

SIDE SIX

LAUREL

Excuse me...

JIMMY

(Looking up, suddenly smitten)

I...Uhm....Hi....

LAUREL

Are you the tree doctor?

JIMMY

Tree doctor. Shrub surgeon. Plant psychiatrist. The Florence Nightingale of horticulture—at your service.

LAUREL

Maybe you can help me then....What do you have in the way of aphrodisiacs?

JIMMY

Aphrodisiacs...? I'm afraid we don't carry those. Could I recommend a sturdy dieffenbachia? Or a split-leaf philodendron? They do well in both sun and shade.

LAUREL

I need an aphrodisiac...an elixir...a love potion.

JIMMY

Oh. A love potion.

LAUREL

To make someone fall in love with me.

JIMMY

I can't imagine an attractive girl like you needs a love potion....

LAUREL

But I do. *I do*. I've fallen in love—and she hardly knows I'm alive.

JIMMY

(Looking disappointed)

Maybe you're underestimating her feelings....

LAUREL

Oh, I wish! But she spends all of her time with foliage. Flowering plants. Epiphytes. Tender young saplings. She won't give me the time of day.

JIMMY

How would you feel about a better offer?

LAUREL

I'm not sure I understand....

JIMMY

I was thinking....maybe.....you know....

LAUREL

Yes?

JIMMY

I thought maybe you might like to fall in love with me....If that's not too presumptuous a suggestion....

LAUREL

I'm flattered....but I can't....

JIMMY

(Discouraged.)

I guess I'm not your type.

LAUREL

It's not that at all....

JIMMY

You can't blame a fellow for trying, can you? I thought you might like men *and* women.

LAUREL

I do like both men and women.

JIMMY

Romantically, I meant.

LAUREL

Romantically? Romantically, I like neither men nor women.

JIMMY

But you just said you've fallen in love with a woman.

LAUREL

In love with a woman! Is that what you thought?

JIMMY

That's what you said. You just asked me for an aphrodisiac in order to make her fall in love with you.

LAUREL

Not a woman....I'm in love with *her*!

(Laurel points at the poplar tree.)

JIMMY

....That's a tree.....

LAUREL

An Atlantic poplar. *Populus atlanticus*.

JIMMY

You're in love with a tree?!

LAUREL

But to her—I'm less than firewood.

JIMMY

You won't go out with me because you're in love with...her.

LAUREL

Please don't take it personally.

JIMMY

How can I not take it personally? You're rejecting me for a tree.

LAUREL

“Rejecting” sounds so harsh. How about: “Not preferring.”

JIMMY

I don't get it.

LAUREL

I don't either. At least, not in a way that I can explain. One day last April—the final Friday before the final Saturday in April—

JIMMY

—Arbor Day—

LAUREL

Exactly. Arbor Day. I was sitting on the wooden bench under that poplar tree when the skies opened up. It rained and rained and rained—but I didn't get wet. The poplar sheltered me with her leaves. I've never felt so safe, so at ease. And then I looked up into her shimmering branches and I was in love.

JIMMY

I'm losing out to a tree. This is unbelievable.