

CLEAN MEAT, CLEANER CONSCIENCE

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. CLEAN MEAT LABORATORY - EVENING

A space that invokes Willy Wonka's "TV Room". Antiseptic. High tech, too.

A sign decorated with a cartoon cow yells:

"Got Meat? *Clean Cuts* Does - Forget Bessie, We Make it Here!"

Beneath the logo: Counters bristle with beakers, microscopes, test tubes, blenders and petri dishes...

Tended by LAB TECHS with gloves and white lab coats, name tags pinned in front.

Lab tech CHET transfers liquid into petri dishes.

Another tech with disheveled hair, DEVIN, grabs a dish; this one stuffed to the brim with home-grown MEAT.

Stomach snarling from hunger, he eyes the patty closely - so near his breath frosts the plastic rim.

Prim tech SUSAN rips the dish from Devin's hands.

SUSAN

Don't breathe on the product.
You'll corrupt the batch!

Almost religiously respectful, Susan scrapes the meat into a blender. Hits a button. WHIRRRRR.

DEVIN

Hey. I was inspecting that!

CHET

"Inspecting"? From here, I'd call it drool.

DEVIN

I'm famished, but that's not my fault. I did a double shift and missed lunch.

CHET

So? It's almost closing time.

SUSAN

In the meantime, eat a Snickers.

CHET

Have you seen the crap Devin paper bags to the cafeteria? Snickers bars ain't his style.

DEVIN

It's not crap. I'm a "Gastronomic Adventurer".

CHET

Gastronomic Nightmare, you mean. What was that mess you brought yesterday? Fermented soybean with rotted egg?

DEVIN

The Natto and Baluut? You should try it sometime. Sushi's great, but there's way more than that to Asian food!

Devin grabs another meat-filled petri dish, waves it around.

Susan tries to snatch this one, too. Now wise to her moves, Devin ducks.

And stumbles into Chet, who trips into the counter. A beaker flips off the table. CRASH!!

Alarms wail. All the other Techs back away. Hands up, signaling "not me"...

MOMENTS LATER

Susan, Chet and Devin stand meekly before Team Leader RONALD. All the other techs have clocked out for the night.

Ronald's three piece suit screams "Upper Management." Face red, he singles out Susan and Chet for his tirade:

RONALD

You just had one job: to supervise. Help *him* clean this up. Or clean out your desks. Either this, or you're gone!

Ronald points at the puddle, and slaps a broom into Devin's hand. Turning off a light switch, he storms out. SLAM.

Susan and Chet's eyes follow Ronald's irate exit. Then drift back to Devin.

Who's *attempting* to sweep up glass. And doing a lousy job.

SUSAN
Uh, Dev? Liquid first. Glass
second.

Grabbing a mop, Susan sets to work on the spilled fluid.

Chet evaluates Devin's half-assed performance with the broom.

CHET
Dude, you're sweeping in circles.
Pick one area. Build a pile.

Devin still doesn't get it. Chet commandeers the broom.

DEVIN
You're criticizing my sweeping now?

CHET
Bro, nothing personal. We're all
tired. Let's fix this together, and
just go home. Let us handle the
floor. You clean up on higher
ground.

Chet points to the counter.

Chastened, Devin pulls a stained napkin from his pocket, and
dabs at puddles by one beaker.

The three clean. Awkward silence grows.

DEVIN
Hey, I'm sorry Ronald blamed you.

CHET
It's not *all* your fault -

DEVIN
Yeah. Ronald's a grade-A douche-
bag. He doesn't know how hard I
work down here!

For Devin, even counter mop-up seems complex. His soggy
napkin shreds. He swaps out the edge of his lab coat next.

As Devin wipes, his stomach grumbles. Susan and Chet eye him
from across the room.

SUSAN
I don't mean to sound elitist,
but... not everyone's cut out for
culinary research. Maybe this job
isn't right for you?

DEVIN

Hey, I DIG my work. Science rules!

Susan and Chet look dubious. Devin beams an eager smile.

DEVIN

Why'd you two sign with *Clean Cuts*?

Susan continues to mop. Thinks.

SUSAN

Animal rights and the environment.
Create irresistible clean meat, and
we'll save humanity and the world!

She prods a sweeping Chet with the mop's business end.

SUSAN

Hey handsome...

CHET

"Handsome"? Ha! No-one's called me
that for years! 'Scept for my
mom...

SUSAN

We've worked together for a year,
but never talked. Since we're stuck
here together, time to share.
What's your motive for this gig?

CHET

The 401-k, mostly. And overtime.
But saving animals? That's a bonus
worth collecting, too.

The two share a moment. A flicker of chemistry ignites.

SUSAN

Hey, after Chernobyl's all cleaned
up - how's about we share more?

CHET

Excuse me?

SUSAN

I mean, a drink? I know a place
that makes fabulous White Russians
with soy milk. Almond, too!

CHET

Y'know, that sounds... tasty.

SUSAN

And they just put Impossible
Burgers on the menu. Ever have one?

CHET

Nah. But *Beyond Meat* Burgers rock
my plate! Though, *Clean Cuts* will
be better once we score FDA
approval...

SUSAN

Especially when stacked on a Kaiser
roll with ketchup -

CHET

Don't forget onion and jalapeños.

SUSAN

We've got the same taste? Who knew!

The two drift closer. Attraction sparks. They're about to
kiss when...

SMACK, SMACK, SMACK. A wet sound swings the two around.

To witness Devin scarfing down meat from Susan's blender.

CHET

What the fuck?!? No!

SUSAN

OMG. Devin, stop!

Still chewing, Devin grins and holds out a fistful of
cultured meat to the floored couple.

DEVIN

(muffled)

You think sushi's good? Steak
tartar rules!!

Chet and Susan dart over.

Slamming Devin's wrist against the blender rim, Chet dumps
the meat back into the bowl.

Susan yanks Devin from the counter. The two circle the tech
with questions - intense interrogation time:

SUSAN

Why in the world would you be so -

CHET

Dumb ass idiotic?!?

SUSAN
Reckless and irresponsible?

DEVIN
I *told* you I was hungry. You guys
wouldn't stop talking about food.
You see a vending machine in here?
There's no Snickers bar in sight!

CHET
Dude, that was raw meat. Gross!

DEVIN
Clean meat. Major delish!

He points to the company sign with the cartoon cow.

DEVIN
No e-coli or bacteria in this baby.

CHET
Except when you breathed on it
before.

DEVIN
Come on, be real. We're gonna be
selling these to the public. We may
as well try them now.

SUSAN
Only if you cook it first.

DEVIN
What could possibly go wrong?

Susan and Chet exchange worried looks over Devin's head.

SUSAN
Think we should observe him for
awhile?

Devin picks raw meat from his teeth, BURPS.

Until a JINGLE-SQUISHY sound interrupts.

His eyes drift towards the noise. It's the blender on the
counter.

Something PINK wriggles inside. Inching just over the rim,
it's a strand of raw meat - undulating like a worm!

Devin's eyes bug. Debate between Chet and Susan rolls on.

CHET

We should write up an incident
report. Ronald's a tight ass. I
guarantee, he'll insist.

More meat-worms crawl out of the blender. An army of ground
chuck undead on the march.

Devin points towards the grotesque vision.

DEVIN

Guys, look!

Still oblivious, Chet only has eyes for Susan.

CHET

We were supervising Devin. If we
weren't watching, who's at fault?

SUSAN

You've got a point. Devin's sweet.
But we all know he's a *bit*
unhinged.

The meat worms PLOP to the floor, swarm towards the humans.

Devin screams and staggers back into Chet. Who bear hugs him.

CHET

Geez, watch where you're running!
You're a bull in a meat and glass
china shop, man!

Devin pinballs between Susan and Chet. Unaware, the two
continue to deliberate.

They - and the tide of approaching meat worms - block all
possible escape.

The worms swarm up Susan and Chet's lab coats. Wriggle into
Susan's hair. Slither over Chet's face.

Bizarrely, neither seems to notice. Devin gurgles, terrified.

SUSAN

Honey, can you breathe okay?

Devin nods - frantic.

CHET

Guy, you're sweating like Niagara
Falls. Maybe you should sit down?

Susan leans closer, concerned.

A meat worm on her face arches towards Devin and HISSES.
Prepares to jump -

Devin howls and launches himself at Susan.

Chaos ensues. Chet tries to rip Devin off. Devin backhands
Chet into the counter.

A row of beakers tumble. CRASH.

Pinning Susan to the floor, Devin swats at her face and every
meat worm he sees.

DEVIN

You won't eat me, you bastards! Not
before I kill you all!

With a roar, Chet grabs a shard of beaker glass.

Diving on Devin, he stabs him between his shoulder blades -
with passion that would make Norman Bates proud.

Superhuman with terror, Devin won't slow down.

Reaching around, Chet slashes the tech's throat.

That works. Devin stops. Gurgles more. Glassy eyed, he stares
down at Susan's strained face...

...as the meat worms fade away. Replaced with rivulets of
blood from his throat.

DEVIN

Dear God. They weren't real?

Last words expended, Devin collapses on Susan. Dead.

CHET

Susan - you okay

SUSAN

(gasps)

I'm under a Dead Devin. But
otherwise, uh, yes - I'm fine.

CHET

What the fuck was that?

MOMENTS LATER

Susan and Chet hover over Devin's corpse. Wadded paper towels
halo the body; a weak attempt to staunch the flow.

The two techs stare at each other.

SUSAN
He was hallucinating. Obviously.

CHET
From raw meat? What did he see?

SUSAN
Now? We'll never know.

They eyeball each other's lab coats. Which look like Rorschach tests, more red than white.

SUSAN
Guaranteed, they'll shut the lab down.

CHET
Well, better to be unemployed than selling protein PCP at Burger King.

The two nod in agreement. A thought darkens Susan's face.

SUSAN
Unemployed's manageable. But incarcerated? Not as much.

CHET
No-one's going to jail! This is no time for crazy talk. We had enough of that with poor Dead Devin.

SUSAN
You're the one who killed him, Chet.

CHET
In self-defense!

Susan eyes the perforated corpse.

SUSAN
I appreciate the effort, but I'm counting at fifteen stabs. And that's not including overlap.

The two lock eyes. Decision time.

CHET
I - I could tell Ronald a lab mouse showed signs of delirium, then escaped. That would protect the public and stop FDA from giving *Clean Cuts* any green light.

SUSAN
(shudders)
Animal testing? That's immoral!

CHET
Not for reals. I'm gonna lie.

SUSAN
Okay. But what do we do with, uh,
our soggy friend?

Chet turns towards the counter.

CHET
Desperate situations call for
desperate measures. The good news
is we've got all night...

LATER

An entire row of blenders WHIR... all busy chewing something.

In one, Devin's disheveled hair rotates like a troll doll in
a gyroscope...

Until it's sucked down into the blades. Susan and Chet stand
back and supervise the maceration.

CHET
I don't blame you if you don't
wanna go out now.

SUSAN
You kidding? We're beyond the get-
to-know-you phase. And man - if
ever I needed a drink, it's
tonight!

FINAL FADE OUT: