

CLOSE ON A BUTTERFLY...

It sits motionless on the side of a tree. Suddenly, a jar comes down and covers it. A hand comes in to act as the lid.

EXT. VILLAGE SCHOOL. INDIA -DAY

A teenage boy, AMAR, pulls the jar away from the tree. Nearby there are ten mats where class was recently held. The TEACHER puts away her meager materials. Amar is surrounded by SIX SCHOOLMATES including a pretty, dark-skinned girl with big eyes, SONIA (15), and her smaller, fair-skinned sister, PREETI (13). Sonia watches the butterfly with great joy.

Amar takes the jar and puts it up to his cheek. (**NOTE: All dialogue in Hindi unless noted**).

AMAR

This is how you get a butterfly
kiss.

Preeti moves in closer, partially blocking Sonia but Sonia doesn't mind.

Amar removes his hand from the jar and the butterfly flaps away against Amar's cheek. He laughs and puts his hand back on the jar.

PREETI

Can I feel it? Can I feel?!

Amar brings the jar over to Preeti and, again, removes his hand letting the butterfly's wings brush against Preeti's cheek. Preeti giggles.

Amar covers the top again. The other kids beg for them to feel it but he sees Sonia and goes over to her.

AMAR

You want to try?

Sonia practically blushes but Amar steps over to her. She finally nods, giving him the OK. He puts the jar up to her cheek. The butterfly, though, doesn't move. It sits in place. Amar slaps the bottom of the jar though and the butterfly comes to life, batting its wings against her cheek. Sonia screams with joy and jumps away. Amar quickly puts his hand over the jar and keeps the butterfly from escaping.

SONIA

I'm sorry.

Amar is unfazed though.

AMAR

It's OK.

Amar has a gentle way about him that embarrasses Sonia.

EXT. ROAD. AFTERNOON.

Sonia and Preeti walk back home after school. Preeti has a anklet with a bell that jingles when she walks. They are surrounded on either side by barren land.

PREETI

Amar likes you.

SONIA

He put the butterfly on you first.

PREETI

Because I asked.

An abandoned ox-cart lies toppled over.

A shack's roof has caved in.

They continue.

SONIA

It didn't feel like a kiss anyway.

PREETI

It did a little.

SONIA

It felt like this.

She takes Preeti's hand and places it over her (Sonia's) eye and begins blinking. Preeti laughs and pulls away.

PREETI

We don't even need a butterfly.

SONIA

I guess. Unless you like these kisses more...

Sonia suddenly lunges over to Preeti and kisses her cheek. Preeti laughs and then goes to kiss Sonia but she runs away and it turns into a game of tag.

Sonia lets Preeti catch and kiss her. Preeti runs away and Sonia chases after her. Preeti screams with joy, her anklet jangling away.

EXT. SONIA'S FAMILY'S FARM -LATER

Sonia, Preeti, her MOTHER (a quiet, obedient woman with lines of hardship that define her face) and her weathered father, SHIVA, are working in the fields.

SHIVA
(to Sonia)
Take that to the shed.

Sonia lifts up a very heavy bushel and walks away from them.

In the distance we see ANOTHER FAMILY working the anemic land as well, a trail of dust being kicked up.

As Sonia gets close to the house...

SHIVA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Get up! Get up!

Sonia turns to see Shiva standing over Preeti. He grabs her and pulls her up roughly by the arm.

SHIVA (CONT'D)
You are a fool! You are a useless
fool!
You cost me another days work!

Sonia puts down the bushel and rushes over to Shiva and Preeti.

SONIA
(to Shiva)
No! Daddy! No!

Shiva hits Preeti and she falls down amongst a spilt bushel that has been ruined. Her mother watches, helplessly.

SHIVA
Useless!

SONIA
Daddy!

Sonia comes to them.

SONIA (CONT'D)
Daddy, stop! Please.

Preeti hides behind Sonia.

SONIA (CONT'D)
We will make up for it.

Sonia picks up the spilt bushel. Shiva stares down at Sonia for a moment and then steps away from them, frustrated.

SONIA (CONT'D)
(to Preeti)
It's OK.

INT. HOUSE -NIGHT

Sonia and her mother are making dinner.

MOM
You are a very good sister, Sonia.
You should always protect Preeti
like that.

SONIA
(glad she has made her
mother happy)
Of course, mother.

Mom leans over and kisses her.

INT. HOUSE -NIGHT

Sonia comforts Preeti, combing her hair. There are a couple of torn pictures on the wall of Bollywood stars and one of Preeti (torn away from a picture that was the rest of the family). Preeti absently plays with the bells on her anklet.

SONIA
Mother says you were not meant to
work in the fields. You are an
angel. One day, men will line up to
marry you and maybe you'll get to
go away.

PREETI
To where?

SONIA
To Delhi or Mumbai.

PREETI
I could meet Rani.

SONIA
That's right.

PREETI

You will come with us too, won't you?

SONIA

Of course.

PREETI

I'm sure we will need someone to help us.

SONIA

That's right. I will help with your babies.

PREETI

I will have many babies!

SONIA

That's right!

PREETI

I will be so tired. You can bathe them while I sleep.

SONIA

You'll need to get a lot of sleep to keep your beauty.

Preeti puts her head on Sonia's lap and closes her eyes. Sonia takes Preeti's hand and puts it up to her (Sonia's) eye and begins blinking. Preeti smiles as she drifts off to sleep.