

Westcrest: Season 2

Episode #9: What's That Noise?

Jeremy, Marcus and Chatravati make their way towards the barn. So many of the plants have sprouted up now that they have knotted together, forming a tangled mass of green stalks and idiot, leering heads that dart at them from all angles.

They come to the ruined edge of the barn, rotten wood from the fallen walls crunching under their feet.

"There," says Jeremy and points and they can see flashes of light coming from the rusted tractor. Vines have grown up around the sides of the tractor and several toothy heads are closing in on it.

Sarra is trapped inside the riding compartment, her palms glowing brightly and her eyes wide. One leering head rises higher than the others and its mouth peels back in a parody of a smile. Marcus swears under his breath and steps forward.

"Hey!" he says and picks up a plank of wood with rusted nails jutting from the sides. But whether it's because the plants don't have ears, or that they're simply preoccupied with Sarra, they pay no attention to Marcus until he steps forward and begins swinging the club in wide, brutal arcs.

Sections of plant fall away and several heads rupture, spilling teeth into the air. Jeremy rushes forward to help but Chatravati stays back—he only has two bullets left and he won't use them unless it's *absolutely* necessary.

Marcus and Jeremy clear away the heads away from the tractor and Sarra clammers out. More of the plants have already sprung up in the field behind them, which now looks like a writhing mass of snakes beneath the midday sun. And now there is a noise—a high-pitched whirr that seems strangely familiar—and it seems to be getting closer.

"Hey guys," says Jeremy. "What's that noise?"

"The bike!" say Sarra and Marcus in unison, but both of them immediately know that's impossible, because the bike is back at the mansion... with Conor.

"I'll kill him," says Sarra through clenched teeth, but not even Marcus can prevent a smile from appearing on his face as Conor appears on the horizon, guiding the bike down the embankment. Even from this distance they can tell he has made several modifications—including the addition of a squat tank fixed to the back of the bike where a passenger would normally sit.

As Conor brings the bike closer they can make out more details: twin lengths of hose twist out from the tank at the rear of the conveyance and each hose is sending out a wide spray of clear liquid. Everywhere the droplets land the alien plants are recoiling to snap uselessly at the sky—or at each other. The healthy green stems are turning brown and dark patches are spreading from plant to plant, causing them to wither and crumble.

“Yahoo!” says Conor now that he is close enough for them to hear and Sarra rolls her eyes. But Jeremy and Marcus are laughing and Chatravati feels a surge of pride as Conor wheels the bike around in a crazy arc, spraying the plants wherever they are growing.

“The plants operate as a single system,” Chatravati explains. “The toxin is affecting them all.”

There is a chorus of heavy thumps as the heads of the plants begin falling from their withered stems. Conor pulls the bike up close to where the others are standing. “I’m distilling more herbicide back at the mansion,” says Conor. “But I couldn’t wait. Sorry about the bike, Marcus.”

Sarra rushes up to the conveyance and inspects Conor’s modifications. She notices at once that several vital components have been removed and—at the least—the bike won’t be able to fly again until it is repaired.

“You did good,” says Marcus and Conor’s face relaxes with relief. Then he turns to Chatravati and says: “Sorry about your tree,” but the old man only scratches his silver beard and smiles.

“It won’t *fly!*” wails Sarra, who hasn’t been paying attention.

“Then I guess you’ll have to walk,” says Jeremy.