

Scene 1

Ihaka, a 20-something-year-old man on vacation in San Diego, lights a blunt 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 sorrowful opera.

Ihaka

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.

Scene 2

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 reading a novel while drinking her coffee. 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

(Looks at Ihaka with wide eyes)
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.

Amina

Hey, can I take this seat?

THEODORA

Yeah, sure.

Amina

Thanks.

Ihaka

Hey, do you want to help us with something?

Amina

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 blunt.

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.

Scene 3

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 boiling water gun I'll be fine.

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

PUNKY

(Widens eyes)

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?

Amina

(Turns to Punky)

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.

Amina

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.

Amina

No problem.

Scene 4

Later that day.

Amina

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.

Amina

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.

Amina

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 slaughtered my entire family 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.

Amina

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.

Amina

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??

Amina

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.

Scene 5

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 envelope labeled with Ihaka's address.

Amina

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

Scene 6

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

Ihaka

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

PUNKY

Much less daunting than a boiling water gun.
(Nervous giggle)

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 dad's 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 particle physics 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.

Scene 7

Cut to the end of the week.

Ihaka

Alright Punky, it's time to send you to Theodora. 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!

Scene 8

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 new book, 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 dog 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

THEODORA

So what does this mean?

PUNKY

I... uh... 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 calls up 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 continue to mail 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.

EPILOGUE

Ihaka, Punky, Theodora, and Amina are all back at the coffee shop, 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?

Amina

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 joooooking. I would never cook one of my coolest friends alive.

THEODORA

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

Amina

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 I have everything I've ever wanted. 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.

THE END