

by

is a 25 year old man from New Zealand. He is of Maori descent and was raised as part of a tribe for most of his childhood. His parents aspired for Ihaka to be a part of the modern world and grow beyond the rooted Maori culture, and thus indoctrinated him into public schools in New Zealand.

He was a very prestigious student but alienated himself from the others, who were mostly white New Zealanders. This caused him to be rather anti-social, despite having decent social skills. While he studied, he was taught by his tribe the ways of the Maori.

He was particularly fond of the Haka, the war dances of the Maori. He keeps himself in top physical shape as a part of his culture. He went to college in America, specifically in California, and studied particle physics for undergrad and masters. He is currently working at a laboratory in San Francisco with a six figure income. He recently bought a lavish house, which he considers a proud achievement.

Despite being quite set up in life, he has a dark side to his success: he antagonizes those who criticize his cultural background and secretly murders them in their sleep, demanding utmost respect for his culture that most people overlook.

is a farfalle pasta noodle. With they/them pronouns and a bowtie build, Punky suffered a neglectful upbringing alongside their fraternal fusilli twin, Funky. They rock a fringe, and gauges in every lobe.

Punky has traveled from the waterside city of Palermo, Sicily, to the streets of Manhattan by means of their dad's pant pocket. They possess a burning resentment for their fathers, given that their first memory is watching the two men boil and eat the rest of their pasta family on that dark day in 1978.

Punky spends their free time listening in on the Ramones tracks constantly playing in the record store across the street, as nothing else can quite subdue their severe social and separation anxiety since split from their brother.

These instabilities have come on gradually after being exposed to human life, but Punky also remains with their biological phobias of water and/or being consumed, as either one of these could lead to their demise. A pessimistic introvert, Punky still flickers with hope in witnessing human kindness as well as practicing opera. Behind their angsty facade lives a caring, ambitious noodle.

grew up and still lives in a small town named Silverton in the mountains of Oregon. She had a normal, quiet childhood with her older sister and parents. She is twenty-three years old now.

She has dark hair, blue eyes, and wears glasses. Theodora is introverted, quiet, organized, and prefers to keep to herself. Her greatest strength is her kindness, and her greatest weakness is fear. Her favorite color is purple.

She has a cat named Millie, and a dog named Teddy. She loves reading, especially classics, and manages a bookstore. Her dream is to become an author, so much of her free time is spent writing. She has an English degree with a focus in creative writing and has interned with quite the successful editor.

Books mean everything to her. She loves the idea of being able to dive into a world that is unknown and exciting to her.

is a 22-year old living in the United States. She was born in El Santo, Cuba. Her father was Cuban, also from El Santo, while her mother was from Peshawar, Pakistan, a city fairly close to the Afghanistan border. They had Amina on May 22, 1994, and when she turned four, they moved to Pakistan because Amina's grandmother was sick.

One day, when Amina was seven, she came home from school only to have men barge into their home in Peshawar. They slaughtered her entire family, and the man who was assigned to kill her just barely gave her a scratch on her neck. She ran away to her grandparents that day and, about a year later, moved in with them in Cuba.

Ever since then, she has been out seeking revenge for her parents making sure she gets every single person who was a part of the killing and make them suffer just as they did to her and her family.

When she turned eighteen, she knew she wanted a good education despite her life being filled with trauma. She was accepted into UCLA majoring in business administration. Using her father's parents' money, she attended college for the next four years. Now she owns a place in San Diego, California, where she keeps all her tools that she made and trains frequently.

Ihaka, a 20-something-year-old man on vacation in San Diego, lights a and smokes it. While he walks the streets of the city high, he comes across a noodle that happens to be talking right at him. Upon closer inspection, Ihaka finds that this bowtie pasta noodle is actually performing a

Man, this blunt is really hitting if this noodle is singing opera...

You can hear me?!

IHAKA

I don't know if I should be hearing you.

PUNKY

I don't know the science behind it, but it's been 41 years since my dad dropped me here and I've been belting away ever since. Late on weekends sometimes I'll get someone to do a double take at my voice and move on, but you're the first one to actually acknowledge me.

IHAKA

I'm... honored...? But what is a living noodle doing on the streets? Where are your parents? Shouldn't they be coming back for you or something?

PUNKY

I have no clue. I'm from Manhattan, maybe my dads are long gone. As far as I know they were fleeing back to Palermo because of something with the mafia, and this was their last stop before then.

IHAKA

Well I'll tell you what... what's your name again?

PUNKY

My name's Punky Chunk. Please don't ask, it's a family name.

IHAKA

Well Punky, my name is Ihaka Tangaroa. Even though I shouldn't be doing shit because I'm high off my mind right now, I'll help you find your parents.

Ihaka takes Punky into his pocket and continues walking down the street.

Ihaka enters a coffee shop and notices that it's very packed. He sees two empty seats and quickly occupies one of them. He is sitting across from a woman who he later finds out is named Theodora. She is a novel while drinking her . She's quite introverted, so she doesn't bother to look up at Ihaka.

IHAKA

Excuse me ma'am, can I ask you a favor?

Um... sure?

IHAKA

Would you mind smoking this blunt and seeing if this noodle will talk to you?

Ihaka pulls out a blunt, a lighter, and Punky from his pocket

THEODORA

Uhhh... What? Why?

IHAKA

I need to make sure I'm not tripping off my mind.

THEODORA

I... guess I can do that.

Ihaka lights the blunt and passes it to Theodora. She takes one quick hit and passes it back.

PUNKY

Hey..?

THEODORA

Did that noodle just talk?

PUNKY

Woah... if... huh... what? Does this mean my parents were high that entire year??

IHAKA

Holy shit, I'm not crazy after all! Okay, I have another favor to ask and this one's pretty tall. Would you be down to help?

THEODORA

Well I've read a lot of books about adventure but I've never been on one so hell yeah!

IHAKA

Cool. So, I need to get this talking noodle, named Punky, back to Manhattan, but I dunno how to find its parents or whatever. Got any ideas?

Right when Theodora was about to answer, a young woman abruptly enters the coffee shop looking anxious and out of breath.

Hey, can I take this seat?

THEODORA

Yeah, sure.

~~REMI~~

Thanks.

IHAKA

Hey, do you want to help us with something?

~~REMI~~

Depends on what it is... I usually don't help people.

IHAKA

We're trying to get a talking noodle back to its parents. I just found out you can only talk to it while high though, so... want to take a hit of my blunt?

Amina hits Ihaka's .

PUNKY

Hey... sorry about all this... can you hear me too?

AMINA

WHAT THE FUCK, is this actually happening? A talking NOODLE?

THEODORA

Yeah, it's crazy right?

AMINA

You know what? I have some time to spare. Let's find the noodle's parents.

PUNKY

Uhh... yeah. Sure. I guess.

IHAKA

Let's move somewhere else, I don't think a coffee shop is a good place to publicly be talking about taking a talking noodle back to its parents.

AMINA

Okay, I guess we could go to my place since I live down the street. Plus, I have tons of experience with adventures like this.

Everyone walks with Amina across the street to her house.

Amina unlocks her door and opens it.

AMINA

So this is my crib guys... you may come across some dangerous equipment, but just ignore it and act like you never saw it... no one can know I have these.

PUNKY

As long as you don't have a I'll
be fine.

Punky looks to their left and sees a water gun labeled "BOILING WATER".

PUNKY

Yikes...I'll try not to piss you off.

They all walk to the living room and sit down.

IHAKA

Alright, so we have a weird-ass noodle here, no offense, that needs to get back to its parents in...Manhattan? Now it's probably gonna be easy to mail a noodle to New York, but I have no idea how to find its parents. Any ideas?

REMI

Do you know your parents' address at all?

PUNKY

Not at all. I was telling Ihaka before, my dad's got mafia ties and had to flee Manhattan, and they were headed back to Sicily when I was left on the street.

IHAKA

Well that makes things a lot harder. I dunno about y'all, but I don't wanna get into shit with the mafia. I think our best bet for right now is to keep you between us while we try to find out who and where your parents are. Does that sound good?

PUNKY

Yeah, I understand. Makes more sense than approaching the mafia out of nowhere for a noodle you just met.

THEODORA

Are you guys from around here? How will we pass the noodle around?

IHAKA

I think what we should do is have one person take the noodle back with them and keep it company while the rest of us figure out how we're sending it back. We can rotate possession of Punky by mailing them to another person and switching out every week or something.

REMINE

Punky, you could stay with me for a bit. Just try not to hurt yourself, I don't wanna have to make this place pasta-proof.

PUNKY

Yeah, I got it. I'll take this place any day over that nasty street side. Thanks.

REMINE

No problem.

Later that day.

REMINE

So you said your dad's in the mafia?? That's crazy.

PUNKY

Yeah, I guess he didn't choose it, but every day was so stressful with that whole situation lingering over our family. He wanted to start a new life with my other dad here in the states, but who knew how strong the mob could be even across the pond? I really don't know how you guys are gonna figure this out, but I appreciate so much that you're even trying. This is the first day that's gone by where I've felt an ounce of purpose, and I don't think it's just because My Chemical Romance has gotten back together.

REMINE

Yikes, so I guess you're not close with your parents... huh?

PUNKY

Physically, I was always by their side. But yeah, mentally and emotionally, we couldn't be more disconnected.

REMI

Yeah, I feel that. I was pretty close to my parents up until I was seven. That's when I came home from school one day, and several men barged into our home and with no remorse. They were trying to kill me too, but they just barely got me. It's like the guy who was supposed to kill me didn't even try. But yeah, I'm not close to my parents either. Not anymore.

PUNKY

Uh... jeez. Sorry to hear about that... can't say my life was ever that intense. Hope it all works out for you too.

REMI

Yeah, I've been training with my grandparents who live in Cuba ever since then. I'm secretly out for revenge to get all the men who were a part of it, but my grandparents don't know that. I've gotten two out of eleven men so far.

Amina opens a case with two items in it: a knife and an arrow.

REMI

These are the weapons that each of the men had before they died. I'm trying to use it for the last person who was in charge of the killings.

PUNKY

Oh my god. You know, this is all sounding a little mafia-esque. I feel like we could have a lot to talk about. I mean neither of us chose to be associated with all this shit, right??

REMI

Facts.

Punky and Amina talk the night away, staying up late solely venting about the turmoil that organized crime has brought upon their families. They have a lot more in common than they suspected upon their first encounter in that coffee shop. And Amina smokes more weed that night than she could've expected to throughout the span of her entire life.

A week passes by.

AMINA

I never thought that I would ever be talking to pasta. Pretty sure I look crazy right now. I'll be sad to see you leave, but I'll send you to Ihaka so that he can figure out how we'll send you back because I have no idea.

PUNKY

Amina, thanks for the housing and the good conversation. I hope I'll see you again soon. Bye for now.

Amina gently places Punky in an

AMINA

Sorry if this isn't the most luxurious ride. Tell Ihaka I said hi.

Ihaka and Punky are in Ihaka's living room, a week later.

IHAKA

Welcome to my place. I hope all my
isn't scary or anything.

PUNKY

Much less daunting than a boiling water gun.

IHAKA

... I'm not even gonna ask. So if you are alive, how the hell did you survive for like 41 years on a street?

PUNKY

You know, I'm gonna thank whatever higher entity is out there that my dads left me in such a dry city. I never would've outlasted the New York humidity. And I guess I'm lucky that no dogs have gone after an expired, uncooked pasta noodle on the side of the road.

IHAKA

Yeah, thank god no one likes stale pasta. You know what that means though? You're tough. Being able to survive that long while being essentially limp is crazy, even if you are a piece of pasta. In my tribe back home, strength like that is something only the eldest of my tribe have.

PUNKY

Oh yeah? What tribe is that?

IHAKA

The Maori tribe. We were the first citizens of New Zealand before the British came. We survived getting colonized, modernized, you name it. Strength like what you showed is a huge part of our history - without it, I'm sure I wouldn't even be where I am today.

PUNKY

Sounds sick, I really appreciate that. I didn't know any of that, but I guess you can't blame Manhattan's public education system for leaving pasta noodles behind. What brought you to San Fran?

IHAKA

I research at a lab downtown. Not to brag or anything, but I'm one of the more successful people of my tribe. I was raised to explore the world instead of being trapped in one place and to one culture. But I'm still proud of being Maori, and I don't tolerate anyone who doesn't appreciate that.

PUNKY

Ihaka, that's really awesome, and I feel like I'm learning from your tribe already. My dads kept me so caged that I always saw myself as some useless introvert who found an excuse not to make real connections. In meeting the three of you, I've learned so much about myself and people in general.

IHAKA

I can't expect a noodle that magically comes to life when you're high to make a ton of friends anyway. But thanks for the kind words, Punky, it means a lot. I'm glad that I could help make you feel more than just a piece of dough.

Cut to the end of the week.

IHAKA

Alright Punky, it's time to .
It's been nice spending time with you! Hopefully they've made progress on tracking down your parents.

PUNKY

Yeah... thanks man, for everything. See you in a bit!

Theodora hears a ring at her doorbell, walks to the door, and looks down to see a small package on her front step.

THEODORA

Hey Punky, it's nice to see you again!

PUNKY

Hey Theodora! You seem upbeat, what's been going on?

THEODORA

Not much, I'm just excited to have you here. A magic talking noodle is the most exciting thing to happen in this small town and to me.

PUNKY

Aw wow, I never knew I could be this excited either. You have no idea how much you guys have changed everything for me! So, what have you been up to?

THEODORA

The usual: working, reading, baking. But I did start writing a , inspired by you.

PUNKY

What?! I... that's insane! Tell me more!

THEODORA

Well, it's still in the beginning stages but I'm thinking a story about a group of people that bond and become friends when they meet a talking, sentient action figure. They go on an adventure trying to figure out where the action figure's best friend is after he went missing.

PUNKY

Wow, sounds all too familiar...but it's evolved enough to make such a great story!

THEODORA

Yeah, it's a bit different from what I normally write but since this is the only adventure related thing that's ever happened to me, it inspired me to write a story about it. I have spent my whole life in this small town, without much travel or excitement. Reading has always been my escape but now I have a fun thing to write about that I have experienced.

PUNKY

I'm so happy for you, this is gonna be great! I think we're helping each other out; I'm adding an unpredictable element to your life, while you're doing the opposite to me, in the best way possible. You're giving me someone to count on!

THEODORA

I'm glad I can be that person for you! Oh, by the way, how do you feel about animals?

PUNKY

Uh... I mean... I don't have much experience with them... a dog once tried to get its teeth on me before its owner exclaimed I was too grody to eat... uh... why do you ask?

Punky hears a faint growl, rattling each and every one of their gauges. Theodora gives a quick whistle and motions the dog to sit down.

THEODORA

Yeah... I have a dog and a cat. The will leave you alone once he meets you, but my cat is very unpredictable. She's good with people and books but everything else...

PUNKY

I guess a talking pasta noodle would classify as "everything else," huh...

THEODORA

I guess I can keep her shut up in another room for the week. So, has anyone come up with any ideas for how to find your parents? I have a lot of ideas like-

PUNKY

-Uh... actually...

THEODORA

What is it?

PUNKY

Well... about my parents...

THEODORA

Yes?

PUNKY

... I don't think I even care where they are at this point. Why should we have to get wrapped up in all their shit, the mafia and all, when my dad couldn't even double check his pocket to make sure I was there? Maybe this isn't such a good idea, Theodora.

THEODORA

Wait, so you don't even want to find your parents?

PUNKY

I don't know. I don't think so. All I can tell you is I've enjoyed the past couple weeks with you guys more than I enjoyed the entire year I spent with them. My brother is still out there, but for all I know they've lost him too. He'll be okay without me.

THEODORA

So what does this mean?

PUNKY

it means... I guess... would it be possible for me to just... hang out with you guys for a while? I mean I know it takes time and money to send me back and forth and there's your cat and-

THEODORA

Well, I would have to check with everyone else but I'm cool with that. It would mean I could continue getting inspiration for my book too.

PUNKY

Okay, only if you're okay with it, and I guess if it'd even be helping you out, it may be worth the stamp money.

Theodora Ihaka and Amina, and in a matter of minutes it's decided that the parent hunt is over and a new friendship will remain.

The three of them this sentient farfalle noodle back and forth, a week each, never breaking schedule; except for the two weeks of Christmas and New Year's, when Punky begged to stay with Theodora to escape all of the California commotion.

Ihaka, Punky, Theodora, and Amina are all
, where they fatefully met one year ago, to celebrate their friendship with the talking noodle.

IHAKA

Y'know, I still can't believe that we're all friends with an uncooked piece of pasta. Crazy right?

PUNKY

You're telling me.

THEODORA

Who knew stepping into a coffee shop would result in this?

~~REMI~~

I really wasn't planning on making any friends here, much less a talking noodle.

THEODORA

It's been such an exciting year. It's like having pen pals but instead of getting a letter, I get a friend in the mail.

PUNKY

Man... I can't even express how grateful I am for you guys. I've gone from a small bake shop in Sicily, to living in fear in Manhattan, to the most disgusting street side in San Diego, to the best life I could've asked for. Thank you, really.

IHAKA

Hey, it's our pleasure. I do wonder though... what'd happen if we cooked you?

PUNKY

If I had hands, Ihaka, I'd be telling you to catch them right now. But I guess you'd have a really nasty, 40-something-year-old noodle imported from Italy, if that's what you want... I have a lot more to offer socially and emotionally than I do gustatorily.

IHAKA

I'm jooooking. I would never cook one of my coolest friends alive.

THEODORA

I sure hope you wouldn't. Punky doesn't deserve that.

REMI

Wow... I can't believe it's been a year since we all met right here in this coffee shop. Time really flies. But I'm glad you guys could make it. Punky, you're staying with me next, right?

PUNKY

Yeah! I guess this little get-together saved the trouble of mailing me, haha.

IHAKA

So, does this work for you guys? We've got busy lives but once a year, on the first Saturday of June, we'll meet here? At this coffee shop?

THEODORA

Good with me. I like having something to look forward to now, like a new holiday.

PUNKY

Wow. A holiday. Dedicated to me. To us. The way my life has turned around so quickly and gracefully, I'll never comprehend. I don't know what I did to deserve this, I just know

. Maybe I'll even get back into opera.
Thank you, guys.

The four new companions bid their farewells, and Amina leaves first with the talking noodle by her side. Ihaka and Theodora exchange a few more words, having something to do with the finishing touches of her newest novel. They hug goodbye and count down the days until their next reunion in this small San Diego coffee shop.