

The Taco Cart

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FADE IN:

EXT. STATE STREET - DAY

Downtown WORKERS line up to buy lunch at various food carts.

MAX, a young professional in a stiff shirt and tie, scans the crowd as he waits to order from Diego's Taco Cart.

KRISPIN, a surly young man with long, unrestrained hair, puffs on a cigarette and dishes up a meal for a BLIND WOMAN.

BLIND WOMAN

Not so much sauce this time.

Krispin eyes the burrito plate, pulls it back and drenches it with sauce until it spills over, then hands it to her.

KRISPIN

There you go. See how ya like that.

The blind woman's guide dog licks the sauce in midair as it drips from her plate. Krispin glares at his next customer.

MAX

Hi, I'm Max.

Krispin stares blankly, unimpressed.

MAX

Two dog meat tacos, please.

Krispin pulls out a special container from the bottom shelf of the cart and drops some strange-looking meat between two taco shells. Max pays him, takes a bite and CHOKES on it.

MAX

My God. This is... real dog meat.

KRISPIN

(irritated)

That's what you asked for.

Max looks around, leans over the counter and half-whispers.

MAX

It's *me*. Max. From the Health Department. You're not supposed to serve me dog meat. You're supposed to say you don't have any.

KRISPIN

It's our best seller. Why should we be bashful about it?

MAX

Well, for one thing, I might have to shut you down.

KRISPIN

(sarcastic)

Oh no. Then I wouldn't be able to stand in the blazing sun for 10 hours straight for minimum wage, with no breaks, forced to piss in this container.

Krispin holds up a large yellow, squeezable mustard bottle. A MAN WITH A HAMBURGER comes over from one of the other carts, borrows the mustard bottle and SQUIRTS it on his bun.

MAX

Look...

(checking name tag)

Krispin, Diego and I have this little deal. Didn't he tell you about it?

KRISPIN

Only deal I know about is the one I get from the unemployment office after you shut down this stupid taco cart.

MAX

Don't worry, I'm not gonna close you down, but you'll have to...

KRISPIN

Next! Get your fresh dog meat tacos!

PEOPLE on the street overhear, including A COUPLE walking a dog. All of them excitedly run over and stand in line. An ELDERLY WOMAN with white hair steps up and pays Krispin cash.

ELDERLY WOMAN

Two please. What is it today, labrador or shepherd?

MAX

(to Krispin)

You can't do this. This is highly illegal, not to mention unethical.

KRISPIN

Then shut me down, big man. Come on.

MAX

You don't understand, I have a deal with Diego. I let some things go unnoticed and he takes care of me. But you can't blatantly sell dog meat to the public.

More CITIZENS overhear Max's comments and get in line. Must be fifteen people now. Krispin hands a serving spoon to Max.

KRISPIN

Okay, then you do it. I'm outa here.

Krispin yanks off his apron and sticks his name tag, pin first, into Max. Max grimaces and pulls the pin out like an arrow. The customers stare at Max expectantly.

LATER

The line grows thin, finally. An OLDER MAN with wild gray hair looks behind and to the side while waiting at the cart. Max re-emerges from under the stand with a plate of tacos...

MAX

Two dog meat tacos.

And then he recognizes the older man, who seems very nervous.

MAX

Mr. Sheltie, I can't believe it! You're ordering an illegal meal.

OLD MAN/MR. SHELTYE

Max? I am not... Wait a minute, what are you doing serving dog meat at a taco stand? I'd say that's a fire-able offense.

Mr. Sheltie takes a big bite and really seems to enjoy it.

MAX

I, I, I...

MR. SHELTYE

Sweet Maria, these are good.

MAX

(thinking fast)

I'm conducting an undercover sting operation. There's cameras everywhere. The gig is up, Mr. Sheltie.

MR. SHELTYE

Okay, okay. You got me. I resign as chief of the Food Inspection Division. Just don't try to take this away from me!

Mr. Sheltie devours the first taco, cradles the second one to his chest and runs off into the crowd like a demented elf.

DIEGO, the bald owner of the cart, pats Max on the shoulder.

DIEGO

Max, where is Krispin? That boy has been nothing but trouble since he married his sister.

MAX

He quit. I had to take over, to keep your business alive.

DIEGO

Ah, Max, you're a good man. How can I repay you? Just increase the number of pigeon enchiladas I feed you under the table, huh?

MAX

Yes, but remember, don't tell anyone.

Diego LAUGHS for a while, then pats Max on the back.

DIEGO

Max, this has been a good joke, but I cannot do this to you any longer, my friend. I do *not* sell illegal meat.

MAX

What? But I heard you myself, that first day when I discovered your activity. You said, 'Would you like a dog meat taco?'

DIEGO

Yes, yes. *Hot dog* meat. Some people prefer it. And who knows what's actually in it? Maybe a few Chihuahuas.

MAX

And the pigeon enchiladas?

DIEGO

Didn't they taste like chicken?

MAX

You mean, all this time...

DIEGO

I should have said something long ago, but it's been good for business, all the rumors. People think they're getting something they're not supposed to have and suddenly processed beef becomes a forbidden delicacy.

MAX

So I haven't been on the take? I'm an honest food inspector after all?

DIEGO

So it would seem. Now, be a good honest food inspector and shut down my competitor over there. Reliable sources tell me he is serving rat fajitas.

INT. HEALTH DEPARTMENT - DAY

Max, one hand on a bible and the other held upright, recites an oath in front of a COURT CLERK.

MAX

...to seek and destroy spoiled food products wherever they may exist, to protect the public from animal flesh unfit for human consumption, to go where no man has eaten before...

COURT CLERK

So help me God.

MAX

So help me dog. ... Oops.

EXT. STATE STREET - DAY ONE WEEK LATER

Max stands at Sheltie's Taco Cart, dollars in hand. Mr. Sheltie, the former food inspection chief, wears a white chef's coat and sterile gloves as he prepares two fajitas. He hands them to Max, recognizing him after it's too late.

MR. SHELTYE

Here you go, two rat fajitas. ... Max?

MAX

Mr. Sheltie, I can't believe you've sunk this low.

MR. SHELTYE

Hey, you know how expensive beef is? I got a great deal on these rats from some guy with a flute.

MAX

Mr. Sheltie, you do realize I am now chief of the Food Inspection Division.

MR. SHELTYE

I pity you, Max. You know, I never realized how restrictive our regulations were until I found myself on this side of the inadequately refrigerated perishables. I have to break the law just to make a living.

MAX

I'm afraid I have to shut you down.

MR. SHELTYE

Okay, big shot. But if you do it to me, you've got to red tag the others, too.

Mr. Sheltie points to all the other food carts.

MR. SHELTYE

That egg roll stand over there? Run by the same people under contract to scrape road kill off the highway. You put two and two together.

MAX

Aargh. I used to eat there all the time.

MR. SHELTYE

And over there. That's not really pork barbecue.

MAX

What is it?

MR. SHELTYE

You noticed they've cleaned all the hookers off the street?

MAX

No!

MR. SHELTYE

And your buddy Diego. He give you that line about hot dogs? Take another look.

Max and Mr. Sheltie watch as Diego accepts a St. Bernard from a THIN WOMAN. He pays her in cash and leads the horse-sized dog into a trailer in the parking lot behind the taco cart.

SIDEWALK

An angry Max talks on his cell phone, approaches the trailer.

MAX (ON PHONE)

I've called the other stations, too. Believe me, your viewers are going to be appalled by what you're going to find. Now, get a camera crew down here fast.

PARKING LOT

Max gives Thin Woman a mean look as he passes her. He hustles up to the trailer and POUNDS on the door.

INT. DIEGO'S TRAILER - DAY

Diego invites Max into his surprisingly posh pad.

DIEGO

Welcome, Max. Did you eat a rat?

MAX

No, but I smell one. You lied to me, Diego. I saw what just happened. You paid that woman for this dog.

DIEGO

Yes, I did.

MAX

So, you don't deny it? You're about to serve this fella with a little Mexican seasoning, some diced onions, sliced tomatoes, chili peppers, a dash of...

Max catches himself drooling at the thought.

MAX

Snap out of it, Max. ... This is wrong, Diego. I can't let you continue to offer members of the Westside Kennel Club on your menu.

DIEGO

Relax. This is my dog, Andy. That woman is his veterinarian. Now *that's* the business we should be in. Four hundred bucks to stick a thermometer up my dog's ass. Coulda paid one of these hookers around here twenty bucks to do it. Although, come to think of it, I haven't seen many of those girls around lately.

Max reflects on Diego's words as he pats Andy's head.

MAX

So, this is your pet? You're not going to turn him into a taco?

DIEGO

Hey, that's not a bad idea. ... For Halloween. I always dress him up.

A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN in an evening gown and a BUSINESSMAN enter the trailer, wave hello, and disappear into the back.

ANOTHER GORGEOUS GIRL in hot pants, drinking a large soda, brings in a MAN WEARING A HAT. They undress as they hurry through another door in the back. Her bra flies out the door and wraps around the dog's head.

DIEGO

Ah, you have never met my daughters?
They are good girls. They bring me such
joy. ... Thank you, Max, for your concern
about my Andy.

Diego pushes Max toward the door.

EXT. DIEGO'S TRAILER - DAY

Max exits and bumps into a BUSTY BLONDE, who GIGGLES and
gives him a knowing look.

MAX

You must be one of Diego's daughters.
I'm Max.

BUSTY BLONDE

Max? I thought he said *Hank*. Whatever.
Come on, the rubber sheets are in my car.

Busty Blonde drags Max around the other side of the trailer,
where THREE TV NEWS CREWS are set up, ready to film. THREE
FEMALE REPORTERS simultaneously begin live broadcasts.

FIRST REPORTER

Behind me you see Max Farley who was
recently appointed as the city's food
inspection chief but will now certainly
be fired after hiring this prostitute.

A TEAM OF COPS rush in, arrest Max and drag him away.

MAX

Wait, I didn't do anything. I didn't
even taste any dog meat, I swear.

A cop pulls Andy the St. Bernard out of the trailer. The
sexy bra still hangs around the dog's neck.

FIRST COP

(to Max)

You are one sick bastard.

First Cop KICKS Max several times.

SECOND REPORTER

Police say Farley is also the alleged
mastermind of an exotic food ring...

Cops pull a handcuffed Diego out of the trailer. The two
women Max saw, and their Johns, are led away, too, followed
by EIGHT OTHER PROSTITUTES and their CUSTOMERS.

THIRD REPORTER

...and will surely be questioned about
last week's Metropolitan Zoo
disappearance of two Indian elephants.

INT. PRISON - CAFETERIA - DAY WEEKS LATER

Max, wearing prison garb, scoops up some meat and plops it
onto a tortilla. Diego, now Max's fellow inmate, takes the
plate and places it on his tray.

DIEGO

So, what kind of meat you got today?

Max slowly raises his eyes, spots Diego and becomes enraged.
He reaches across the food bay and strangles Diego.

INT./EXT. PRISON - SOLITARY CONFINEMENT CELL - DAY

Max, sweating like a pig, lies on the floor inside. A window
opens. A GUARD stuffs a plate of two tacos into the cell.

GUARD

Eat up, boy. ... Heh, heh. It's probably
dog meat.

The guard LAUGHS. Max eyes the food and screams...

MAX

No!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

EXT. STATE STREET - DAY BACK TO REALITY

Max huddles on the ground next to Diego's Taco Cart.
Krispin, his serving apron still on, hovers over Max with a
half-eaten plate of tacos in his hand.

MAX

No!!!!!!

Krispin returns the plate to Max's outstretched hands.

KRISPIN

Sorry, you can have them back. Jeez.

Max, shivering like a junkie, devours another taco.

MAX

They're so good. I don't know what it is
about them. They're so addictive.

Krispin reaches into one of Max's tacos and pulls out a slimy
gray...

KRISPIN

You were so worried about the meat when you should have been paying attention to the mushrooms!

From Max's perspective, Krispin appears to spin around in circles. Krispin LAUGHS as he watches Max rise and stagger.

KRISPIN

Now, come on, inspector dude, are you gonna shut this place down so I can collect my unemployment or what?

Max studies Krispin's distorted face, scratches his chin and thinks long and hard about what action to take.

MAX

No. But I'll have six more to go. Make that two dozen. Do they freeze well? I'm throwing a party this weekend... to celebrate my resignation from the Health Department.

Krispin throws down his spoon in disgust and walks off. Max chows down.

FADE OUT