

Two friends in a diner. (A male, BENJI, and a female, STEPH)

There's a particular tension in the air, almost like we've tuned into an intense chess match.

Benji, light brown skin with stylishly unruly hair, is intensely and rather performatively eating his meal: a double cheeseburger with fries and a shake. He rotates between the three in a swift fashion. A large bite of the burger here, a couple of fries there, and a fashionably loud slurp of the shake to end the sequence.

Steph, rocking a natural look and cradling a hot cup of tea, quietly observes him with a look that is only employed when someone whom you deeply care about is drowning in their own self-pity. In this case, it's in the form of a calorically-dense meal of sodium and sugar.

Benji, deliberately avoiding Steph's gaze, chews loudly as he stares at his plate, preparing himself for another pass through the rotation. Recognizing his scheme, she breaks the silence.

"So we're really not going to talk about it?" Steph asks. Her face motionless. Benji acknowledges her question by taking a large slurp of his shake. Steph is irked by this but keeps her composure as he goes in for another bite of his burger.

"Can you please not do that?" She asks in a calm yet assertive tone. Benji looks at her with disbelief.

"You want me to *not* eat this burger? No can do, hombre." He replies as he takes a big bite.

"Benji, I'm serious." She sighs.

"Mm-You know what else is serious? This burger. It's fucking amazing. You're really missing out." He says with a mouthful of ground beef and cheese. Without skipping a beat, Benji slurps on his shake but even louder this time.

Steph rolls her eyes and tries to suppress a smile.

"Benji, we have to talk about last night." She says.

A beat. The tension rises.

Benji stops chewing before slowly resuming again.

"Last night was a mistake. We both know that." He shrugs.

"Do we?" She inquires.

"Do we what?" He replies.

"Both know it was a mistake?"

"Of course we do." He replies as he stuffs some fries into his mouth.

"So what? We just act like it never happened?" She asks.

"Exactly." He says as he takes another bite. "Mmm-You sure you're not hungry? I can't be the only one enjoying this burger."

Steph's irritation becomes harder for her to hide.

"But it *did* happen." She continues.

"I know it did." He says while chewing.

"So why are you trying to pretend like it didn't?" She interrogates.

"Because that's what's best for both of us." He returns to eating.

A beat. Steph leans back.

"Best for us or best for you?" She smirks.

Another beat. Benji stops chewing and looks at her.

"What's that supposed to mean?" He awkwardly chuckles.

"Oh c'mon, Benji, don't play dumb." She says.

"I seriously don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh yeah? Well, from the looks of how you've been eating that burger, you know exactly what the fuck I'm talking about." She grills.

"The hell does that have to do with anything? Maybe I just really like my fucking burger."

"Sure you do." She says sarcastically.

This upsets Benji.

"Yeah, I do!" He exclaims.

The kitchen staff and other patrons shoot glances their way. Steph notices this.

"Benji-" She says quietly.

"I like this burger, Steph!" Everyone can hear him clearly now.

"Okay, Benji-" She tries to stop Benji but it's too late.

"What? You got a problem with me liking this burger?"

Steph shrinks in embarrassment.

"Actually, you know what? I don't just like this burger. I fucking *love* this burger!"

Benji turns to project to the other patrons and embraces the spotlight.

Steph is completely embarrassed but can't look away from Benji.

He continues projecting "Yeah, I love this burger! And I think whoever doesn't love this burger either has no taste buds or has never been loved before. Because this (*Benji holds the burger up like a trophy*) This is the best fucking burger that I've ever had!" He finishes his outburst by scarfing down the rest of his burger, chewing angrily and in a huff.

A beat. The rest of the patrons slowly return to normalcy as Benji continues chewing.

Steph, still recovering from embarrassment, observes Benji as he stares hard at his empty plate, his chewing slowly losing steam.

"You know- you could've just said you didn't want to talk about it." She delivers.

"I don't." He pouts.

"Clearly." She chuckles.

"Look, Benji, I know what you're doing. You're not fooling me or anyone here."

"I'm not-"

"No, it's my turn now." She snaps back.
Benji sinks back into his seat and looks away. Steph's eyes stay locked on Benji.
A beat.

"I know how you feel. You're scared. Scared of messing things up.." She starts confidently. Benji continues to look away.

"And that's okay cause, to be honest...so am I." she delivers the last three words with tenderness.

This grabs Benji's attention and now he's locked onto her eyes.

"What?" He asks gingerly.

On cue, a waitress comes by their table and sets a plate down in front of Benji. It is, of course, a freshly grilled double cheeseburger.

"I didn't order this." Benji says confused.

"It's on the house." The waitress gestures to the kitchen with a smile.

A beefy cook proudly bumps his chest twice and salutes Benji. The waitress walks away. Almost instantaneously, Steph's attitude is playful. She turns her focus to the burger.

"Wow! That looks so good! Ok, I actually have to try it now. You mind if I- Actually, I'm just gonna take it. There's no way you're still hungry. Thank you!"

Steph performatively takes a bite of the burger and her face instantly contorts with pleasure.

"Oh my god. This is so good!" She exclaims. She turns to the rest of the patrons, pointing to Benji. "He was not lying. Y'all really need to try this burger!"
Benji realizes what she's doing. Checkmate.

Steph turns back around and meets Benji's eyes. He smiles.

"You were right. This burger is amazing." She smiles with the burger in her hand.
They both laugh.

The End.