

FADE IN:

INT. OLD-FASHIONED COFFEE SHOP/DINER - DAY

A young man is sitting at a table reading a weathered paperback, oblivious to the click-click of dishes and the buzz of the after-class crowd. He reaches out to crush another cigarette into a wobbly ashtray, never taking his eyes off his book.

SAMIA
(cheerful)
Tanuki! It's Tanuki, right?

A wiry girl appears before Tanuki wearing a sweeping floral print skirt, bunched to the side, with a simple cream-colored sweater. Her hair is short, jet black, contrasting her milky neck. And tied around the back of her head is a cherry print scarf, the kind that screams jackpot at Vegas.

TANUKI
(confused)
Umm, Hi. Yes, that's right.

SAMIA
(smiling)
I'm Samia...

TANUKI
(recognition: he's seen
that smile before)
...from Literature Class.
Professor Oleander.

Samia holds up one hand like a claw and scrunches her face.

SAMIA
Yes! Exactly! The old
curmudgeon's class. Mind if I
sit?

Before Tanuki can answer, Samia settles into the chair across from him and plops her large tote bag on the floor, the contents of which threaten to spill out at any moment.

A beleaguered waitress shuffles into view behind Tanuki waving a steaming coffee pot.

WAITRESS
(barking)

More coffee, sir?

Tanuki is caught off-guard. He looks at the table and realizes he's lost track of how many times his cup has been refilled. There is no evidence of the single slice of pie he'd eaten when he first arrived.

TANUKI

...

WAITRESS

(impatient)

Anything for your *friend*?

SAMIA

Oh, yeah. I'll have a cheeseburger. Make it deluxe, I haven't eaten all day. And some water. Thanks!

WAITRESS

(sarcastic)

Wonderful. Coming right up.

As the waitress leaves, Samia grabs the salt shaker and gives it a quick rattle over her shoulder.

TANUKI

What's that for?

SAMIA

Luck. And *lots* of it. Finals will be here before we know it.

TANUKI

(determined)

Hmm. Gimme.

Tanuki takes the shaker and gives it a quick shake over one shoulder. Before putting it down, he pauses and then does the same over his other shoulder.

TANUKI

For good measure.

SAMIA

(clapping)

Good for you! Not that we need it, or anything.

TANUKI

(playful)

Of course not.

SAMIA

(talking fast)

But seriously - did I interrupt you studying? I mean, I can't even think straight here with all the people. And the noise. It's always so crowded. I still can't get used to it. It's nothing like back home, you know?

TANUKI

(deadpan)

Mmm. I guess that depends where you're from.

SAMIA

(laughing)

I suppose that's true.

TANUKI

But no, it's cool. I come here to unwind between classes, grab a quick bite. This place is the model of efficiency. And you can't beat the price.

SAMIA

I hear ya. And sometimes you just need a cheeseburger, you know? Or a delicious chicken parm. Who doesn't like that?

TANUKI

Good choices. You really can't go wrong.

SAMIA

I'll say! Let me ask you something though...

Samia pauses dramatically and looks at Tanuki through squinted eyes.

SAMIA

It's important, but you seem astute, matter-of-fact, dependable...

TANUKI

Okay...

SAMIA

You ready?

TANUKI

I think so.

SAMIA

Which is better? Cake...

Samia leans forward, shifting to the edge of her seat.

SAMIA

...or pie?!

She leans back, cocking one brow in anticipation.

TANUKI

(with zero hesitation)

Pie. Too easy.

Samia throws her arms up in recognition.

SAMIA

Ha! I knew it!

Samia composes herself, straightening her dress.

SAMIA

And why is that?

TANUKI

(contemplating)

Well, I feel like people mostly eat cake because it happens to be there. Like a sheet cake at a wedding or a kid's birthday party. The predominant flavor is just...sweet. Most cakes are dry as well, and then spackled with crappy icing. Cake is usually all show, and no go, you know what I mean?

SAMIA

(serious)

And what about pie then?

TANUKI

(matter-of-fact)

Pie, on the other hand is all substance. You can have any number of delicious fillings, sweet or savory, wrapped in all kinds of delicate crust. Pie is just...more dynamic. Let's be real.

Samia pounds the table with one fist, creating a mini mushroom cloud of cigarette ash.

SAMIA

Amen! You can't argue with that.
I knew I asked the right person.

TANUKI

Think nothing of it.

SAMIA

(mock sheepishness)
Maybe you can help me with one
more thing?

TANUKI

Shoot.

SAMIA

Can I borrow your notes from the
next class? You know...

They both hold up one hand as a claw at the same time and chuckle.

SAMIA

I need to fill in for my friend
at work. What do you say?

TANUKI

Sure. No problem. How do you want
me to get them to you?

SAMIA

(pursed lips)
How about we just meet here? Same
day and time?

TANUKI

(smiling)
Perfect.

SAMIA

(enthusiastic)
Great! It's a date...

Samia blushes at her choice of words. Tanuki clears his throat and looks at his watch.

TANUKI

(standing up, shoving
his book int his
backpack)
Oh man, speaking of work...I need

to be at the record store in like
10 minutes to start my shift. I
help the owner on certain nights.
The pay stinks, but I mostly just
spin records and ring up the odd
costumer.

SAMIA
(composed)
Have fun. I'll see you next week
then?

TANUKI
(lingering)
Absolutely. Um, Enjoy your
burger.

SAMIA
(with a warm smile)
You can count on it.

They wave at each other as Tanuki works his way through
the crowded restaurant floor to the front. As he waits in
line, the display case next to the register catches his
eye. Circular shelves spin and all manner of desserts
dance under the neon lights.

CASHIER
Next!

TANUKI
Yeah, hi. I need to pay my bill?

CASHIER
(rifling through a mound
of receipts)
The table over there, right?

TANUKI
Right.

CASHIER
(holding up two slips of
paper)
You guys together or separate?

TANUKI
Oh...together.

The cashier grunts and starts ringing up the total while
Tanuki's eyes return/gravitate to the dessert carousel.

TANUKI
Wait! Can you add a slice of pie

and have it sent to the table?

CASHIER

Sure. What flavor?

Tanuki pauses for a brief moment of contemplation followed by realization.

TANUKI

(with a wry smile)
Cherry. Definitely cherry.

FADE OUT.