Food for Thought

FADE IN:

INT. JUNGLE HUT - MORNING

A primitive shelter, with a palm leaf roof. A young native, BILLY(20), sleeps on a bed of fur. A flap opens, and his mother NANCY(35), a huge woman, barely covered by skins, enters. From outside comes the SOUND of people laughing and talking.

SUPER - AMAZON JUNGLE, SOUTH AMERICA

NANCY

Billy? Up you get. Breakfast is ready.

She potters around the hut, arranging spears and knives. Billy stirs, YAWNS.

BILLY

Huh? Oh, morning already...um, I'm not really hungry, Mom.

Nancy nudges him with a massive foot.

NANCY

How can you not be? You hardly ate a thing last night.

BILLY

I...

NANCY

Don't think I didn't notice. I'm your mother.

(beat)

You have a big day helping your father.

Billy sits up.

BILLY

I just don't feel like eating, Mom.

NANCY

But it's your favorite. Livers and kidneys roasted, not grilled. I got up earlier to prepare it.

Billy stands up, stretches.

BILLY

I might be coming down with something.

He rubs his stomach, glancing at his mother for sympathy.

NANCY

Rubbish! We are the healthiest tribe on the river. and all because of our diet.

She raises a humongous butt cheek. A thunderous FART sends Billy on his way...

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Similar huts ring a large clearing. The thick jungle forms a perimeter. The clearing is filled with tribespeople. They laugh as they tend cooking fires, spits and hot coals. Children flit about, stealing tidbits of food. Billy looks about sleepily as Nancy follows him out.

BTLLY

Mom, I really don't___

NANCY

Quiet! You'll eat it.

She examines her cooking - small pieces of meat on hot stones.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Your father went to great lengths to get this. He tracked that logging crew for days.

BILLY

No he didn't! He kept leaving them food parcels!

NANCY

Exactly! He was fattening them up so the meat would taste better. Always thinking of his family. Aah, here he is now.

ROGER(35), a tall handsome native, strolls up, gnawing on a leg bone.

ROGER

Finally awake, son? Good. Now eat up, and we'll get moving. That boatload of eco warriors is not far downstream.

NANCY

He says he's not hungry. He...

She trails off, a dawning look of horror on her face. Roger stares back, equally worried.

ROGER

You don't suppose...

NANCY

(whispers)

Oh, dear chef-god in the sky...

Billy SIGHS, seeing it's time.

BILLY

I have a confession to make.

Nancy and Roger fall into each others arms. The whole tribe falls silent and watches...

BILLY(CONT'D)

I...I'm...gay.

Dead silence. Then Nancy looks up.

NANCY

You...gay? Oh, praise be to the provider of all things meaty. I thought you were going to tell us you were a vegan.

The tribe makes a collective moan, then continues its chatter and cooking. Roger slaps Billy on the back.

ROGER

Had us all going there for a moment, son. Now eat your offal and we'll be off.

CHARLIE (O.S)

Stop! Billy's not telling us everything.

A young boy, CHARLIE(8), pushes through the crowd. He points an accusing finger at Billy.

NANCY

What are talking about, Charlie?

CHARLIE

He's been sneaking off to that new village. I saw him.

ROGER

New...ah, the tribe that's just moved in upstream? I'll have to pay them a visit...say hi.

CHARLIE

They're vegans.

The tribe GASPS again. CRIES of horror and pain.

ROGER

Vegans! What proof do you have?

CHARLIE

I saw the fruit racks, the sorting tables.

(beat)

No spits, no carving logs, no bone splitters...just fruit and veg.

He HAWKS loudly, spits on the ground. The tribe grows angry, MURMURING unrest.

NANCY

Is this true, son? Have you been to this heathen village?

Billy is silent, looks at the seething masses. He shakes a defiant fist.

BILLY

Yes! Yes, it's true, ok? I'm not ashamed to admit it.

CRIES of 'traitor', 'savage', and 'orderer of vegetarian dishes'...

CHARLIE

They're not only vegans. They're all gay as well.

UPROAR! The tribe is STAMPING it's collective feet. It's getting ugly. Three natives in their thirties, STAN, JACK and COLIN discuss things...

STAN

All of them gay? What, even the women?

JACK

Yes, they'd be lesbians.

COLIN

Ssh, this is getting interesting...

NANCY

That explains why the hut furniture has been moved.

BILLY

Yes, they're gay vegans. So what? Does that make them any less human? No! And now I'm one of them, and proud of it!

He storms off to the hut. Its meant to be aggressive but comes over as sort of...well, gay, I guess.

The crowd surges forward. CRIES of 'let's eat him', 'eat the vegan'. Roger bars the way.

ROGER

Stop this! Have we gone mad? This is my son and your tribal brother.

NANCY

You know, dear, I am a little peckish...

ROGER

What? Nancy...

Billy disappears into the hut.

NANCY

Sorry, dear. Primal instinct. You know how it is.
(beat)

But you're right. He is our son.

She faces the crowd, holds up her great arms.

NANCY (CONT'D)

Why is there a problem with Billy's choice to have a different lifestyle?

An ELDERLY CANNIBAL steps forward.

ELDERLY CANNIBAL

It's unnatural! We're cannibals. We eat other people. Have done for centuries.

The crowd ROARS it's approval.

NANCY

Yes, that's true. But we are a tribe and so have to stick together. If some of us have different views, we should respect that.

ELDERLY CANNIBAL

Of course we have different opinions! That's how humanity works. I myself think that you could be cooked nicely into a superb buffet breakfast, that the guy in the hut next to me is a wanker, and that the city of Cleveland is a complete shithole.

Muted affirmation from the crowd, somewhat confused. MURMURS of 'Cleveland'?

ROGER

Well, that backs up what my wife is saying.

CANNIBAL AT THE BACK(O.S)

I'm not a wanker, you old goat.

ELDERLY CANNIBAL

Wha__? Enough of this faggotty vegan talk! I say eat the vegan. Before his flesh goes mushy like his brain.

CHARLIE

Brings new meaning to the word 'mincing', doesn't it?

The tribe moves forward, waving axes and spears. Roger and Nancy back up against the hut. It's looking grim...until a clear voice RINGS out from behind the tribe.

BRIAN(O.S)

Friends, friends. What is happening here?

CHARLIE

It's them! The vegans!

ELDERLY CANNIBAL

Aargh!! They've come to make us eat potato salad!

The tribe mills in confusion. BRIAN(26), a tall, well muscled native, steps through. He's followed by his tribe, all handsome, if somewhat effeminate men. Womenfolk and children carry baskets of fruit and veg.

BRIAN

Greetings, fellow countrymen. I am Brian. We come in peace. Your wonderful young man, Billy, has told us much about you all.

ELDERLY CANNIBAL

Yeah, I'll bet he was wonderful...

STAN

(to Jack and Colin)
Damn, their chief would be
lovely, sizzling in tapir fat...

JACK

Yep. With anaconda chips, followed by a piranha mousse. Mmm...

COLIN

(dreamily)

He'd look even better on me...

The other two look at him, aghast.

COLIN(CONT'D)

(shruqs)

Hey, maybe it's time for a seachange...

ROGER

Brian, welcome. I'm Roger, chief of this tribe. Billy is my son. But my people are threatened by his acceptance of your cultural mores. Perhaps you can allay their fears.

ELDERLY CANNIBAL

Words! Always words. In case you didn't notice, Brian, we outnumber you vegans. So what's to stop us eating you and all your tribe? What do you think, people?

The crowd ROARS again. Roger and Nancy glance at each other - it's hopeless. The vegans look worried as the tribe surrounds them. Brian only smiles.

BRIAN

I had anticipated this reaction.

Charlie sniffs the air suddenly.

CHARLIE

What is that wonderful cooking smell? Meat? But...

BRIAN

A gift from us vegans.

He beckons, and two natives emerge from the crowd, bearing a wide piece of tree bark. It is laden with steaming meat, dripping with juices.

ELDERLY CANNIBAL

It's a trick! They've poisoned
it. We ain't touching it.

Billy comes out of the hut, watches proceedings intently.

BRIAN

No, no tricks, no poison. This food is the eco warriors. We ambushed their boat last night.

(MORE)

BRIAN (CONT'D)

We have worked non-stop to prepare this feast for you.

STAN

For what purpose? To lull us into a false sense of security? Maybe the old man is right...

ROGER

Enough! I think it's fair to say that Brian and his vegans have acted in perfectly good faith.

He nods at Brian, who grins, throws him a coy wink. Roger grimaces...

ELDERLY CANNIBAL

Hang on, hang on. Let's not get all fuzzy and warm here. This isn't just gonna go away. I've eaten eco warriors and treee huggers in the past. They're the worst food on Earth! Their flesh is all tough and wiry from their organic diet. And a lot of them are just plain full of shit.

(beat)

We eat this, we might as well becomes vegans ourselves...

Two VEGAN natives step forward. They each wear a furry chef's hat.

VEGAN 1

Ah, sir? These greenies have been specially prepared, to ensure their usual flavor is greatly improved.

ELDERLY CANNIBAL

(skeptical)

Is that so?

VEGAN 1

Oh, yes, sir. We made sure they were active just before slaughter. A lot of these specimens were still handing out pamphlets. One was even doing a Powerpoint presentation on his laptop.

VEGAN 2

This ensured the blood flow was enhanced, right up until the knife thrust.

CHARLIE

Wow, you guys really know your stuff.

BRIAN

Our cooks are the best in the Amazon Basin. They can handle any emergency situation.

VEGAN 1

Exactly. One of the greenies was an Australian. He began spouting about climate change.

At these two words, the entire crowd LAUGHS. CRIES of 'ooh, climate change...we're scared...'

VEGAN 2

Yes, the fool was trying to tell us how his country would save us from extinction. They were going to lower their emission rates!

JACK

Ha! Look at him now! He's a
bloody rib roast!

More LAUGHTER from the tribes. Some roll on the ground in tears.

ELDERLY CANNIBAL

(giggling)

These people deserve to be eaten. So gullible.

NANCY

When will they learn?

CANNIBAL AT THE BACK(O.S)

As if! Even if "climate change" was true, there's no way China, the U.S and India are gonna slow down emissions. Ain't that right, old goat?

ELDERLY CANNIBAL

Yep

(beat)

Wanker.

BRIAN

Um, ok, I think we've drifted away from topic slightly. We're natives, remember. Not some fancy Internet discussion group.

Nancy shudders.

NANCY

I ate a backpacking screenwriter once. Gave me the runs for weeks.

ELDERLY CANNIBAL I hear ya, Nance. But, look, I'm still a bit iffy about this meat. Can't disquise bad goods.

VEGAN 1

That's where our special marinade comes in, sir.

VEGAN 2

Correct! This lovely flesh has beeen tenderly soaked for hours, in a mixture of papaya juice, mashed broccoli, and pureed cauliflower.

Some of the cannibal tribe make RETCHING noises. Some faint...

ELDERLY CANNIBAL

Ok, I'm gonna try it. But if it ain't up to our standards, there's gonna be trouble. You vegans will find yourselves on tonight's menu.

He takes a piece of the meat. Tastes it gingerly. Chews, swallows. The crowd waits in silence. At last he nods, gives the thumbs up.

ELDERLY CANNIBAL(CONT'D)

Not bad. Not bad at all.

BRIAN

So, what do you say? We can live side by side in harmony? Despite our cultural differences?

The elderly cannibal looks around, smiles.

ELDERLY CANNIBAL

Yeah, what the hell...I guess I can't be a grumpy bastard all my life, can I?

CANNIBAL AT THE BACK(O.S)

Grumpy old goat you mean.

The elderly cannibal LAUGHS. The whole crowd relaxes as one. There's CHEERS and laughter. The two tribes mingle, exchanging back slaps.

ROGER

You handled that superbly, Brian. It was a tense moment.

BRIAN

True. I thought I was going to get an inside view of your cooking pot.

STAN

We can only dream...

Jack chats to the two cooks.

JACK

So what do you recommend for marinating feet? I find those backpackers soles are very tough.

VEGAN 1

Yes, one of our biggest problems. We've tried a few things, and rubbing them in grated carrot seems to work.

The tribes begin a great feast. Vegans and cannibals side by side, eating their own food. Roger and Nancy embrace Billy.

BILLY

Thanks for being so understanding. I love you guys.

NANCY

I think we've all learned something today.

ROGER

Go on, son. Go and join your friends.

(beat)

So, beautiful lady. Wanna grab some greenie fillet and head down to the river?

NANCY

Sounds good, honey.

They pick out some meat, wander off into the jungle. The tribes eat happily, the clearing full of good vibes. Colin sidles up to Brian.

COLIN

I might try some of that fruit. We all have to expand our horizons, don't we?

His eyes glaze as he stares at Brian. The elderly cannibal looks up from his chewing. Shakes his head sadly.

ELDERLY CANNIBAL It's not like in the old days...

FADE OUT

THE END