Post-Assessment: Welcome Back

UNIT: Detective Series

TRANSCRIPT

Welcome Back by Jacob Kramer.

Koyla was preparing for the best day ever. Her best friend, Sarina, was coming back into town, and they love to bake cakes together. There were so many fantastic combinations: Caramel Peach! Chocolate Pecan! Peppermint Grape! Okay—even Koyla had to admit that was a bust. Sarina had described it as a “toothpaste and jelly sandwich.”

A month ago, Sarina left to visit her cousins in Canada. Koyla had missed her tons. The last thing that Koyla and Sarina did together was bake a milk chocolate cake with raspberry buttercream icing. Koyla remembered tasting it and feeling like it was the best day ever. Now Sarina was finally back home, and they could bake the exact same thing again. That's one of the best things about baking: when you follow the recipe, it turns out exactly the same every time. Koyla looked around the kitchen where all the ingredients were laid out. She knew Sarina's first day back was going to be perfect, just how she planned it.

DING-DONG! That's her! Sarina's finally here! Koyla almost tripped running to let her in.

When Koyla opened the door, Sarina looked… different. First of all, her hair was shorter, and it had green in it. And she was wearing dark lipstick. And she didn't have, like, any zits at all. Sarina looked cool. Almost too cool.

"Welcome back!" said Koyla, pushing through her discomfort to force a big smile. "You look AMAZING! Canada must have been so weird."

"Actually, it was pretty fun. My older cousins are in a band, and they played a bunch of shows. They're really cool."

When she heard that, something in Koyla's chest hurt. "Oh, well, today's more about sweets than beats, right? Finally, we can get back to baking! It'll be perfect."

Koyla ushered Sarina into the kitchen where the flour, sugar, chocolate, cream, butter, eggs, and raspberries were all waiting, neatly arranged.

"Remember that awesome cake we made before you left? I've got everything prepped to make exactly the same one. It's gonna be like you never even went away."

Sarina looked hesitant and fiddled with her earring. It was new and green to match her hair. It also matched the green logo on the band shirt Sarina was wearing. It was probably the band Sarina's cousins were in. Noticing it, Koyla felt something like a bruise in her chest. Ouch.

"I dunno know," said Sarina. "It was good, but maybe we can make something else. The thing is—"

Suddenly, Koyla's bruised feelings turned to anger. All she wanted was for everything to be the same when Sarina got back, but everything felt different. She felt tears starting in her eyes.

"What? Are you too cool now? You go off to Canada and suddenly you're like, oh, baking is for little kids like Koyla? Well, that's fine. I can make this myself and eat it myself!"

"Whoa! I didn't say any of that! You didn't even let me finish," said Sarina. "Remember how I used to have all those problems, like stomach problems? And my skin was really itchy?"

"Yeah," said Koyla, calming down a little.

"It turns out that my cousins used to have the same issues. And then they went to the doctor and found out that they can't eat any dairy. So, I went to see their doctor, and she told me the same thing: Stop eating dairy. But this cake has buttermilk and cream."

“So you can never eat cake again?"

"Yeah. At least not cake with those ingredients. But I feel better. And besides, look at my skin!"

Koyla had to admit, Sarina's skin was glowing, like in a commercial.

"So what does that mean, are we making this cake or what?"

Sarina shrugged. "Well, maybe we could modify the recipe, like using oat milk and plant butter?"

"But then we're not following the recipe!" protested Koyla, "It's going to be different."

"What's wrong with that?" asked Sarina.

Koyla wiped the tear from her cheek. "I just want things to be like they were before you left."

"I know," said Sarina. "Let's make that toothpaste and jelly cake, but for real this time. No butter, no milk, no flour, only toothpaste and jelly, perfectly dairy free."

Koyla burst out laughing. "That sounds terrible!"

"True," Sarina said, "but it'll be fun, right?"

Koyla and Sarina giggled as they squeezed toothpaste and jelly into a bowl. The bruised feeling in Koyla's chest began to disappear and was replaced by something warm and light. Sarina was still the same, even though she was a little different.

The cake turned out absolutely disgusting, and neither of them could actually eat it. It was about as far away from a perfect cake as it could be. Koyla actually choked on a bite and had to spit it out. Sarina laughed, and Koyla started laughing too at the steaming goop they had created. Wiping tears of laughter from her eyes, Koyla still felt like it was the best day ever.