

Gardening Boys

Treatment / Step-outline
For a feature film

A situational buddy comedy.

By
Chris Andre

Tagline: Honest gardeners in a white-collar world.

Logline: Two guileless landscapers are given sham jobs as a bank's compliance officers to encourage them to pursue a more white-collar profession. They attempt to pursue a money laundering investigation and unwittingly uncover a major criminal operation in the process.

ACT ONE:

1.

CHAZ comes to the gardening shed where BOBBY lives, which sits behinds his parents' house. Bobby and Chaz are long-time friends and landscaping partners with limited ambitions for worldly success. Bobby puts on the dirty white t-shirt that has the words GARDENING BOYS hand-written in black marker, raises his arms triumphantly and proclaims: "It's gardening time!"

2.

The tempo and tenor of Bobby's and Chaz's work experience is quickly explained through eight short gardening vignettes, with Bobby and Chaz seated on the ground pulling weeds as various customers say inappropriate and awkward things to them ("You might want to be careful how deep you dig in that bed there - we buried our dog Bananas in there somewhere."; "I need you boys to go out in the woods and wash the rocks out there. Really scrub them hard. Can't look out my windows knowing there might be dirty rocks out there."; "How about if you boys take off your shirts? You'll be more comfortable."; "If either of you need me, I'll be inside taking a nap. Naked.")

3.

That evening, Bobby, DAD and MOM are seated at a formal dining table. Dad, president of a bank, tells Bobby that to assume more responsibility for his life he will need to work at the bank as their new compliance officer. Bobby initially resists, but when he learns that Chaz can work at the bank as their new pantry boy, he agrees with the proposal.

4.

Chaz comes to collect Bobby at his gardening shed the next morning. Bobby, wearing an ill-fitting business

suit, opens the door and hands a business suit on a hanger to Chaz. Bobby says sheepishly: "Um, there's been a . . . slight change of plans."

5.

Dad enters Lion's Head Saving Bank a little later that morning, followed by Bobby and Chaz. The tellers and other employees salute Dad with a lion roar and paw gestures. Dad introduces Bobby and Chaz to the two tellers, RACHEL and DIANE, who over time become friendly with Bobby and Chaz. Dad leads Bobby and Chaz to the pantry at the back of the bank, where he introduces Bobby to PETER, SUSAN and DOUG. Chaz blurts out "I'm Chaz!" and Dad introduces him as the new pantry boy. Doug offers to help Bobby settle in.

6.

Bobby, Dad and Mom are seated at a formal dining table. Dad asks Bobby how it feels to be the new compliance officer, and praises him for not knowing what he's supposed to be doing so no one else knows what he should be doing either.

7.

Later that evening, Bobby and Chaz are sitting on the couch in Bobby's garden shed watching television when there is a knock on the door. SPECIAL AGENT JOHNSON stands ominously in the doorway with dark hair slicked back, dark suit, white shirt, dark tie, black shoes and dark glasses. He tells Bobby that as the bank's new compliance officer he is personally responsible for making sure that the bank complies with all laws, including those designed to protect the bank from laundering criminal proceeds. He threateningly tells Bobby that he needs a big case to give him the headlines that will help him become governor, and if Bobby doesn't bring him a big case quickly he'll be dragged downtown. He also tells Bobby that he can't tell anyone that he's been contacted by a special agent, as it would compromise the investigation. After the agent leaves, Bobby and Chaz agree that Bobby should talk to Doug tomorrow to figure out how to get the agent what he wants.

ACT TWO:

1.

Bobby and Chaz arrive at the bank the next morning. They have a brief, somewhat awkward chat with Rachel and Diane

and then Bobby goes to talk to Doug while Chaz goes to tend to the pantry. CUT to the pantry, where Chaz is examining the cookie selection in the pantry when Susan enters. Susan begins aggressively flirting with Chaz, which makes him visibly uncomfortable. Chaz anxiously scrubs the counter surfaces while Susan asks him a series of inappropriate questions ("Have you ever bench-pressed a naked woman?"; "How many pushups can you do . . . with your tongue?"). Chaz flees the pantry ("I need to be elsewhere!") and Susan ominously tells him, "I'll see you soon, Chaz. I know where you work." CUT to Bobby sitting in Doug's office while Doug describes what a compliance officer would do to detect money laundering. Doug explains that to place the cash gained from illegal activity into a bank, one would use a cash-intensive front company, and after running a report tells him that he should check out one of their customers, a business called Los Jaguarcitos Café, to see whether they have enough business to justify the cash they deposit. CUT to the hallway outside Doug's office, where Bobby runs into Chaz and explains what Doug told him. Chaz offers to accompany him to Los Jaguarcitos Café since the cookies are stocked and the pantry can get a little crowded.

2.

Bobby and Chaz are standing across the street from Los Jaguarcitos Café, scanning the windows and foot traffic for signs of customers inside. As they talk, the curtains in the café window open slightly and a face peers out. Feeling conspicuous, they decide to return to the bank to see if Doug has better resources for them to watch the café.

3.

Bobby and Chaz enter the bank and have a brief conversation with Rachel and Diane as they pass the teller counter. They walk to the intersection of the pantry and the back offices. Chaz follows Bobby toward Doug's office and ducks into a nearby cubicle as Bobby knocks on Doug's door. CUT to Bobby sitting in Doug's office. Bobby tells Doug that he has deputized Chaz and asks him if the bank provides the compliance officer with supplies, such as surveillance equipment. Doug agrees to the purchase of equipment, "within reason, of course", and hands Bobby a corporate card.

4.

Bobby and Chaz are standing outside a window front entirely covered in black mirrored glass. They discuss whether it's really a store that will have surveillance equipment, since Secrets looks and sounds like a strip club. Knowing that they need to provide the agent with intelligence, they go in. CUT to Bobby and Chaz standing in a small store with back-lighting and blue LED light strips outlining various counters and edges. DIRK questions them to determine their objective and budget, and when he realizes they have no idea what they're doing and a corporate card, he begins to present them with the store's most expensive offerings. ("Allow me to suggest some of our most expensive, I mean best, items . . .")

5.

That evening, Dad knocks on the door of Bobby's shed to see if he's coming in to dinner. "Not tonight, Dad. We have some bank work to do." CUT to the interior of the garden shed, with Bobby and Chaz sitting on the couch surrounded by boxes of surveillance equipment and wearing black turtleneck shirts, black pants, and night vision goggles on foreheads. Special Agent Johnson knocks on the door, and Bobby reluctantly opens it. They tell the agent about the café. ("The little jaguars, eh? They sound cute. Or highly dangerous. You boys stay on your toes out there.") The agent tells them to get him a big case fast and then leaves. They decide to go to the café that night to use their new surveillance equipment.

6.

Later that night, Bobby and Chaz are seated in a car across the street from Los Jaguarcitos Café. Both are wearing their night vision goggles. Chaz is in the driver's seat holding a parabolic microphone and wearing headphones. The café is completely dark, and Chaz hears no noises inside. ("Maybe they took the night off from crime?") A car pulls up outside the café and flashes its lights three times. The lights inside the café flash three times in response, and the car speeds off. They decide that they need to get different surveillance equipment to hear what's happening in the café, and that they'll sneak surveillance bugs into the café in a food delivery.

7.

The next morning, Bobby and Chaz arrive at the bank. They briefly discuss their surveillance work with Rachel and Diane ("I never knew banks did this kind of stuff. Real black ops!"). Bobby and Chaz walk further into the bank to the intersection of the pantry and the back offices. Chaz starts to head into the pantry and Bobby begins heading for Doug's office. CUT to Chaz in the pantry restocking the cookie selection when Susan enters. ("Hello, Chaz. Fancy meeting you here.") She harasses him while he restocks the cookies. ("When was the last time you shaved your whole body?; Have you ever rolled around naked on a bear-skin rug?"). Chaz flees the pantry. CUT to Bobby seated in Doug's office. Doug asks "More equipment?" with concern about the cost and Bobby assures him it's necessary.

8.

Later that morning, Bobby and Chaz are standing outside the surveillance store. They agree that Dirk's cologne might have hypnotized them into buying too much equipment, and that they will buy only necessities. CUT to Bobby and Chaz standing inside the surveillance store. Dirk tries to sell them various extravagant items ("Are you sure that I can't interest you in a pen that becomes a jet pack? Very exclusive, very sophisticated.") They purchase two surveillance bugs.

9.

That afternoon, Bobby and Chaz are seated in a car across the street from the café as a delivery van pulls up. The van's driver leaves the back door open as he carries a crate into the back of the café. Bobby and Chaz run across the street and quickly place a surveillance bug into a tomato and a melon before running back to their car. They put on headphones and listen as the tomato and melon are carried into the café, prepared and then eaten, each time ending with a loud crunch and muffled exclamation of surprise and pain. They decide that the best way to get the café to reveal its illegal activity is to enter the café posed as customers who are clearly criminals.

10.

Bobby and Chaz enter the bank the next morning. They have a brief chat with Rachel and Diane before walking further into the bank to the intersection of the pantry

and the back offices. Chaz starts to head into the pantry and Bobby begins heading for Doug's office. CUT to Chaz restocking the cookie selection in the pantry as Susan enters. ("Well, well, Chaz. Here we are again.") Susan asks Chaz a series of suggestive questions before he flees the pantry ("Have you ever made love in an igloo?; How many times have you been entirely covered in whipped cream?"). As he flees, she yells threateningly "They didn't tell you what happened to the last pantry boy, did they?". CUT to Bobby seated in Doug's office, where Doug reluctantly agrees to more purchases to fund their new "low-tech operation."

11.

Later that morning, Bobby and Chaz are standing outside Freddie's Costume Emporium. They enter the store and are greeted by Freddie. Freddie suggests various costume genres, and when Bobby tells him "We need something more . . . gangstery", Freddie offers them a range of ethnic criminal stereotypes. Chaz says a cartoonish Russian accent is his only accent, so Freddie sells them Russian mobster costumes. Before they leave, Freddie discretely tells them that his store offers more than just costumes, suggesting illegal products and services: ("You should come back soon, we are always having a nice party here. You can get anything you want. Anything."). They leave to put on their Russian mobster outfits.

12.

That afternoon, Bobby and Chaz are seated in a car across the street from the café wearing generic eastern European gangster outfits. They discuss their characters, with Bobby deciding that being physically larger he's more plausible as the muscle ("The Ice Crusher") while Chaz will need to be the boss who does most of the talking ("Boris"). CUT to Bobby and Chaz standing in the entrance of the empty café. PEDRO enters from the kitchen and shows them to a table. Chaz introduces them as Boris and The Ice Crusher using his cartoonish Russian accent. ("We are a criminal enterprise.") Chaz asks Pedro whether they have a special menu for narcotics. When Pedro says no, they each order two fish tacos. Repeated CUTS of Pedro approaching the table, Chaz asking about a different type of criminal activity (prostitutes, heavy weapons etc.), Pedro shaking his head and Bobby and Chaz taking a bite out of another fish taco. This pattern repeats until they have consumed twenty tacos

each. Chaz asks for the check and Pedro proudly tells them that he needs to take their picture since they have joined the 20 Taco Club. Staying in character, Chaz refuses, but Pedro finally convinces them to be photographed. CUT to a photograph of Bobby and Chaz on the café wall, next to photographs of other people they know who are apparently also in the 20 Taco Club (Dad and Mom, Rachel and Diane, Peter, Susan, Doug).

13.

That evening, Bobby and Chaz are seated on the couch in the garden shed wearing their gangster outfits, regretting having eaten so much. Special Agent Johnson knocks on the door, and Bobby opens it. When the agent pressures Bobby for solid leads in the case, Bobby panics and promises that they'll have big developments tomorrow. The agent threatens severe consequences for failure ("Give me something solid tomorrow or it's downtown for you, compliance officer.").

14.

Early the next morning, Bobby and Chaz are seated in the car across the street from the café still wearing their gangster outfits, now quite rumpled. They decide that the only way to gain information about illegal activity in the café is for them to pose as restaurant workers and have the café hire them. CUT to the bank, where Bobby convinces Doug that they need to buy more supplies to complete their mission.

15.

Later that morning, Bobby and Chaz enter Freddie's Costume Emporium. They ask Freddie whether he carries chef outfits. Freddie asks them whether they're looking for comical chefs or sexy chefs, and when they tell him real chefs ("the kind that cook food"), he suggests the restaurant supply store next door. During this conversation, Freddie is more explicit about the additional goods and services they offer ("We have party favors! Cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, poppers, special K, whatever you need to make your party extra special!"). CUT to outside the restaurant supply store, where Chaz convinces Bobby that before returning to the café they need to tell Doug about the illegal activity happening in the costume shop. CUT to the bank, where Chaz hides in a cubicle while Bobby tells Doug about the

costume shop. Doug says the bank has a relationship with the costume shop, and that he'll look into it.

16.

Later that same morning, Bobby and Chaz are in the café, seated across from Pedro and JUAN at a table in the back. Pedro and Juan question them on their restaurant experience, and tell them that they will need to perform various menial tasks before they can be tested in the kitchen. Pedro and Juan suggestively say that if they prove their worth in the kitchen, they may be included in the café's "outside ventures". Bobby and Chaz take this to mean illegal activity, and agree to perform the menial tasks.

Multiple CUTS of Bobby and Chaz performing menial kitchen tasks (chopping hundreds of pounds of onions; washing dishes in a large sink full of scalding, sudsy water; pouring dirty, smoldering oil through a strainer; scouring old grease off the floor; scraping ice off the wall of a walk-in freezer).

Juan finally approaches Bobby and Chaz to say that they have earned the right to test their skills in the kitchen, where they will need to prepare the café's signature dish: roasted boneless goat. Juan tells them that the café has lent its goat deboner to another restaurant, and they must retrieve it quickly and by hand due to its sensitive nature. Multiple CUTS of Bobby and Chaz outside various other restaurants, with restaurant workers telling them that they have just lent the goat deboner to another restaurant. The last restaurant presents them with a bulky canvas bag. CUT to Bobby and Chaz dragging the heavy bag down the sidewalk as the afternoon wanes. CUT to Bobby and Chaz at dusk standing outside the café dripping with sweat. They agree that "being a compliance officer is too hard" and they should return to being landscapers.

ACT THREE:**1.**

Bobby and Chaz are standing at the entrance of the café, where the tables are all full of people they know or have encountered (Dad, Mom, Special Agent Johnson, Doug, Peter, Susan, Rachel and Diane). Pedro and Juan enter

the room wearing jaguar outfits and announce the arrival of Bobby and Chaz. ("Our guests of honor have arrived.")

Dad rises and addresses the audience. He explains that to try to introduce Bobby and Chaz to white-collar life he pretended that Bobby was the bank's new compliance officer, while having the bank's real compliance officer (Doug) help him and using an actor to portray Special Agent Johnson to make the job seem interesting and important. Dad explains that Juan and Pedro are some of his bank's best customers, and that they agreed to pretend to be engaged in suspicious activity because it would be fun. Dad tells them that since they clearly don't like indoor work, he'll lend them money to expand their gardening business.

Special Agent Johnson 2 stands up at the back of the café dressed identically to Special Agent Johnson and announces that based on their tip they just raided the costume shop. Special Agent Johnson stands up and points at Special Agent Johnson 2 accusingly ("But I made you up!) Special Agent Johnson 2 responds ("I'm the real deal, pal. Going to be governor soon.") and Special Agent Johnson sits down again ("I guess I'm better than I thought.").

Pedro and Juan begin to play the "Compliance Officer Song" and the people Bobby and Chaz interacted with during the goat deboner scenes enter from the kitchen carrying trays of food. Bobby and Chaz sit down at a table with Rachel and Diane as the scene fades out.

2.

The "Compliance Officer Song" continues, reducing in volume to accommodate vignettes of Bobby and Chaz in polo shirts and khaki shorts discussing gardening with their new employees, two high school students wearing official looking "Gardening Boys" t-shirts. ("You might want to bring your own water next time. That way it won't have pollywogs in it."; "Out of necessity, sure. I mean, some people pay to eat dandelions."; "You can't jump in the pool. Even they can't. It's for their dog."; "Apply sunscreen yourself. Do NOT let them do it for you.")

At the close of the last vignette, Bobby and Chaz wander off into the sunset as the song trails off. They are joined by Rachel and Diane as the scene fades to black.

