

KODI

Written by

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EXT. KODI VILLAGE TANK - DAY

A shallow 100 x 60 ft swimming hole with rock steps on all sides leading down to the water.

CLOSE ON the tiny silver anklets around the feet of a young girl, DHANYA (South Indian, smart and goofy). She wears a traditional *pattu pavadai* (silk skirt and blouse). Her hair is in two long plaits down either side of her shoulders. She sweeps the jasmine flowers in her hair out of her face and takes a deep breath before dipping her right foot into the water.

MANI (O.S.)

I knew you were lying. There's no fish in the water.

On CUE, MEENA, an uncannily luminescent goldfish pops up and spits some water right onto the boy who stands a few steps behind Dhanya, MANI (reluctant about everything).

MEENA

For the record, I'm a magic fish.
There are lots of fish in the tank.

Dhanya looks at Mani - I told you so. Twins - APPU (girl, always hungry) and PAPPU (perpetual optimist) come running down the stairs to meet Dhanya and Mani.

APPU

Sorry we're late. I saw Ramu selling cotton candy and I just had to get some.

DHANYA

Where's the candy?

Appu looks sheepish. There are candy crumbs around her mouth.

APPU

I ate it all.

PAPPU

The rest of us will have more room for lunch! Oh, hi Meena!

MEENA

Are we waiting for anyone else? Can we get started? I have other things to do, you know.

Dhanya looks over at Mani, whose eyes are so wide they might pop out of his head. Dhanya, Appu and Pappu giggle.

CUE TITLE SONG:

- Over shots of Kodi village. Dhanya and her gang run together towards the tank, down the steps and to Meena.
- Meena asks them a riddle.
- The gang goes around Kodi trying to figure out the answer and they come back to Meena with a response.
- They get it right, Meena gives them a brass coin - which the kids put in their piggybank. They are saving up for bicycles.

EXT. KODI VILLAGE TANK - DAY

Mani's eyes are still wide. Appu eats almonds from her pocket. Dhanya and Pappu sit on the bottom step and lean forward to listen to Meena. There are several people around the tank - sitting by the water, chatting and swimming.

MEENA

(looking directly at Mani)
There are places where people like to be. There are places that people like to see. There's only one place in the whole of Kodi which people agree - is both. What is it?

MANI

I... I don't know.

Meena turns to Dhanya.

MEENA

Who's the new boy?

DHANYA

Mani is my cousin brother from Kovil town. He just moved here with my aunty Jaya.

MEENA

Okay. I'll see you kids later. It's time for my synchronized swimming class.

Without waiting for a response, Meena vanishes - literally.

DHANYA

So, what do you think?

PAPPU
 (catchphrase)
 I think it's time to get KONJAM
 creative!

*Konjam = a little

APPU
 After we get lunch?

DHANYA
 Appu, it's only 8 AM.
 (beat)
 There are places where people like
 to be. There are places that people
 like to see. There's only one place
 in the whole of Kodi which people
 agree - is both. What is it?

MANI
 Someone needs to tell me what just
 happened!

DHANYA
 Meena is Kodi's famous goldfish.

PAPPU
Magic goldfish.

DHANYA
 Right, magic goldfish. Since it's
 summer, we are saving up to get
 bicycles so we can drive around
 Kodi. If we solve Meena's riddle
 she gives us a penny.

PAPPU
 And we get to go on a fun summer
 adventure! And explore the wonders
 of our beautiful, majestic hometown
 - Kodi.

INSERT : A bird's eye view of the whole gorgeous village of
 Kodi. Rolling hills, lines of bungalows with open courtyards,
 the village tank, a grass field, rice fields (paddys)
 complete with the scarecrow KANNA (he talks, but can't move,
 and his head is an upside down mud pot). Idyllic and serene.
 Cows graze the fields. Bullock carts are used to transport
 goods around town. A river flows through the village.

Back with the kids at the tank.

APPU

And it's a great chance to flavor
the different snacks and delicacies
of Kodi!

DHANYA

(to Mani)

What do you say? Do you want a
bicycle?

Dhanya, Appu and Pappu put their hands together in a team
huddle. After a bit of hesitation, Mani joins in.

EXT. PANCHAYAT TREE - DAY

Dhanya and the gang approach the stone benches under the
massive banyan tree.

DHANYA

This is a place people like to be.
It's beautiful with lots of shade
and you get the best view of Kodi
in all directions.

Dhanya spins around in a 360 and we see her POV.

PAPPU

Try it, Mani.

Mani twirls around and tries to take in the view. In his POV
as he spins, a bird gets in his face. Mani yelps and falls
backwards.

MANI

Ow!

The bird is MYLE, a rather cocky peacock who speaks as though
he owns the village. Also, he always speaks in third person.

DHANYA

Myle, you scared Mani.

MYLE

Myle must not be feared. Myle must
simply be
(dramatic pause)
respected.

DHANYA

Myle belongs to Thatha.

MYLE

Myle belongs to no one. Myle is his own peacock.

MANI

(in awe)

You are a magic peacock.

MYLE

Myle is a miracle of sorts.

The kids giggle. Myle walks around Mani and hands him one of his own feathers.

MYLE (CONT'D)

A gift from the great Myle to welcome the newbie.

Mani cracks a smile for the first time as he looks at the feather.

THATHA (super old man with the darkest skin, the whitest beard, and the kindest smile) sits on a stone bench under the Banyan tree with his eyes closed, snoring lightly.

DHANYA

Hi Thatha!

Thatha doesn't respond. Pappu goes up close to Thatha and taps him. Thatha's eyes shoot open and --

THATHA

(yelling)

I didn't take the sweets!

Thatha grabs Mani startling him.

DHANYA

Um, Thatha. Were you sleeping?

THATHA

(regaining composure ;
enlightened)

I was just meditating, child.

(gangsta)

What up?

PAPPU

We're solving a riddle for Meena.

THATHA

(uninterested)

Okay.

Thatha closes his eyes again. Just as Pappu is about to tap his shoulder again, Myle intercepts him.

MYLE

One mustn't disturb one's elders.

DHANYA

But, I was just going to ask him --

Myle shushes Dhanya with his feathers. Thatha goes back into his deep slumber. Pappu looks to Dhanya helplessly. Myle finally, slowly removes his feathers from Dhanya's face.

DHANYA (CONT'D)

Myle, maybe you can help us.

Myle's feathers flare up again and he indicates that Dhanya should whisper and not wake Thatha up.

DHANYA (CONT'D)

(whisper)

Do the people of Kodi like to be here - under the *panchayat* tree?

MYLE

(loud; dramatic)

Of course, there is no one who doesn't like to visit Myle.

The gang looks confused since he just asked them to whisper.

APPU

We are looking for a place, Myle.

MYLE

Please, speak quietly.

APPU

(whisper)

A place in Kodi that people like to see.

PAPPU

A place that people like to be.

MANI

A place that is both is what we're looking for.

Dhanya and the twins turn to Mani smiling. He's finally getting on board.

MYLE

Myle knows of no such place. The Panchayat Banyan tree is a place some people like to see, but Myle wouldn't say that it's a very popular spot.

Dhanya rubs her chin.

DHANYA

What other places do people like to see in Kodi?

Mani shrugs.

MANI

Don't look at me - I just got here.

Pappu has an idea. He grabs the peacock feather from Mani and bends down, talking as he draws in the sand.

PAPPU

Lets make a list!

In an impressive quick movement, Pappu gets back up and reveals a map of Kodi that he's drawn and hands the feather back to Mani, who looks deflated at the now dusty feather.

DHANYA

Pappu, you're a genius! What a great idea - let's make a list. What place do you like to see or be, Pappu?

PAPPU

I love seeing the plays at the amphitheater.

DHANYA

You're right, the amphitheater is beautiful. And people love to watch plays. We should put it on our list.

Pappu plucks the feather from Mani and uses it to circle the amphitheater on his map.

PAPPU

Amphitheater.

As Thatha's snores continue to punctuate the scene, the gang huddles around the map. Myle peeks in too.

DHANYA

Appu, you've been really quiet.
What is a place you love to be?

Appu holds her rumbling tummy and her face lights up.

APPU

Guna's snack shop!

Appu points to it on the map - nestled between the tailor's shop and the music shop.

DHANYA

(unsure)

I guess that could be the place
that Meena meant. Lots of people do
love snacks.

(to Pappu)

Let's add the snack shop to our
list.

Pappu circles the snack shop on the map.

PAPPU

Guna's snack shop.

Appu hooks her arm into Dhanya's excited.

APPU

Let's go!

DHANYA

I thought we might visit the
amphitheater first.

But it's too late. Appu is already on her way to the snack shop.

Before he leaves, Myle gives Mani a brand new feather. Mani bows to Myle.

MYLE

Welcome to Kodi, young Mani.

MANI

Thanks, Myle. See you later.

Mani runs to catch up with the others.

EXT. GUNA'S SNACK SHOP - DAY

Seemingly the entire population of the village is outside of the open shop.

Each person scrambling for the owner, GUNA's attention. Guna works with unbelievable dexterity, manning different stations and moving between them without missing a beat - *dosa* plate, mixing the chai, rolling the dough for breads.

PEOPLE

Guna, please can I have extra
chutney? / Guna please don't put
any butter on my bread!

Appu walks right up to the front of the line - this is her spot. Dhanya looks around at the crowd.

DHANYA

People definitely like to be here!

PAPPU

I've never seen the shop so busy.

APPU

That's because you never come in
the afternoons. It's lunchtime!

Mani dodges and weaves through limbs to keep up with everyone.

MANI

Dhanya, wait for me.

As soon as he spots Appu, Guna seems to move even faster. He waves to Appu and within 20 seconds, hands her and the gang each a steaming plate of *idlis* (rice cakes) served on banana leaf plates.

GUNA

(to Appu)

The usual for my best customer.

Appu digs in immediately.

APPU

(with her mouth full)

You have to eat while it's hot.

DHANYA

Silly Appu.

Dhanya, Pappu and Mani giggle when Appu burps slightly. They eat their food, carefully trash the banana leaves, and wash their hands at the stone sink next to the shop.

MANI

That was delicious.

DHANYA
Best snacks in Kodi.

APPU
Best snacks in the world!

Pappu approaches one of the customers in line - MANGA (middle-aged, always in a hurry).

PAPPU
Manga! We have a question for you.

MANGA
Well, I'm already late. My lunch break was over 10 minutes ago, Pappu. I can't be answering questions for kids right now.

The line inches forward and Manga waddles ahead.

DHANYA
It won't take long. We just want to know if you like seeing Guna's snack shop.

Manga stops in his tracks and the woman behind bumps right into him.

MANGA
Uf, I don't have time to think about this, but let me think.

Manga pauses and scratches his head. He looks at the snack shop - tilting his head to the right first, then to the left. We see his POV of the crowded snack shop. Hot steam rises above the shop. Guna's hands are a blur as he whooshes between stations. The chatter of the crowd is excessive.

APPU
Manga, what are you doing?

MANGA
I'm trying to answer your question.

Manga does a headstand and goes upside down to squint at the snack shop.

MANGA (CONT'D)
I have thought about it. And I have seen the shop.

Manga stands upright again. The woman behind him glares at him.

MANGA (CONT'D)

I have an answer.

Dhanya and the kids hold their breath. Manga closes his eyes, readying himself to say the words.

MANI

What is your answer?

MANGA

I don't like seeing the shop. I like eating the food, but seeing the shop - that I don't like.

APPU

Personally, I love eating the food.

DHANYA

Well I guess we can cross the snack shop off our list.

APPU

It's going to stay on my list. Forever.

DHANYA

Thank you, Manga.

WOMAN

The line is moving you should hurry up!

Manga jumps and hurries forward.

MANGA

Look at the time!

The kids huddle together.

PAPPU

I guess we should head to the amphitheater.

APPU

Okay. I'm just going to grab a few *bondas* for the road.

*bondas = fried dough snacks.

MANI

I'll come with you.

Dhanya and Pappu look at Mani questioningly. Mani smiles and shrugs.

MANI (CONT'D)
The snacks are super yummy.

CUT TO:

EXT. NILA STREET - DAY

Appu and Mani munch on *bondas* as they walk through a tree-lined street behind Dhanya and Pappu. They pass several villagers riding bicycles.

DHANYA
I want to get a bicycle just like that.

PAPPU
I'm going to get a green one. It's my favorite colour.

APPU
I need a cycle with a basket, so I can put my snacks in it.

PAPPU
What about you, Mani? What kind of bicycle do you want?

Mani smiles and scratches his head.

MANI
(mimicing Manga)
I don't even have the time to think about it, but let me think.

Mani tilts his head to the left and then to the right as he squints at the bicycles passing by. The others giggle.

PAPPU
That's a great impression of Manga!

MANI
(bowing)
Why, thank you.

DHANYA
Maybe Mani will perform at the amphitheater plays soon.

MANI
Me, an actor? No.

Mani shakes his head.

APPU
You didn't tell us what kind of
bicycle you want, Mani.

MANI
I just want a good one.

The gang agrees - that's the most important factor. Everyone
nods.

DHANYA
I want a good one too.

PAPPU
Yeah, me too.

APPU
Definitely.

They continue trotting towards --

EXT. AMPHITHEATER - DAY

The open air theater is surrounded by vines and the rock
stairs are worn into rounded corners. When the gang arrives,
they are welcomed by a single pigeon. The pigeon spots them
and flies over to sit on Mani's head. Mani jumps trying to
shoo the pigeon away.

PAPPU
Birds really like you.

MANI
I don't know why.

Mani gives up and lets the pigeon sit on his head.

MANI (CONT'D)
(to pigeon)
I suppose you can talk too!

The pigeon just purrs in response.

DHANYA
(looking around)
There are *no* people here. People
don't like to be here at all.

PAPPU
I like seeing the theater.

DHANYA

But, you like seeing the plays not
just the theater.

PAPPU

Good point.

MANI

I like seeing the theater itself.
It's beautiful.

The pigeon purrs agreeing with him.

DHANYA

(deflated)

This isn't the place.

Dhanya slides down and sits on the stairs hugging her knees.
The others sit next to Dhanya.

DHANYA (CONT'D)

This is a tough one.

APPU

I'm kind of tired... And hungry.

PAPPU

Meena really wanted us to think
about this one.

Mani has his hand under his chin.

DHANYA

We should head back to Meena. It's
almost time.

MANI

Maybe she will give us another
hint.

PAPPU/APPU/DHANYA

(in unison ; shaking their
heads)

She won't!

MANI

Why?

PAPPU

Those are the rules. She only gives
us one clue.

DHANYA

She knows we are smart and we can figure it out. Come on, I'm sure we will find the answer. We can't give up, yet.

Mani gets up. The pigeon flies off of his head after giving him an affectionate peck.

EXT. TANK STREET - DAY

The gang walk through the street leading up to the tank as the sun sets.

DHANYA

A place people like to be.

PAPPU

A place people like to see.

APPU

A place that is both. What could it possibly be?

They reach the tank as the sun sets.

MANI

Look! The sun is setting. It's amazing! I'm so glad I got to see this.

Dhanya looks at Mani, an idea forming in her head. She looks over at the tank where there are crowds of people sitting, chatting and dipping their feet in the water. Others dive in and swim -- that's it!

DHANYA

Mani, that's it! The tank.

Dhanya starts running down the stairs.

EXT. KODI VILLAGE TANK - DAY

Back where they started, the gang is on the bottom step of the tank.

DHANYA

Look, people love being here. Families, kids and even pets.

QUICK SHOTS of the families sitting on the tank stairs, kids running around and splashing water on one another. Several cats and some monkeys wait for food to be dropped.

DHANYA (CONT'D)

And people love seeing the tank.

QUICK SHOTS of people pointing at the sunset, some people paint and sketch the tank on canvasses. They even take pictures (with an old timey Victorian looking camera).

DHANYA (CONT'D)

The answer to Meena's riddle is her own home.

MEENA (O.S.)

That's right!

REVEAL: Meena has popped up behind them

MEENA (CONT'D)

Kodi's crown jewel is the Kodi tank. It is said that the tank attracts visitors from far and wide to see the magical goldfish that swims in these waters.

Meena chuckles haughtily.

DHANYA

You are so smart, Meena. That was such a fun riddle.

MANI

It was! Thanks, Meena. What an adventure. And on my very first day in Kodi.

APPU

We're so excited to add the reward to our piggybank, Meena.

PAPPU

Yes, I've decided on getting the green bicycle.

MEENA

Of course.

Meena vanishes and reappears with 4 brass pennies which she hands to each of the kids.

MEENA (CONT'D)

Well done, kids. You've earned it.

Mani smiles pocketing his penny.

INT. DHANYA'S HOUSE - EVENING

The kids put the pennies in their individual piggybanks. Mani sees his is pretty empty except for the one penny. Everyone else has a fuller bank.

MANI

Boy, it's going to take me a long time to save up for my bike.

DHANYA

Oh.

Dhanya looks at her fuller piggybank. She takes hers and puts half of her pennies into Mani's.

MANI

That's so nice Dhanya, but you don't have to do that.

Pappu and Appu do the same. They pile their pennies together and split the loot 4 ways.

DHANYA

We can all save up together.

APPU

It'll only be fun if all my friends have bikes.

PAPPU

We just need to solve more riddles.

DHANYA

And go on more adventures!

MANI

Yay! Let's do it.

DHANYA

We'll go visit Meena again.

Mani heads towards the door. Dhanya pulls him back.

DHANYA (CONT'D)

Tomorrow! We'll visit Meena tomorrow.

DHANYA'S MOM (O.S.)

Dinner-time kids!

APPU
 Coming, aunty!

Appu runs out the door.

 DHANYA
 Coming, *amma!*

The others smile and follow.

INT. DHANYA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The kids eat dinner and chat with Dhanya's parents. Appu scarfs down the food very quickly. Mani smiles at his new friends.

END OF EPISODE