

FONDUE

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Category C

CHARACTERS

Sam A rather high strung adolescent. Insightful, insistent, intelligent

Ailene Sam's middle-aged grandmother.

Frank Sam's somewhat older grandfather.

Ali Cafe server known to Sam, Ailene & Frank

Ish (Isaiah) Cafe chef

INT. CAFE - EVENING

An older couple and young boy sit at a round table.

Enter Ali, bringing menus.

SAM

Want to see a card trick?

FRANK

Show Ali

ALI

Be right back, Sam.

Sam rummages through his hoodie's pockets looking for his deck of cards.

FRANK

That's a boss hat

SAM

It's not boss; it's the bomb

FRANK

Boss. Bomb. I got two letters right. Show Ali your trick.

Enter Ali

ALI

For the missus...

AILEEN

We're not married.

ALI

Oh. Sorry.

AILEEN

I didn't want to be married; neither did he.

SAM

Got it! Pick a card!

Ali reaches for a card but has a hard time getting it from Sam tight grip.

SAM

Did you look at it?

ALI

Wow, you're pretty strong; I could hardly...

SAM

(louder)

Did you look at it?

ALI

(startled)

Yes, yes. Should I put it back?

Sam nods his head, furiously, but when Ali returns the card face down atop one half of the deck his mood changes rapidly to delight.

ALI

Something from the bar, folks?

AILEEN

We'll have the usual.

Exit Ali

AILEEN

I see. Now you're sober?

FRANK

No, now I'm sleepy.

SAM

Where's Ali? I'm ready.

AILEEN

She'll be right back

SAM

But I'm ready!

Enter Ali with drinks.

SAM

How did you know I wanted apple juice?

ALI

Magic. How about your trick?

*For a moment Sam looks Ali up and down, wondering.
Showing her the card. Ali's face slowly brightens.*

Wow! How did you do that?

SAM

Magic.

ALI

Really?

FRANK

Not bad, boy. She was impressed. How did you do that?
I'll figure it out; I know some tricks, too.

AILEEN

I'll bet. She's too young for you, you know.

FRANK

They all are.

AILEEN

I'm too young for you, too.

FRANK

In case you hadn't noticed, she's flirting with your 10 year old
grandson, not me.

AILEEN

So, you were watching her?

FRANK

I was talking to her like any other customer would—because I'm
ordering. What do you care?

AILEEN

I don't.

(drains her glass)

Sam drains his glass and leaves the table.

AILEEN

Where are you going?

SAM

Bathroom!

FRANK

Easy trick. She places her card face down on one half of the deck but it's right next to the deck that's face up. He finds the card he sees, first, and then he knows the one next to it is the card Ali picked. Clever.

Aileen slams her menu down on Sam's empty seat.

What! What was that for?

AILEEN

You're watching her!

FRANK

What's the matter with you? I was watching to make sure Sam didn't take any side trips, like he sometimes does.

AILEEN

Right

FRANK

Yes, right. He's done it before.

AILEEN

Not in a cafe. He behaves in a cafe.

FRANK

You're right. I know you've been working hard with him. He's been behaving except...

AILEEN

Except? And how do you know how hard it's been?

FRANK

I imagine...

AILEEN

Oh, you imagine?

FRANK

Where is he, anyway?

AILEEN

He'll be back. Unlike you.

FRANK

Stop it. I'm here now.

AILEEN

Are you? You haven't said a word to me. You've been flirting with Ali all evening.

FRANK

What? She's been talking to your grandson all evening!

AILEEN

You've been talking to her *through* my grandson all evening! Don't you deny it.

LIGHTS DOWN ON AILEEN AND FRANK.

SCENE 2

Ali in the kitchen. Ish is short but strong looking despite appearing to be almost as old as Frank, though not quite as gray. Sam enters and walks up quietly beside her. She almost drops plates in fright. He holds out his deck of cards to her.

SAM

Pick

ALI

Again?

SAM

Pick!

Drawing a card, she looks at it then places it back in the deck. This time, Sam shuffles the cards after she places the card back, impressing her. Then he produces her card.

ALI

That's it! How did you do that? Ish! Did you see this? The first trick was just a trick but this is...

SAM

... real magic.

ALI

Yes, real magic.

SAM

I gotta go back. I want fondue. Hey, how come all the cooks speak Spanish in a French cafe?

ISH
(laughing from the kitchen)
Estamos en America! Todos somos mexicanos en la cocina! Quieres francés? Ir a Francia!

SAM
I will! Adios, Ish!

ISH
Adios, nino!

LIGHTS DOWN ON THE KITCHEN

SCENE 3

Sam enters but does not return to the table watching and listening instead.

FRANK
Where is that kid, anyway?

AILEEN
Don't worry about him. Where could he go?

FRANK
Nowhere, I guess. There's only one way out of here.

Ali enters but Sam holds her back. They both watch the scene unfold.

AILEEN
Are you leaving again?

FRANK
(exasperated)
Stop it, will you? I'm not leaving again.

AILEEN
Sure, not now. You'll wait until you get home and never return, just like last time.

FRANK
Last time? What last time?

AILEEN
My daughter, Frank! My daughter died! His mother, my daughter - she died! You left me. Sam left. I wanted to keep him but...

FRANK

... but he has a father! Sam always had to go home with his father.

They both grow quiet and stare into their drinks

AILEEN

Everybody left. Jessica died, you left, Sam left.

FRANK

For the record, I didn't leave after Jessica died. I left before she died.

AILEEN

That's better?

FRANK

It's not better; it's different. We had problems before anyone died.

AILEEN

What wasn't happening with us, you mean.

FRANK

Alright, what wasn't happening with us.

AILEEN

Should have left years ago before my bed went cold.

FRANK

That's not fair.

Frank stands and begins pacing back and forth

FRANK

Goddammit.

AILEEN

Goddammit?

FRANK

Goddammit! What am I—Abraham's sacrifice? I pay for everyone's sins, as well as my own?

AILEEN

You got plenty of your own.

FRANK

I've been paying for everyone else's sins.

AILEEN

Sure, you have, poor you.

FRANK

Tim goes, Tim comes back, Tim dies. John leaves or you leave—I don't know which - Molly comes and goes; Molly cries, Molly leaves. You cry.

AILEEN

And your point?

FRANK

You blame me because they're not around to blame. My sins and theirs. Can't blame Tim—he's dead. John? He vanished. Molly's the kicker. She says you're gay and then decides she isn't.

AILEEN

I don't blame you for that!

FRANK

My history, their histories until it's all our history!

AILEEN

Yes! You are all my history! You're all I have left but go ahead—follow everyone out the door.

FRANK

I backed away. I turned my back but I didn't leave. I'm still close by.

AILEEN

Not close enough. That's not the truth. You stayed close enough to be loyal but not close enough to be true.

Frank walks over and hugs Aileen from behind.

FRANK

Is this close enough?

Aileen nods silently and wipes her tears as Frank sits. Sam makes a move to rejoin them but Ali holds him back this time and motions him to wait. She then approaches the table.

ALI

(without making eye contact)

Ready to order?

They mumble their orders, giving Ali back the menus. As Ali passes Sam, she sends him back to the table.

FRANK

Long time in the bathroom.

SAM

I couldn't find the toilet tissue...

AILEEN

Oh Sam...

SAM

But I found some! It was behind the seat. I dropped my magic cards and they scattered behind the seat.

FRANK

What do you think is more important: Trust or Loyalty?

SAM

(mischievously)

Can you handle the Truth?

FRANK

Wiseguy. I can handle the Truth.

SAM

Well, don't they work together?

AILEEN

What do you mean, honey?

SAM

I mean, it's like my trick: One card faces up and the card that's picked is face down, but next to the one I saw. So, if I find the card I saw, I know the card next to it is the card I'm looking for. I need to know one card to find the other.

(pauses)

I think they work together.

LIGHTS DOWN

SCENE 4

The cafe is closing; everyone has left. Ali is cleaning their table as Ish enters. She stops.

ISH

Que pasa, Hija?

ALI

Why can't they stay in love? Sam hates it when they fight. Don't they know what they've got?

ISH

Si, lo saben.

ALI

I hope so.

LIGHTS DOWN