun goes down behind the garden.