

EAT AT JOES

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EXT DINER, MORNING

FIONA, a pretty brunette wearing sunglasses, arrives at Joe's diner, a slightly seedy looking restaurant. She exits her car and walks towards the door. On the way, she is interrupted by a scruffy looking homeless man, **ZEKE**. He steps in front of her, his hand held out.

ZEKE
Got any change?

Fiona tries to avoid him but ends up opening her purse.

FIONA
Oh, Zeke. Let me see.

ZEKE
Anything ya got would be welcome.

FIONA
Just hang on.

ZEKE
It's just, I gotta eat today miss.

FIONA
You didn't eat yet today?

She shoos him toward the diner.

FIONA
Come on, I'll buy you breakfast.

ZEKE
Uh, no miss. I'd rather have the money. Kinda shameful having to have my meals bought by a pretty young lady.

Fiona peers over her sunglasses at Zeke.

FIONA
Oh yeah? And it's not because you want to drink the money away, is it?

ZEKE
Nope! I don't drink.

She holds her nose.

FIONA

Not according to my sense of smell.

She plucks at his sleeve

FIONA

Now, come inside and let me buy you breakfast or you aren't getting anything at all. Got me, Zeke?

ZEKE

Do I got a choice?

FIONA

Yes. You can go without eating again today, but I don't want that to happen. So, come with me.

ZEKE

Okay. But can you tell people it's cause I did you a favour or something?

FIONA

Sure.

ZEKE

Thanks miss.

Zeke gestures for her to go first.

ZEKE

Ladies first.

FIONA

Thanks.

They enter the diner.

INT DINER - CONTINUOUS

Zeke shambles up to the counter, looking uncertainly back at Fiona. She shoos him ahead of her, to an empty seat. He attempts to sit down but **SANDY**, the waitress, stops him.

SANDY

You can't sit there Zeke.

ZEKE

Why not? I'm gonna eat.

SANDY

Is that so? And how you planning
on paying for it?

ZEKE

Uh...well...

FIONA

I'll be paying for it. He did some
work on my ...car and I didn't have
any cash on me so I'm buying him
breakfast. So you can give me the
bill, Sandy.

SANDY

Fine, but he can't eat it in here.

FIONA

What? Why?

SANDY

Look at him. He's filthy and he
smells bad.

FIONA

That's discrimination.

ZEKE

It's okay miss. I don't mind.

SANDY

There, see. He don't mind.

Sandy waves a menu at Zeke.

SANDY

You go round the back by the
kitchen and Joe'll serve you there.

She turns back to Fiona.

SANDY

Full breakfast?

FIONA

Yes. Give him the works. Four
eggs, bacon, sausage, toast, hash
browns...everything. And you bring
the bill to me.

SANDY

Fine by me.

Zeke is about to leave but Fiona stops him.

FIONA

Sorry about this.

ZEKE

Don't worry about it miss. I'm used to it.

FIONA

You shouldn't be.

She turns away from Zeke so everyone can hear her.

FIONA

Well, the food's not very good but at least there's enough to fill you up Zeke. And thanks for fixing my car.

ZEKE

You're most welcome miss.

Fiona smiles at Zeke and lets him leave. She turns to find a seat herself when her friend **DAVID MILLS**, web designer, taps her on the shoulder, making her jump

DAVID

Miss me?

FIONA

It's rather hard to miss you David.

DAVID

Really? Cause you didn't see me come in. And you jumped just now.

FIONA

I wasn't paying attention.

DAVID

Are you sure that's what it is? Are you sure it isn't because I have perfected a spell for invisibility?

FIONA

Oh god, are you still pretending to be Wiccan?

DAVID

Pretending? I've told you, I'm a witch.

FIONA

That just sounds so bizarre when you say it like that.

DAVID

Oh come on. You love it. It makes you hot thinking I can put a spell on you.

FIONA

If you can put a spell on me, how come you haven't put a spell on me to make me fall in love with you?

DAVID

Why would I want you in love with me? I just want to have sex with you.

FIONA

So why haven't I yet?

DAVID

Because...it's not the...solstice yet.

FIONA

Uh huh.

Fiona realizes they are standing very closely together.

FIONA

Let's just get a seat.

They look around and see a group leaving a booth near the window.

FIONA

Look, a booth just opened up.

He gestures for her to precede him to the booth, which she does, slipping past him as he leers at her. She shakes her head as they both sit down, he tries to sit next to her but she pushes him to the other side, where he sits.

Both say nothing as they grab menus and study them.

DAVID peeks over the top of his menu at Fiona.

DAVID

Why do we even bother to look at these menus? We know what's on them and we order the same thing every day.

FIONA

We look at them so we don't have to look at each other.

DAVID

But I like looking at you.

FIONA

Fine, I look at my menu so I don't have to look at you.

DAVID

That hurts Fiona. Now why did you have to say that? I know you don't mean it.

FIONA

David...! Stop hitting on me and just look at your menu.

Fiona returns to looking at the menu but David is sulking.

He pulls out a pen and paper from his pocket and begins doodling occult symbols.

The bell over the door of the diner jingles and in moments, **HENRY WOODS**, school teacher, stands at the edge of the table.

HENRY

Well, this is a happy table today.

Both Fiona and David stop what they're doing and look up at the newcomer. Henry is standing at the edge of the table looking from one to the other as the two scowl at him.

HENRY

Isn't anyone going to invite me to sit down?

FIONA

Oh Henry. As if you ever wait to be invited anywhere.

DAVID

You don't need an invitation. Come on and sit down.

David slides over so Henry can sit, which he does. As he settles himself, he throws the newspaper he was carrying onto the table.

HENRY

Well, my young friends. It's finally happened.

DAVID

What? You mean...

HENRY

I do mean. Indeed, I mean...

DAVID

Nostradamus' predictions are coming true?

FIONA

Oh, honey. How is it possible that such a talented web designer could believe in so much mumbo jumbo?

DAVID

Hey! I'm entitled to a hobby.

HENRY

Be quiet for a minute you two. I have something important to tell you.

FIONA

Get ready for a school teacher moment.

DAVID

What is the matter with you? Do you have your period?

FIONA

You condescending little shit!

HENRY

(interrupting)

Could you two shut up?

Fiona and David stop and stare at the agitated Henry.

HENRY

Thank you. Now, what I have to tell you is very important. It's finally happened.

DAVID

You said that before.

HENRY

Then let me finish.

FIONA

Okay, okay.

HENRY

Our lovely little picturesque town has finally succumbed to big city banality.

FIONA

Not that I didn't understand what you just said but try to translate everything else you say into English, Henry.

HENRY

You have no soul Fiona.

FIONA

I have a soul, but I would like to have a life, so get to the point.

He points to the paper.

HENRY

It's all there in the paper.

David grabs the paper.

DAVID
'Dog Rescues Cat From Tree'?

Henry hits the paper with a finger.

HENRY
No! The other headline.

DAVID
'Famous Fast Food Restaurant Rolls
Into Town'. Yeah, so?

FIONA
When did we get a fast food chain?

DAVID
They've been planning it for months
now. Don't you read the papers?

FIONA
No, I have a life.

DAVID
Well, I have a life too but I have
time for the papers.

FIONA
When? Between voodoo hour or spell
casting 101?

HENRY
Again, shut up!

FIONA
Sorry Henry.

DAVID
Go on.

HENRY
Don't you see? Our quaint little
diner here is now an endangered
species.

FIONA
So is some of the meat Joe uses.

HENRY
This will drive Joe out of
business.

(MORE)

HENRY (cont'd)

Think about it, instead of stopping to sit and enjoy a nice plate of sausage and eggs or french toast, people will line their cars up outside the drive through, get their morning breakfast sandwich, with it's healthy serving of your entire daily dietary requirement of calories, and a coffee and eat in the solitary confines of their cars.

DAVID

Well that would suck. How would I get a glimpse of Fiona's spectacular ass every morning?

FIONA

(glaring at Jordan)

Some days I wish I could eat in the confines of my car.

HENRY

You aren't getting my point. Where's the proper nutrition? Where's the social interaction, not to mention the support of a local small town business? This is a disaster, unless Joe can come up with something spectacular to keep the customers coming in.

FIONA

You might have a point there Henry.

HENRY

Of course I do. It's the ultimate erosion of everything we hold near and dear and the ushering in of everything that is bad. Food is an experience to be enjoyed. It's the fuel that keeps us moving. If we start putting junk in the trunk, how will we survive?

DAVID

Okay. I think you've put a little too much thought into this.

FIONA

I don't. I mean, I don't want the extra calories and I certainly can't cook, so if Joe's goes out of business, then where will I eat?

DAVID

I could cook for you.

FIONA

I would rather eat human flesh.

Just then, Sandy arrives at their table with the pot of coffee. She eyes Fiona warily and pours the coffee.

SANDY

What can I getcha?

FIONA

Uhm, I'll have the egg white omelette with the veggie sausage on the side and brown toast, no butter and low fat cream cheese.

DAVID

I'll have the usual.

SANDY

What's that?

DAVID

My usual!

SANDY

Honey, if you think I can remember what every single customer has every day, then you must be out of your mind. Now what'll you have?

DAVID

Fine, I'll have the tall stack of pancakes with sausage and extra syrup.

Sandy turns to Henry.

SANDY

And you hon?

HENRY

I think I'll have scrambled eggs today. With bacon, and white toast instead of wheat, with lots of butter and uh, grape jelly on the side.

SANDY

I'll be back in a minute with your order.

Sandy enters the kitchen

FIONA

Henry, are you feeling okay?

HENRY

No, I'm not. I'm not feeling okay at all. But I'm still going to eat a good breakfast.

DAVID

Yeah, but you ordered something totally different than what you usually have.

HENRY

Yes, I did.

FIONA

David, if he starts acting funny, take him down.

HENRY

Let's talk about something else.

DAVID

Sure. Sure Henry.

A loud noise comes from the kitchen and Sandy comes scurrying back into the dining area. Joe follows her.

He shakes the morning paper in her face as she flinches.

JOE

You see this Sandy? Do you see this?

Sandy cowers against the counter a bit, while all the customers stare. Joe doesn't notice and continues his tirade, waving around his cleaver.

JOE

I can't believe it. What am I gonna do now? I can't keep my customers happy if they have this fast food place to go to.

SANDY

I'm sorry Joe. I don't know what to tell you.

He glares at her and then his shoulders slump. He stares at the floor.

JOE

I'm going to have to do something drastic. I'll have to do anything I can to make this place stay afloat.

Sandy goes to him and puts an arm around him.

SANDY

Don't worry Joe. We'll find a way.

JOE

I'd give one of my arms for the answer.

He swings the cleaver around and nicks his arm. He gasps and Sandy grabs a napkin, slapping it on the wound.

SANDY

Careful hun, you don't have to go quite so far as hurting yourself.

He pulls away from her.

JOE

I'll do whatever I have to Sandy. You just wait and see.

SANDY

Fine. Do whatever you have to but get that arm bandaged up.

JOE

Don't fuss over me woman.

SANDY

I'm just saying, it'll fester if you don't.

JOE

I'd cut it off and serve it to the customers before it does that.

He storms back into the kitchen. Sandy shakes her head and looks around, noticing that Henry, David and Fiona are watching intently. She glares at them and flounces off into the kitchen after Joe.

FIONA

Well, that was disturbing.

DAVID

It was creepy. You don't think those two have a..."thing" going on, do you?

FIONA

What if they do?

DAVID

It's just weird. They're weird.

FIONA

There's someone for everyone David.

DAVID

Does that mean you're going to give me a chance?

FIONA

Don't be ridiculous. Henry, what did you think of that little exchange?

HENRY

Interesting, indeed.

Sandy arrives with their food and all but slams the plates on the table.

SANDY

You're orders and make sure you
clean your plates.

Sandy storms off again as the threesome stare at each other. Fiona and David shrug and begin to eat as Henry stares thoughtfully towards the kitchen.

INT DINER, NEXT MORNING

Fiona walks into the diner to find it mostly deserted. She sees Henry sitting in a booth near the back. She approaches him and sits down. He looks very serious.

FIONA

Henry, what's wrong?

HENRY

It's already happened Fiona.

FIONA

What has?

HENRY

Look around you. People are
already deserting the ship. Fools,
all of them.

FIONA

Henry, I think you're over-reacting
a bit.

Henry slams a fist into the table.

HENRY

But Fiona, I'm not. Look at this
place. It's almost empty. Even
Zeke isn't out front anymore.

FIONA

Well, maybe he had somewhere to be?

HENRY

He's homeless and he doesn't have a
job. Where, my dear, would he have
to be?

FIONA

Well, I don't know. But I think you're just jumping at shadows.

HENRY

Really? So where is our dear friend David this morning? Is he perhaps grabbing an artery clogging breakfast sandwich at the new fast food place?

The bell over the door jingles. Both Fiona and Henry look over. It's David looking harassed. He makes his way to the booth where Henry and Fiona are sitting.

DAVID

You won't believe what I just saw.

HENRY

I might. I truly might.

DAVID

People are lemmings. They'll eat anything that is represented by a cool logo and some loser in a funny costume.

FIONA

What are you talking about?

HENRY

I'll tell you what he's talking about. He's talking about the traffic snarl that's going on at the new restaurant. I bet the place is packed.

DAVID

You bet it is. I almost got run over by a car and the lady had the nerve to scream at me because I delayed her by several seconds from getting her kids some disgusting kids meal. Can you believe that?

HENRY

Yes, why yes I can.

FIONA
Oh have mercy.

HENRY
Now don't scoff, Fiona. David is right.

DAVID
I am? Yeah, I am!

HENRY
No gloating. But you are still right. It's only the first day and people are already acting like savages. This doesn't bode well for Joe's Diner.

Sandy approaches, looking sullen.

SANDY
You wanna order something?

HENRY
Yes, Sandy, I do. I'll have the Lumberjack Special.

FIONA
Speaking of heart attacks!

HENRY
Be quiet Fiona. I'm going to enjoy this place while I can.

DAVID
I'm with you Henry. Let's eat Joe out with style.

FIONA
Do you realize what you just said?

DAVID
Yes, and I choose to ignore whatever your filthy mind is thinking.

Fiona turns to Sandy.

FIONA
I'll have the diet plate, please
Sandy.

SANDY
You want peaches or pineapple?

FIONA
Peaches.

DAVID
Fiona, have you no heart? Don't
you care what happens to this
place? What will you do for
breakfast when Joe's is no longer
here? Where, tell me, will you get
your diet plate?

FIONA
Here's an idea that I think has
finally reached it's time, I could
eat at home and avoid the silliness
of you two.

HENRY
But you can't cook. You said so
yourself, and you'd miss us.

FIONA
About as much as I miss Zeke
hanging around out front.

DAVID
Where is Zeke this morning?

Sandy taps her pen on the table.

SANDY
He's gone. And good riddance.

DAVID
How can you say that? Zeke is a
fixture.

SANDY
He's a pain in the ass, always
begging from the customers.

FIONA
Yes, but where is he?

SANDY
How should I know, and I don't
care.

She taps her pen on David's hand.

SANDY
Now, you gonna order or are we done
here?

DAVID
I'll have the pancakes with sausage
and extra syrup.

SANDY
Fantastic.

Sandy takes their order the kitchen as the threesome sit in
silence. David grabs Fiona's water glass and makes a toast.

DAVID
Long live Joe's!

Henry raises his glass too.

HENRY
I agree. Long live Joe's indeed.

FIONA
Oh my. You two are nuts!

DAVID
It's a sad, sad -

FIONA
Oh shut up!

HENRY
Look you two, this is serious. I'm
not being melodramatic now. This
affects our local economy, health,
social issues.

FIONA
Oh for god's sake Henry. Will you
get off your soapbox.

(MORE)

FIONA (cont'd)

You're not lecturing to a classroom of impressionable students who think the sun shines out of your butt. We hear your message and we get it, but you have to deal with the fact that most people just don't care what they're eating. So long as it tastes good and doesn't cost an arm and a leg, it's good. So get over it.

HENRY

Fine! Then let's discuss the Zeke situation.

FIONA

What Zeke situation? You're doing it again. He probably went to check out the dumpster of the fast food place. Let them deal with it. I personally think it's a blessing.

DAVID

You are so heartless.

FIONA

Yes, yes I am. Haven't you figured that out by now?

Sandy returns with their orders. As she lays the plates in front of them, they gaze at the food as if they have never seen it before.

David points at his plate.

DAVID

What's that?

SANDY

Your pancakes.

DAVID

They look at little, uh, the wrong shape.

SANDY

Yeah, I know. But they're edible.

HENRY

I think Joe forgot to cook my eggs,
because I always thought scrambled
were supposed to be less, runny.

SANDY

Joe didn't forget anything. Look,
I'm sorry, but Joe's off sick today
and the other cook isn't
experienced enough.

FIONA

Off sick? Joe's never off sick.

SANDY

Well, he is today. And so would
you be if you had to deal with the
possible loss of your life's work.

Sandy grabs Henry's plate.

SANDY

I'll get him to fix the eggs.

Sandy stomps off as David picks over his food.

FIONA

Life's work? It's not like he's a
scientist.

DAVID

Maybe he isn't but I think the new
cook is. I think he's found a way
to create life from pancake mix.

HENRY

I'm not saying anything because I
will only be accused of standing on
a soapbox again.

FIONA

That statement says it all anyway.

David cuts into his pancakes.

DAVID

Well, here goes nothing.
Care to give me a kiss goodbye,
Fiona? Just in case?

FIONA

I don't think you'd want that
because then you really would die,
of excitement.

DAVID

I'm willing to risk it.

FIONA

I'm not. You're not worth twenty-
five to life.

DAVID

Fine.

David puts the food in his mouth and spits it out almost
immediately

That's worse than Joe's regular
food.

FIONA

I have to admit it looks even less
appetizing than usual.

HENRY

Yes, well, here come my eggs so
let's see how things go.

Sandy sets the plate in front of Henry and if possible, they
look worse than before.

SANDY

There ya go.

Henry reaches for his wallet and takes out some bills.

HENRY

You know, I don't think I'm all
that hungry any more. I'll see you
both tomorrow.

Henry leaves the restaurant.

EXT DINER, MORNING - TWO WEEKS LATER

David arrives at the restaurant only to find that Joe's diner
is so busy, there is a line up outside.

He gazes in amazement when a knock on the window from inside startles him. It is Henry and Fiona gesturing for him to enter. He pushes past everyone and enters the diner.

INT DINER, MORNING - CONTINUOUS

David fights his way through the crowd to the table where his friends are.

DAVID
What the hell?

HENRY
It appears that Joe is back from sick leave.

FIONA
And he has some secret recipe. Everyone is raving about the food and ordering double helpings of the meat.

DAVID
That's cool. Then Joe's is back in business after all.

Sandy is passing by.

SANDY
He sure is. Now, if you want to order the new house special then tell me now or you'll have to wait for a while.

DAVID
I'll have the special.

HENRY
I will most certainly have the special.

FIONA
Well, I guess I'll try it, just this once.

HENRY
Good girl Fiona.

FIONA
Yes, well, it is only just this
once.

SANDY
Three specials it is.

Sandy turns towards the kitchen.

SANDY
(yelling)
Hey Joe, three more specials.

Joe comes to the door of the kitchen and waves his spatula at her. It is quite noticeable that he is now missing one of his arms from the elbow down. Fiona, Henry and David all glance at each other.

FIONA
Did you see that?

DAVID
I think so.

HENRY
It appears that Joe is missing part
of his arm.

FIONA
How bizarre.

DAVID
Bizarre? It's downright creepy. I
wonder how he did that?

HENRY
Maybe he cut it off in his slicer
machine!

David and Fiona stare at Henry in horror and disgust.

HENRY
Maybe that's what he's using for
this wonderful mystery meat?

Fiona goes wide eyed and David looks panic stricken.

HENRY
I guess we should watch out if the
rest of his arm goes missing.

Fiona hides her face in her hands and David's mouth is hanging open.

HENRY

What is the matter with you two?

David leans across the table as Fiona whimpers.

DAVID

Dude, behind you.

Henry turns to look over his shoulder and sees Joe scowling down at him. Joe then turns and lumbers back to his kitchen, clutching his spatula.

FIONA

Oh honey, that wasn't good. That was just downright awful.

DAVID

Not even I thought it was funny.

FIONA

Did you see his face though?

HENRY

Unfortunately, yes.

They sit in silence for a moment, until Fiona leans across the table.

FIONA

(whispering)

But what if it's true?

HENRY

Suddenly I have a strong urge to eat some high cholesterol crap.

Henry gestures towards the door.

HENRY

Shall we?

FIONA

I think that would be best.

David shudders, as they all rise and leave. Sandy shoots them a dirty look as they exit.

EXT DINER - EVENING

Fiona walks past the busy diner. She sees that Zeke still isn't in his accustomed spot. She decides to go inside.

INT DINER - CONTINUOUS

Fiona enters the diner and approaches a very busy Sandy. Fiona follows Sandy as she moves from table to table, delivering food.

FIONA

Excuse me.

SANDY

Take a seat hun, I'll be right with you.

FIONA

No, I don't want a seat. I just want to ask you a question.

SANDY

I don't have time for questions.

Fiona grabs Sandy's arm.

FIONA

Make time.

Sandy glares at her but stops her serving.

SANDY

Fine. What do you want?

FIONA

Where's Zeke?

SANDY

This again? Look, I don't know and I don't care.

Fiona grips Sandy's arm more tightly.

FIONA

You should care. I know he's only a homeless man but if anything has happened to him, this is the last place he was seen.

SANDY

Look, babe, I don't care if he's missing, left the country or deep fried with a side of coleslaw, he's not cluttering up the front of our restaurant and he's not annoying our patrons.

Fiona releases Sandy's arm.

FIONA

Your love of humanity is overwhelming.

Fiona turns to go and pauses at the door, listening to the comments of the various diners about the taste and flavour of the food they are eating. She turns to glance at Sandy and towards the kitchen where Joe is cooking. The smell of the food makes her feel nauseous suddenly and she exits quickly.

EXT DINER - CONTINUOUS

Outside, Fiona fights off the nausea before deciding to leave. Her cell phone rings, startling her. She answers and it is David on the phone. She answers.

FIONA

Hello....David...what's wrong...yes, I'm on my way...I just had a stop to make...no, nothing's wrong...I'll see you in a few minutes.

She hangs up and hurries off.

EXT DINER, NEXT MORNING

Fiona stops outside the diner, glancing at the headline of the newspaper in the news box.

The headline reads, "WHOSE BODY, Unidentified man's remains found behind fast food restaurant".

Fiona shakes her head and enters the diner. She spots David and Henry sitting in a booth near the back. She makes her way to them and sits down. They both look scared.

FIONA

Well, what's wrong with you two?
And why are we here? I thought we
weren't going to eat here anymore?

DAVID

We're not eating. Do we look like
we're eating?

FIONA

Well, no, so...

HENRY

Did you see the paper this morning,
Fiona?

FIONA

Yes. Disgusting. Human remains
found in the garbage of a
restaurant?

HENRY

Yes. But did you actually read the
article?

FIONA

No. I just got here and I haven't
had time to read anything.

DAVID

You better read it to her, Henry.

FIONA

Oh for pity's sake, what's wrong
with the two of you?

HENRY

Just listen Fiona.