

ELENORE JASPERS' ROSE GARDEN

by

Jason Earle Helgerson

OVER BLACK:

HAMMERING.

FADE IN:

CLOSE on photo of a smiling COUPLE in their forties. They stand in front of a large rose bush. Our view travels across picking up new photos of the same couple, different outfits.

The final frame contains an Obituary. The woman from the first photo is pictured. A silver-colored urn is beside it.

The HAMMERING STOPS.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JERROD'S WORKSHOP - DAY

JARROD JASPERS, fifties, stands alone at a cluttered workbench. He drops a tool into a bucket of water.

Jarrold WHISTLES as he takes an unseen object to a nearby furnace, tosses it in.

He returns to the bench, pulls a large bag of potting soil from below. He pours its contents into a flower box.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

The yard is divided in two by a cobblestone walkway. The pristine lawn is flanked by a garden. A tete-a-tete sits under an umbrella.

The garden is made up of a row of pruned rose bushes.

The workshop is at the far end of the yard. Smoke billows from a small smokestack.

INT. JERROD'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Jarrold continues to whistle as he pulls a tray of ash from the furnace, carries it to the workbench, pours the ash into the flower box, grabs a garden trowel.

He stabs at the dirt, mixing it. He's interrupted by a CHIME.

Jarrold gives the dirt one last stab for good measure, then scoops some dirt into a sifter.

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

Jarrold comes out of his workshop, sifter in hand.

DENNY GOODE, twenty, stands at the garden, notebook in hand. He looks up as Jarrod approaches.

DENNY
Good morning. Mr. Jaspers?

JARROD
Right on both accounts. And who might you be?

Denny extends his hand. Jarrod snatches it; shakes it.

DENNY
I'm sorry. Where are my manners?
Denny Goode, Baldwin Gazette.

Jarrod begins to sift the soil over the rose bushes.

DENNY
The college.

JARROD
I've heard of it. Read it a few times. What can I do for you?

Jarrod continues to spread the ashy soil; Denny moves out of the way.

DENNY
You have a secret, and I aim to figure it out.

Jarrod stops.

JARROD
Oh?

Denny CHUCKLES softly.

DENNY
It's not as nefarious as it sounds. The roses I mean. You've taken the blue ribbon at the Elm Lake County Fair for nearly a decade now. Some would say that's a pretty big achievement.

JARROD
A decade? Already?

DENNY
This year will be ten. A milestone. There must be a secret.

Jarrold walks to the tete-a-tete, sets down the sifter and dusts off his hands.

JARROD

Tea?

Denny joins him. They sit.

DENNY

Yes, please. Is that your secret?
Tea?

Jarrold LAUGHS as he pours two glasses.

JARROD

Hardly. It's much simpler than that.
The secret is...

Denny flips open his notebook.

JARROD

...In the soil.

Denny looks disappointed, flips the notebook closed.

DENNY

There must be something more to it.
Chemicals? ...Or do you prefer to
go Organic?

JARROD

Have you heard of using wood ash as
a fertilizer?

He doesn't wait for an answer.

JARROD

That's essentially it. My own secret
recipe.

DENNY

So that's it? Fertilizer?

JARROD

That and a little T-L-C.

Denny points to the workshop.

DENNY

Is that where the magic happens?

They are interrupted by an urgent voice:

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Oh, Jer-rod... Mr. Jaspers.

Both men look. SARAH, thirties, stands on the other side of the fence.

JARROD

Morning Sarah. Something wrong?

SARAH

I'll say there is. Kiki got out again. Have you seen her?

JARROD

Can't say that I have. But if I see her snooping about... you'll be the first to know.

SARAH

Thanks. Sorry to trouble ya.

She pulls away from the fence.

SARAH

Kiki!

Jarrold leans in close to Denny.

JARROD

I hate snoopers. That dang dog. Always sticking its nose in my business.

Jarrold gets up, walks to the bushes, drops to his knees and begins to mix the soil.

Denny follows, notebook at the ready.

DENNY

Last year there was some concern as to whether or not you were going to even attend the fair. You know, after your wife...

He trails off.

JARROD

Yes, I took Elenore's sudden passing a little rough.

DENNY

But you came back stronger than ever. Some would say your finest work.

Jarrold GRUNTS as he gets back to his feet.

JARROD

To be fair, the garden is Elenore's baby. She put her heart into it. I just made the ceramic vases to display her fine work.

He gestures toward the workshop. Denny moves in closer.

DENNY

And now?

JARROD

And now... I think you should leave.

DENNY

But the article. What about the story?

Jarrold ushers Denny to the gate.

JARROD

There is no story.

DENNY

The people want to know.

Jarrold pushes Denny out the gate.

DENNY

At least let me take a look at your workshop. Take a few pictures. For the paper.

Jarrold closes the gate behind Denny.

JARROD

Good Bye Mr. Goode. Best of luck on your story.

DENNY

But --

Jarrold turns and walks back to his workshop.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BACK YARD - NIGHT

The night is still. Only crickets can be heard.

A SHADOWY FIGURE approaches slowly opens the gate, steps into the light. It's Denny.

He steals across the yard to the workshop.

INT. JERROD'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

Denny pulls out a penlight, FLICKS it on. A beam of light cuts through the darkness like Halley's comet streaking across the night sky.

He roots around looking for Jarrod's secret. He finds the bag of potting soil, tosses it aside.

He makes a RACKET shuffling through the tools on the workbench. He pulls a tool from a bucket, it looks like a cross between a hatchet and a hammer.

DENNY
(under his breath)
Some garden tool.

The beam of light passes over a strip of leather.

DENNY
What's this?

He picks up the item, it's a dog collar. There is a bone shaped tag that reads: KIKI

DENNY
Son of a --

JARROD (O.S.)
Bitch.

Denny whirls around, hatchet at the ready. Jarrod is partially hidden in the shadows.

JARROD
She came a snoopin' too.

DENNY
So the secret. It's Kiki's ashes?

Jarrod smiles.

JARROD
Not exactly. You know how I said my sweet Elenore put her heart into that garden? That wasn't a metaphor.

He points to the urn on the shelf above the workbench.

JARROD
I tried to replicate it. Rabbits.
Squirrels. Kiki.

Denny grips the hatchet tighter.

JARROD

It was ok, but not the same. Maybe
it has to do with diet or fat content.
I don't know and I don't care.

DENNY

You're crazy.

JARROD

Maybe just a little --

Denny charges, swings the hatchet.

A shovel flashes from the darkness.

CUT TO BLACK:

OVER BLACK:

SUPER: THAT SUMMER

FADE IN:

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

The lawn is pristine and the roses are in full bloom.

A CAMERAMAN sets up a camera, aimed at the rose bush.

Jarrold is ushered in front of the rose bush by a WHITE-HAIRED
MAN. They pose, smile.

The cameraman counts down on his fingers. Three, two, one.

A BRIGHT FLASH.

CLOSE on newspaper photo of Jarrod and the White-Haired Man
in front of a large rose bush.

Our view travels down the page to a smaller article that
reads: LOCAL COLLEGE REPORTER MISSING.

FADE OUT: