

FADE IN:

INT. FISHBOWL - MORNING

A GOLDFISH swims sluggishly through grimy, speckled water. Fungus coats the inside of the bowl, making it opaque. On the outside, the blurred image of a hand appears...

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - SAME

SAMANTHA TRUGGLE, 22 and dressed in black pants and a white blouse, taps fish food into the bowl. She regards the jumble of cluttered piles in her living room and sighs. Kicking through the mess, she walks out the door.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

I found a place for you.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - LATER THAT MORNING

Samantha sits in a tiny, windowless room chewing her nails. Across from her, JANET MCGINNIS, late-twenties, leans over a stack of papers on her desk.

JANET

Took quite a bit of negotiation on my part, but here it is.

She hands Samantha a sheet of paper, who looks it over.

JANET

Pretty damn lucky if you ask me.

Samantha glares at her.

SAMANTHA

This is the place I told you?

JANET

(nodding)

Mm hmm. I wouldn't normally go to this much trouble...The place looks like a real dive, Samantha. But if you say this girl's your friend...

SAMANTHA
 (defensively)
 She *is* my friend.

Janet waves off an invisible fly.

JANET
 Well, regardless. It's important
 that you form relationships with
 normal, working, everyday people.
 So good luck with this. You can
 start this morning, the manager's
 waiting for you to come by and get
 your feet wet.

Samantha stares at the paper and rises from her seat.

SAMANTHA
 Alright. Thanks.

Janet touches her arm.

JANET
 Samantha. Look at me.

She does.

JANET
 At least try not to mess this one
 up. Okay?

EXT. CITY BLOCK - BRENNER'S DINER - LATER THAT MORNING

"Brenner's" flickers in neon above a small diner. Samantha
 walks up, paper in hand. She checks the sign, then enters.

INT. BRENNER'S DINER - CONTINUOUS

A cramped grid of flimsy tables, booths and chairs, mostly
 empty. At one, BOB BILLOWAY, a heavyset man in an apron,
 pours coffee for an OLD LADY. He looks up as Samantha enters.

BILLOWAY
 (approaching)
 Can I help you?

SAMANTHA
 Hi there. I'm Samantha Truggle.
 Ms. McGinnis spoke to you about...

BILLOWAY

Yes, yes. Thanks for coming in.

He extends a hand.

BILLOWAY

Bob Billoway. I manage the place.

Samantha shakes and Billoway eyes her suspiciously.

BILLOWAY

Why don't we head back to the
kitchen area and get you set up?

She follows him towards the back.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

They enter through two swinging doors. Samantha's face brightens a little when she sees CHRISTY, 23 with dyed hair and a lip ring, leaning against a prep counter. Billoway walks past her through another doorway, but Samantha pauses before following after.

SAMANTHA

Hey. Guess I got the job.

Christy bites into a roll and smirks.

CHRISTY

You better not get me fired.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. BRENNER'S DINER - TWO WEEKS LATER

Patrons fill half of the dining room. Samantha busts through the swinging doors wearing an apron and carrying a plate. She brings it to an OLD MAN who sits alone, muttering.

SAMANTHA

(sighing)

Here ya go.

Two tables over, a WOMAN calls out, waving her fork wildly. She sits across from a slouching ADOLESCENT.

WOMAN

Excuse me! Miss! Could you come
over here, please?

Samantha approaches them and puts on a smile.

SAMANTHA

What can I do for you?

The Woman lifts up a plate of half-eaten fried fish.

WOMAN

I asked for the cod broiled, miss, *broiled*. Does this look broiled to you?

SAMANTHA

No, ma'am.

WOMAN

It's fried. Do I seem like the type of person who eats fried food?

SAMANTHA

Looks like you ate half of it.

WOMAN

Excuse me!?

Samantha takes the plate.

SAMANTHA

I'll see what I can do.

She walks back toward the kitchen, but pauses. The Old Man has an entire steak in his mouth, and swings it around like a preying animal. Samantha watches, then goes over and crouches next to him. He continues to growl and flail.

SAMANTHA

I told them not to overcook it.

He stops moving. She lifts up his empty plate.

SAMANTHA

Come on, Manny, put it here. On the plate.

He drops his jaw, letting the steak fall. Samantha picks up his fork and knife and cuts off a piece.

SAMANTHA

There you go. Paying attention? We go over this every week.

He stares ahead vacantly. Samantha brings the fork up to his mouth and he eats. He looks at her and smiles. She rises, pats him on the back, and shakes her head.

SAMANTHA
(to self)
I'd fucking kill myself...

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Samantha stands at a counter with the plate of fried fish, cutting off the breaded part with a knife.

Christy comes up from behind.

CHRISTY
Um, what the hell are you doing?

SAMANTHA
I'm broiling fish. Do not disturb.

CHRISTY
Right. Well, I'm grabbing a cig.

SAMANTHA
Want company?

EXT. BRENNER'S DINER - MOMENTS LATER

They stand side-by-side on the sidewalk, shuffling about in the cold. Christy smokes.

CHRISTY
Crappy day.

SAMANTHA
Yeah, depressing.

CHRISTY
I don't know how much more of this I can take. I'm thinking about going part-time. Take some classes at Franklin.

SAMANTHA
Fuck that. You don't need to go to college. Trust me.

CHRISTY
How do you know? You've never---

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