

VEGANISH

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CHARACTERS (2M/1F)

- JESSICA (F, 20s)
- ADAM (M, 20s)
- JEREMY WINTERS (M, 50s)

TIME: Present.

SETTING: A casual restaurant in Portland, Oregon.

SYNOPSIS

JESSICA has been trying in vain to convert her boyfriend ADAM to veganism. When they happen upon a vegan celebrity at a restaurant JESSICA begins to doubt her screen idol's commitment to the lifestyle, forcing her to choose between a life of truth and a life of doubt.

SCENE 1

(ADAM and JESSICA are seated in a restaurant. Seated a few tables away a man in his 50s is dining alone. ADAM is eyeing the untouched veggie burger on his plate.)

ADAM

What are those tiny orange bits?

JESSICA

Carrots.

ADAM

In a burger?

JESSICA

That's why they call it a veggie burger.

(ADAM holds up the burger)

ADAM

I need my protein.

JESSICA

You're getting just as much protein from that veggie burger as you would from a meat burger, but with none of the artery-clogging cholesterol.

(ADAM takes a bite)

ADAM

And none of the flavor.

JESSICA

It's an acquired taste.

ADAM

I already acquired a taste for real burgers.

JESSICA

And do you realize just how much methane cows emit into the atmosphere? That if everyone simply gave up eating meat we could stop global warming in its tracks?

ADAM

Why is it that every conversation between us gets interrupted by a public service announcement?

JESSICA

This is important to me, Adam. Why can't you see that?

ADAM

I see it. I'm just having a hard time eating it.

JESSICA

Try to see this from my perspective. Women cook most of the meals on this planet, and if we stopped eating or serving meat for dinner, most men would become vegetarians overnight. The problem is that most women are too worried about disappointing their husbands or their boyfriends to take a stand.

ADAM

You cleared that hurdle without a hitch.

JESSICA

Maybe this was a mistake.

ADAM

What do you mean?

JESSICA

This. Expecting my boyfriend to embrace my way of life. I thought this would be a journey we could go on together.

ADAM

I am, Jess. I'm with you on this journey. Just know that you might have to go on ahead without me.

(Notices the other diner; leans in)

Hey, why does that guy look so familiar?

JESSICA

Oh my. That's Jeremy Winters.

ADAM

You sure?

JESSICA

I read that he's in town shooting a film.

ADAM

Did you know he's dating Salma Hayek?

JESSICA

Did you know he's vegan?

(ADAM glances around excitedly)

ADAM

I wonder if he's waiting for Salma to join him.

JESSICA

He was such an inspiration to me in college. He was the reason I gave up eating meat in the first place.

ADAM

You should go over and say hello.

JESSICA

No. I don't want to make a scene.

(Then)

That's odd.

ADAM

What?

JESSICA

He's eating a burger.

ADAM

A veggie burger?

JESSICA

That's no veggie burger.

ADAM

Maybe the chef made him something special.

(JESSICA stands, hesitates)

ADAM

What are you doing?

JESSICA

I have to find out.

ADAM

I thought you didn't want to make a scene.

JESSICA

It's not like I'm asking for an autograph.

(Approaches)

Mr. Winters?

JEREMY

Yes?

JESSICA

I'm sorry to interrupt you. I'm Jessica. I'm a big fan.

JEREMY

I'm happy to hear that.

JESSICA

I wanted to, umm, ask you something.

JEREMY

Yes?

(JESSICA freezes. ADAM steps over.)

ADAM

Enjoying your burger?

JEREMY

I am.

JESSICA

This is my boyfriend.

ADAM

Is that a veggie burger?

JEREMY

Umm, no.

JESSICA

But you're vegan.

JEREMY

And let me take a wild guess. You are as well?

JESSICA

Yes. I am.

JEREMY

I see. Well, when you're on the road as much as I am, it can be difficult to eat vegan all the time.

JESSICA

This is Portland. There are four vegan restaurants within a mile of here.

JEREMY

Yes, well, it's nice to know that now. I'm new to town, and this was the closest restaurant.

JESSICA

There's a veggie burger on the menu.

JEREMY

Oh? I must have missed that.

ADAM

Consider yourself lucky.

JEREMY

Look—Jessica, is it? I never said I was a perfect vegan.

JESSICA

You're not a vegan at all.

JEREMY

I beg your pardon?

(ADAM leans in and examines the burger)

ADAM

Is that bacon?

JESSICA

I could out you. I *should* out you.

JEREMY

And say what?

JESSICA

That Jeremy Winters is a closet carnivore.

JEREMY

And then what?

JESSICA

You'll lose all your vegan fans.

ADAM

All ten of them.

JESSICA

I'm shocked. You're a leader of the movement. A spokesperson for PETA. Does anyone else know?

JEREMY

About what?

JESSICA

About this. This—this lie.

JEREMY

I'm not lying.

JESSICA

Of course you are.

JEREMY

Only if you define a vegan purely by actions, based on this isolated incident.

JESSICA

How else can you define it?

JEREMY

Were you born vegan?

JESSICA

I converted in college.

JEREMY

So before that you ate meat?

JESSICA

I didn't like it.

JEREMY

That wasn't my question.

JESSICA

I see what you're doing. You're trying to turn this around on me.

JEREMY

I'm just asking how you can consider yourself a vegan given these strict rules you've set for yourself.

JESSICA

They're not *my* rules.

JEREMY

My point is that we're human beings. And vegan is just a word. Maybe, just maybe, that word is too strict for most people.

JESSICA

Not for me.

JEREMY

I call myself Catholic and still sin on occasion.

JESSICA

This is not a religion. We don't worship gods.

ADAM

Only animals.

JEREMY

So why are you standing here right now? You realize that I'm just another imperfect human being.

JESSICA

You can say that again.

JEREMY

It's people like you who give the cause a bad name.

JESSICA

Me?

JEREMY

How am I supposed to advance this movement when you are so busy attacking us?

JESSICA

Advance this movement? You're eating a hamburger!

JEREMY

I do not have to answer to you.

JESSICA

Maybe not. But you have to answer to the animals.

(JEREMY stands)

Where are you going?

JEREMY

I've lost my appetite.

JESSICA

Good.

(JEREMY takes a few steps and turns.)

JEREMY

Most people just ask for an autograph.

(JEREMY exits.)

ADAM

I'm glad you didn't make a scene.

(ADAM sits in Jeremy's chair and eyes the burger. JESSICA is still focused on the door.)

JESSICA

He could have been lying all along. All these years.

ADAM

Or this was like he said. A one-time thing.

JESSICA

I don't believe it.

ADAM

Why does it bother you so much?

(ADAM picks up the burger.)

JESSICA

Because he's a public figure. If people find out he's not vegan after all, they'll use it as just another excuse to go back to eating meat.

ADAM

I don't know about that. Are people really that weak willed?

(ADAM takes a bite. JESSICA notices.)

JESSICA

Yes, they are.

ADAM

We can't let this go to waste, can we?

JESSICA

See what I mean? Jeremy eats meat, and now you're doing the same thing. Imagine how many thousands of people will abandon their diets when they hear the truth.

ADAM

So don't say anything.

JESSICA

You don't understand. Everyone I know idolizes the man. What if they saw what I saw and just said nothing?

ADAM

Perhaps there'd be a lot more vegans in the world.

(ADAM takes another bite. JESSICA heads for the door.)

ADAM

Where are you going?

JESSICA

I'm going to follow him so I can watch him eat dinner. You coming?

ADAM

Me?

JESSICA

We're on this journey together, remember?

ADAM

I didn't realize it included stalking celebrities.

JESSICA

We're not stalkers. We're activists. We're doing this for the animals.

ADAM

Can I be an activist after I finish eating?

JESSICA

It's time you made a decision, Adam. Me or that meat.

(ADAM takes time making up his mind while JESSICA glares. He finally stands and puts down the burger.)

ADAM

The things I do for animals.

(JESSICA smiles and ADAM follows her as they exit.)

END