

MANGOES AND BLUE JAYS

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FADE IN:

EXT. HIGH-RISE BUILDING - MIAMI - DAY

ASAHAVEY, a Florida Blue Jay, is perched atop a high-rise building in the downtown area. High-rises clutter the neighborhood. He looks down on the last empty lot that is overgrown with trees and vegetation. Multiple bulldozers and earth moving equipment are staged in front of the lot.

The equipment, guided and driven by men, begin to tear down trees and raze the natural vegetation and the habitat of downtown dwelling birds, critters and small animals. The wildlife scramble to safety as tree after tree is ripped from the earth.

Asahavey sheds a tear.

EXT. IN FLIGHT - DAY

Asahavey takes flight. He swoops down over the top of the razed lot and closer inspects the damage. Then, he vigorously flaps his wings to climb up high. Once high over the city, strong tail winds effortlessly propel him toward the west.

He continues his flight over vast regions of human made complexes - mostly dull and grey concrete structures with no natural vegetation.

In the distance, a large complex of reservoirs and towers come into view.

It is the last man-made structure before a vast wilderness of trees, grasses and swampy regions known as the Everglades.

Asahavey looks down at the complex. A passenger jet approaches the city intersecting with Asahavey's flight path. He sees the approaching jet and quickly adjusts his flight path. The Captain of the passenger jet sees Asahavey making an abrupt flight maneuver to avoid him. Asahavey salutes the Captain in military fashion. The Captain salutes back. The jet continues the approach.

Gator Hook Mango Grove becomes visible. Asahavey descends over a swampy region known as Gator Hook Strand adjacent to the mango grove. Alligators scramble in and out of the dry grass and murky waters. ALLEN, is wearing a Marlin's baseball cap, and ELVIS, two elder swamp alligators, see Asahavey descending into the grove. They wave and salute the incoming blue jay chief.

Asahavey glides down to a nest high atop a mango tree in the grove. He gently lands on the edge of the nest. Three small eggs are visible inside.

INT./EXT. NEST - DAY

Two eggs in the nest are similar in size and are spotted turquoise blue. The third egg is smaller and is solid light blue with no spots.

ESPERANZA, the mama blue jay, watches over the eggs. Asahavey gets close to her and taps her with his wing tip.

ESPERANZA

How was your flight dear?

ASAHAVEY

The world is rapidly changing.

ESPERANZA

You keep seeing things that worry you.

ASAHAVEY

These things that worry me should worry everyone. This morning, the big machines tore down the last grove of trees in downtown Miami.

ESPERANZA

How long before that affects us here?

ASAHAVEY

Unless there is a miracle, our days  
are numbered.

ESPERANZA

What about our chicks?

ASAHAVEY

How are the eggs doing?

ESPERANZA

I'm worried about the one with no  
spots.

ASAHAVEY

Why?

ESPERANZA

I can't feel the chick inside  
moving.

ASAHAVEY

Let's not lose hope.

EXT. MANGO GROVE - DAY

The mango grove is well groomed and healthy. The red, orange and yellow mangoes are near maturity. Water from the nearby swamp flows freely through the land. Birds, bees, squirrels, ants and other little creatures scurry about their business.

A long line of army ants orderly march toward the mango grove. At the front of the line is BOB, the leader of the ants. He is wearing a construction hard hat and has on work boots on all legs except for his right front leg in which he holds a tin cup of coffee. Steam rises from the cup.

Asahavey flies down from the nest to meet Bob.

Bob raises his left front leg to indicate to the ants to stop marching.

Asahavey lands next to him.

ASAHAVEY

The mangoes are not ready.

BOB

We're doing a dry run. This is a  
practice drill for my new recruits.

Bob lifts his tin cup to his mouth and takes a sip of coffee.

ASAHAVEY

Looks like a good harvest this year.

BOB

We have enough manpower.

ASAHAVEY

I have no doubts about that.

BOB

Any problems?

ASAHAVEY

None anticipated. I thought you gave up drinking coffee.

BOB

The one thing I can tell you with all certainty is that my entire operation runs on coffee. When the boys and I wake up at zero five-hundred the smell of freshly brewed coffee fills the caverns. We will not go...

ASAHAVEY

(interrupts)

Sorry Bob. I got it.

BOB

How's the family?

ASAHAVEY

Esperanza is happy our three chicks are about to hatch.

BOB

Do you have names for them?

ASAHAVEY

Not yet. Waiting to see if they are boys or girls.

BOB

Hopefully you get a girl.

ASAHAVEY

A girl would be nice.

BOB

Daughters make you sweet in your old age.

ASAHAVEY

Most importantly we hope they're all healthy.

BOB

Let's talk mangoes?

ASAHAVEY

Mangoes it is.

BOB

When will this year's harvest be ready?

ASAHAVEY

The rains and the swamp have been good to them, but they still need more time on the trees.

BOB

Nothing you and I can do to change that.

ASAHAVEY

I'll send out Sam and Tex to get you when the mangoes are boxed up and ready.

BOB

After this year's harvest, we'll clear out and prepare the land beyond the grove that reaches the swamp.

ASAHAVEY

Great. That will expand the grove for everyone.

INT. LABYRINTH - INSIDE MANGO TREE TRUNK - DAY

LARRY, a grey caterpillar with a matching long grey beard and wearing a yellow bowler hat, crawls up one of the passageways. He stops in front of a door with a sign that reads "Dr. C". The door opens toward the inside of the room. DR. C, a red cardinal wearing a white medical gown with his name stitched on it, stands in the doorway frowning.

LARRY

What's going on Doc?

DR. C

You know you're supposed to take off all your shoes when crawling around in here.

LARRY

Sorry Doc. I'm tired today. Just wanted to get back to my room and crawl into bed.

DR. C

Are you feeling tired? Fatigued? Want to step into my office for a checkup?

LARRY

Not today.

DR. C

What are you afraid of?

LARRY

I hate needles. Hate needles.

DR. C

I promise, no needles.

LARRY

I'll take my sixteen shoes off. Just let me go back to my room. Please.

DR. C

Don't let me catch you again.

Larry starts taking off his shoes. Dr. C looks at him, shrugs his wings then goes back into his office and firmly closes the door. The sign that reads "Dr. C" falls off the hook on the door and onto the floor. Larry picks up the sign, looks at the hook on the door then he puts the sign down, picks up four shoes he had already removed and quickly crawls his way back to his room.

EXT./INT. NEST - NIGHT

A comet rapidly streaks across the night sky. Asahavey notices.

Inside the nest, the two turquoise spotted eggs show cracks where the chicks are beginning to break through and hatch. Asahavey and Esperanza watch over the three eggs. Asahavey gently taps the smaller blueish egg that has no spots with his beak. Esperanza watches him.

ESPERANZA

Be patient love. Everything in nature happens in due time.

ASAHAVEY

I'm so curious about this egg that I can't help myself.

A small beak breaks through one of the turquoise spotted eggs. A second beak breaks through on the second turquoise spotted egg. Asahavey flaps his wings with excitement.

ESPERANZA

Gently dear. Your flapping will startle them.

Of the two turquoise spotted eggs, two little blue jay heads are now visible. Esperanza comforts the newly born chicks.

ASAHAVEY

Are they boys or girls?

ESPERANZA

These two are boys.

ASAHAVEY

I'm hoping for a girl. I want to be sweet when I reach old age.

ESPERANZA

What do you mean sweet?

ASAHAVEY

Bob told me that girls bring fathers sweetness in old age.

ESPERANZA

Bob. Which Bob?

ASAHAVEY

Bob, the army ant leader.

ESPERANZA

Oh. That makes it different.

ASAHAVEY

Never mind. What about the last egg?

Esperanza checks on the third egg by listening closely on the surface of the shell.

ASAHAVEY (CONT'D)

Do you hear anything?

ESPERANZA

I think so. I hear a faint chirping.

ASAHAVEY

Let me listen.

Asahavey closely inspects the surface of the shell.

ASAHAVEY (CONT'D)

There is chirping. Help me.

ESPERANZA

To do what?

ASAHAVEY

Let's crack the shell with our beaks. We'll peck at both ends so the chick can hatch.

Esperanza and Asahavey gently peck at the shell until part of it falls off and a small wing appears. Asahavey grips the wing with his beak and begins to pull.

ESPERANZA

Gently. Be careful.

Asahavey has managed to pull half the chick out of the shell.

A full moon is visible in the clear night sky.

ESPERANZA (CONT'D)

Let me help you.

Esperanza also pulls at the chick as Asahavey continues to pull. They both succeed in pulling the chick completely out of the shell. The chick chirps several times. She is born with a black eye as she got hurt in the process of being pulled out of her shell. Asahavey, exhausted, sits down inside the nest. Esperanza tends to the new born chick.

ASAHAVEY

Boy or girl?

ESPERANZA

Looks like you are destined to be a sweet old bird. It's a girl.

ASAHAVEY

Wow. Sweetness.

ESPERANZA

Do you want to name her?

ASAHAVEY

Mangoes ripen in May and the full moon tonight is a May Milk Moon. We shall name her May.

ESPERANZA

And she will bring us good fortune.

The three new born chicks gain warmth under Esperanza's wings. Asahavey sits next to Esperanza to help warm the chicks. The new family rests.

EXT. SWAMP LAGOON - DAY

Native birds of the Florida Everglades fly overhead and land in the watery grasses surrounding the lagoon. Allen and Elvis float in the center of the lagoon. They thrash around causing several water birds to take flight.

ELVIS

You ever take off that cap?

ALLEN

Never.

ELVIS

Is there a reason for this behavior?

ALLEN

You know how these professional teams have their mascots...

ELVIS

(interrupts)  
Don't tell me.

ALLEN

Why not? We can rename the Marlins to the Miami Gators.

ELVIS

And where do you fit in?

ALLEN

I want to be the face of the team on TV.

ELVIS

Oh brother.

ALLEN

What, you think you're the only swamp gator that can be on TV?

ELVIS

That was a long time ago. We were both young and fresh out of the swamp.

ALLEN

I'm still not taking off the cap.

ELVIS

Change the subject.

ALLEN

How's the water feel today?

ELVIS

Feels good. I'm floating good. Buoyancy control is good. Overall, the water quality is good.

ALLEN

Excellent.

INT. OFFICE - WATER PLANT - DAY

Inside a private office in the largest water plant facility in the area JORGE, a businessman, and JOE, a water plant administrator, discuss a problem while looking at a map on a table. Both men's faces are unseen.

JOE

The only way to guarantee the flow of water you need to build out that land where the mango grove sits is to drain the adjacent swamp.

JORGE

What do your people need?

JOE

Besides big money, we need to start diverting water from Gator Hook Swamp and moving it somewhere else.

JORGE

Money is no issue. Do whatever it takes.

JOE

We need to build a tall ridge around the south side of the swamp to block the natural flow of water into the bay. I'll direct my men to begin diverting waste water through the swamp right away. This will affect the natural flow.

JORGE

I'll mobilize the heavy machinery and dump trucks.

JOE

Tell your men to be careful. There are a lot of large swamp alligators in there.

JORGE

We're not afraid of no gators. They won't cause us any trouble.

JOE

Let's hope not.

INT./EXT. NEST - DAY

Esperanza is feeding the three baby blue jay chicks.

Asahavey is perched on the edge of the nest. He is looking at the sky. A very large bird appears gliding down toward the nest. Asahavey hops into the nest and covers the chicks.

FAITH, a wandering albatross, is wearing a small backpack and flight goggles. She carefully lands on a thick branch near the nest.

Asahavey and Esperanza look on.

Faith removes her goggles and catches her breath. She playfully waves hello to the blue jay couple.

FAITH

Whew, long flight.

ASAHAVEY

Are you at the right place?

FAITH

Am I at Gator Hook Mango Grove?

ASAHAVEY

Yes.

FAITH

My name is Faith. I come from the land that produced the mango seed that gave life to this grove.

ASAHAVEY

Are you hungry or thirsty? Would you like anything to eat or drink?

FAITH

No worries mate, I have provisions on my back. Thank you for being so kind.

ASAHAVEY

You are welcome. My father's father spoke to me about your kind and the legend.

FAITH

I come in peace to fulfill the wishes of my ancestors that one of us always returns to check on this grove.

ASAHAVEY

I speak for all that call this place home. You are welcome here.

FAITH

Very nice of you. I plan to only spend the night resting before my return flight home.

ASAHAVEY

How far away is home?

FAITH

If you only knew.

ASAHAVEY

I'm glad you found me. We'll rest tonight and you and I can talk in the morning.

EXT. SWAMP LAGOON - NIGHT

Allen and Elvis swim along the shore of the lagoon. Their heads come in and out of the water as they swim.

ALLEN

Do you taste anything funny?

ELVIS

No. Are you referring to ice cream?

ALLEN

No dummy. The water. This water tastes funny to me.

ELVIS

Now that you mention it, I'm having a hard time staying afloat. Something's different.

ALLEN

Something's different all right.

ELVIS

Different. Tastes different. Smells different. Feels different.

ALLEN

Different.

ELVIS

I'm not too happy about this.

ALLEN

Neither am I.

EXT. WATER PLANT - DAY

Numerous earth moving and digging equipment are staged in the large yard outside the main building and plant towers. Many men wearing construction clothes move about the yard and equipment. Numerous dump trucks arrive one after another.

SAM and TEX, two brown pelicans, look on from the vantage point of the top platform of one of the water plant towers.

SAM

You see what I'm seeing?

TEX

Looks bad to me.

SAM

Let's get moving back to the grove.

TEX

Yeah. We need to warn Asahavey about this right away.

SAM

He's not going to be too happy  
about this.

TEX

I don't want to be the one to tell  
him.

SAM

You never do.

EXT./INT. NEST - DAY

Faith and Asahavey are talking outside the nest.

Esperanza tends to the three chicks. MAY stretches and moves  
about the nest. She flaps her wings. Faith takes notice.

FAITH

Looks like the little one is  
getting ready to fly.

ASAHAVEY

She's my special little girl.

FAITH

This grove is here because our kind  
could fly.

ASAHAVEY

And, they had a dream and a vision.

FAITH

Many moons ago the earth shook and  
fire rocks came down from the sky.  
Our beloved mango grove home was  
forever destroyed. Most of its  
inhabitants perished. A seed was  
saved.

ASAHAVEY

The mango tree seed that gave birth  
to this grove.

FAITH

You know the legend well.

ASAHAVEY

It was handed down from my father's  
father to me. I am the keeper of  
the legend and also the chief of  
its inhabitants.

FAITH

You have done well. One of my ancestors brought the seed here to birth the tree that shaped our way of life.

ASAHAVEY

And one of your type always returns once in a Milk Moon cycle to check on this grove and its inhabitants.

FAITH

I am pleased with what I have found. Take care of that baby girl chick.

ASAHAVEY

Have a safe flight on your return back home.

FAITH

Thank you for your kindness. You are a great leader.

Faith flaps her large wings which lifts her body above the branch where she was perched. She flaps with more vigor and takes flight in the direction of the sun. Asahavey watches her fly away. Faith looks back at Asahavey. He waves goodbye to her.

EXT. IN FLIGHT - DAY

Sam and Tex fly side by side high above the terrain.

SAM

What are you going to tell him?

TEX

You're gonna tell him.

SAM

If I have to.

TEX

Yes you do.

SAM

I'm going to tell him what we saw.

TEX

Point blank?

SAM  
Straight up.

TEX  
No sugar coating?

SAM  
Bad news is bad news.

TEX  
Incoming.

EXT. SWAMP LAGOON - DAY

Allen and Elvis playfully spin around side by side in the lagoon. Many other gators go about their business. Allen stops spinning. He looks at the sky and spots Sam and Tex overhead. He motions to Elvis.

ALLEN  
Every time I see those two incoming there is going to be trouble.

ELVIS  
Which way do we leave?

ALLEN  
Where can we go? There is no other place for a couple of retired swamp gators to live out their golden years.

ELVIS  
The safety of the swamp.

ALLEN  
Let's hope these two pelicans don't bring bad news this time.

ELVIS  
I would sure like to eat some ice cream right about now.

EXT. NEST - DAY

A golden eagle circles the mango grove high overhead.

May is perched on an edge of the nest allowing her to launch into flight. Asahavey is next to her. May looks down at the ground and looks back at Asahavey. They are the only ones in the nest.

ASAHAVEY

We all go through this.

MAY

It's scary.

ASAHAVEY

Only for one second when you leave the nest.

MAY

What do I do with my tail?

ASAHAVEY

Allow it to naturally follow the lead of your flapping wings.

MAY

When do I start flapping?

ASAHAVEY

Flap hard to lift off the nest and get used to the feeling. Then glide down and maneuver by flexing your wings and tail.

MAY

Seems complicated.

ASAHAVEY

We are all born with the ability to fly. You are no different.

MAY

I'm still scared.

ASAHAVEY

It's natural at first. Go ahead. Try it. I'll glide down with you.

May looks at Asahavey and then down toward the ground far away below the nest. She flaps and flaps to lift herself off the side of the nest. Asahavey watches her intently.

Without warning, May launches from the nest vigorously flapping her wings. She initially flies. Now she is gliding rapidly toward a maze of branches. Asahavey watches. May clips one of the branches with her right wing. She seriously injures her wing and is now spinning and flopping toward the ground in the direction of a flowing, rocky stream. Asahavey launches from the nest to try and save her.

May continues to spin and flop out of control toward the rocky stream. She crashes on a rock, falls into the stream and gets swept away by the strong current.

Asahavey reaches the side of the stream and lands on a rock. He frantically looks around and calls out May's name multiple times.

ASAHAVEY (CONT'D)

May! May! May!

He cannot find her. Asahavey furiously takes flight. He almost crashes into a curved tree branch. He continues his flight upward toward the canopy of the grove trees.

EXT. ROCKY STREAM - DOWNSTREAM - DAY

May is tossed and spun around by the current. She floats beak down along leaves, small branches and other debris.

LEA, a female Florida Panther, slowly prowls along the bank of the stream near May.

May frantically flaps her wings trying to right herself to take a breath of air. She momentarily lifts her beak out of the water and yells for help.

MAY

Help me! Help me! Please.

Larry is crawling around nearby and he hears May. Lea also hears May's cries for help.

May sinks beneath the surface of the water. Her head pops up again momentarily. She fights to stay afloat but takes in a gulp of water and goes under once again.

Larry nears the bank of the stream joining Lea that is already there. May floats to the same location. She is unconscious.

LARRY

Get her. Quickly!

LEA

I don't like to get wet.

LARRY

I can't swim! Save her.

Lea jumps into the stream and rescues May. She pulls May out of the water. Larry rushes to their side to assist.

LARRY (CONT'D)  
She's not breathing.

LEA  
I don't know what to do.

LARRY  
Breathe into her beak. I will press  
her stomach to get any water out.

LEA  
What if she pecks at me when she  
wakes up?

LARRY  
Breathe into her beak! She doesn't  
have much time.

Both Lea and Larry perform rescue breathing on May until she coughs up water and takes a big gulp of air. May is physically injured.

LARRY (CONT'D)  
You're going to have to carry her  
back to the Doc's office.

LEA  
I'll take her to the base of the  
tree but someone else will have to  
carry her up. I'm afraid of  
needles.

LARRY  
I'm not surprised.

Larry helps to secure May. Lea picks them up. Lea carries May with Larry, also onboard, through the forest.

EXT. NEST - DAY

MAX and TATE, May's brothers, look on as Asahavey rapidly approaches the nest in-flight. They both take a step back and allow their father to land on the side of the nest. Asahavey is out of breath.

TATE  
What's wrong?

ASAHAVEY  
May.

MAX  
Where is she?

Asahavey flaps and ruffles his wings and feathers.

ASAHAVEY

We need to find her right away.

TATE

Where do we go?

ASAHAVEY

Quickly. Come on. Fly with me to the edge of the rocky stream.

MAX

Something bad happened.

ASAHAVEY

I'll tell you on the way.

All three blue jays fly down from the nest in the direction of the rocky stream.

EXT. LABYRINTH MANGO TREE - DAY

Lea approaches the tree in which a complex internal labyrinth exist. She is carrying May and Larry on her back. Larry steadies May as Lea carefully takes steps around fallen branches and rocks near the trunk of the tree. Lea stops when she spots FERN and JADE, two southern flying squirrels. Jade raises her tail when she spots Lea. Fern is looking under a branch. Jade taps Fern's back. Fern looks up and spots Lea. Both Fern and Jade scramble to the tree trunk and take defensive positions.

Larry has been observing the squirrels the entire time.

LARRY

Relax ladies. We don't have time for introductions. This big cat is friendly so please come down from the tree and help me carry May to Dr. C's office.

Lea gently lays down. Fern and Jade approach Lea. Jade climbs up on Lea's back. Larry helps by holding May's head straight. Jade picks up May and carefully hands her down to Fern.

JADE

What happened to her?

LARRY

We don't know. She was floating along in the rocky stream.