

Title: Eat Fresh

Logline: A vengeful missionary must embrace Haitian vodou to save a cursed girl as an imprisoned sandwich pitchman plots to expand his vile empire.

INT – HOTEL ROOM – DAY

A sliver of light between closed blinds leads to shadowy figures alive upon a tossed bed. A slap and a girl's muffled yelp.

JARED, 45, plotting jackal, kneels behind MELISSA, 16, dissolute youth and raises his hand. He slaps as Melissa shrieks, twists her face free from the pillow and gasps. A series of grunts and Jared sighs and collapses.

JARED

You know. It really makes perfect sense. I couldn't control myself around food either. For the longest time whenever I saw something in front of me, it just ended up in my mouth.

Fearful, she repels and cowers as he smiles and reaches past her to turn on the lamp.

JARED

Always junk food too. For certain. Then I learned I just had to substitute something. Healthy-Er. That's me. Smart, no self-control. Can't be perfect now can I?

She goes ridged as his smile fades and eyes settle seemingly upon her as he clenches his fist.

JARED

You know what I really love to do. I mean, really love.

He lunges for a candy bar on the nightstand and she shrieks. He chuckles and takes a big bite. Sweat drips down his forehead as he chews and his lips flap. His gaze falls to her as some chocolate spittle drips. He opens wide for another bite.

INT. BOXING RING - DAY

Two pawing boxing gloves slap and a moment of excitement fades for the COACH, 50. Reluctant to engage, two amateur boxers dance and circle. NICOLE, 21, determined and athletic, measures her distance from the opponent.

COACH

It's not a freakin recital. Get in there!

Reluctant, Nicole shuffles in and jabs. BOXER, 40, burly desk jockey, eats a punch. His head jars and his eyes register surprise.

COACH

Got em! No offense. She hits like a girl. Let's go!
Recover.

Dazed, the Boxer shakes his head and gathers himself. He lumbers ahead and engages with a big two punch combination. Nicole shrieks and falls to a knee.

INT. CHURCH – DAY

NICOLE, 17, lanky and sheepish, hangs her head and shuffles her feet as carries a crucifix in an altar procession. She stumbles and shrieks. Embarrassed, she wipes her eyes as she realizes an audience stares. Her red and teary eyes gaze to the floor. .

Concerned, DAD and MOM nod in encouragement. Angry, Mom shushes some giggling kids.

DAD

Come on kid. Hold it together.

MOM

She's always crying? Aren't they helping?
They're not helping. What should we do?

Nicole struggles to uprights the top-heavy crucifix. The audience gasps as the crucifix pirouettes. Dad winces as Mom alerts and clenches his hand crosses her heart.

DAD

Relax, alright? She's a nervous wreck already.
Just like you.

MOM

If it's the lord bidding, so be it.

DAD

It's a learned behavior. From you. Nothing to do
with the Lord. See, she's got it.

A BOY helps Nicole braces the crucifix and slides it in to place. He smiles as she avoids eye contact.

MOM

Why is he standing so close?

Mom shudders and crosses her heart as Nicole jumps as Boy rests a supporting hand on her shoulder.

DAD

Would you prefer it be a girl?

Dad frowns and as his eyes cross as Mom's jaw goes slack. He hears a hoot from the audience and notices the crucifix faces the wrong way.

Distraught, Nicole reacts to the scoff as the Boy rights the crucifix. She glances off-stage and considers running as the Boy smiles and encourages her to sit. Wishing it all away, she sits, hunches and pushes her knees together.

INT. HOTEL AUDITORIUM – DAY

A conference room packed with an eager AUDIENCE. A indiscriminate murmur pitches as a CLERK appears on stage and arranges some chairs along a podium. Antsy and impatient, some guests intermittently clap and gasp.

A WOMAN, 30, jittery and frail, scans the stage as she puts some final touches on her makeup.

WOMAN

Nope. That ain't him.

A looming awkward silence spreads across the crowd. Distracted, the Woman spills a Styrofoam Subway coffee cup.

WOMAN

Crap. Damn it.

The Clerk makes some final adjustments to the stage and fumbles with a microphone.

CLERK

Testing, testing.

The Clerk sets a microphone atop the podium. He steps away and notices the microphone roll towards the edge. He reacts in anticipation as it falls.

INT. KINGPIN'S PETIONVILLE ESTATE - DAY

A third-world upscale compound in rural Haiti. A gaudy smoke-filled room. Wear on the shag rug leads to unkempt luxury furniture. Heel marks cover a mahogany coffee table littered with ashes, chicken bones and high-ball glasses.

Several MERCENARIES, 20-25, gear-heavy hacks, whisper indiscernibly and devour fried chicken. Some stare blankly towards the distance while a few sleep slumber in chairs.

The door slams as a LACKEY, 25, disheveled and craven, shuffles in. The Mercenaries react and reach for guns and machetes. Pensive, he gulps as some Mercenaries glare and settle.

The CHIMERA, 20, adversarial and suave, rises from his wedged spot on the packed couch. He picks up a machete as he sizes the lesser man up and steps close. He taps the machete on the Lackey's shoulder satchel.

CHIMERA

You are late.

Nervous, the Lackey notices the fresh blood on the Chimera's machete and scans the floor for a body. He bites his lip and displays the satchel's contents.

LACKEY

I was taking precaution.

The Chimera grabs and waves a fistful of bundled and soiled bills to JEAN-YELE, 30, cunning brute.

JEAN-YELE lifts his eyes from his feathered copy of Mere Christianity and peers beyond his crooked and scaly toes. He pauses and tugs at some errand toe skin and flicks it airborne. Disinterested, his gaze returns to his book and crosses his feet the other way.

The Chimera tosses the satchel into a pile.

CHIMERA

Good.

The Lackey sees some scared young women on a couch. He notices their unkempt hair and smeared makeup. He recognizes MERCI 16, simple beauty in a familiar fluorescent pink dress as she glances at him and scowls. He musters some courage as he studies the stains on the dress.

LACKEY

What of them?

Indifferent, the Chimera considers as he notices Merci eavesdrop.

CHIMERA

Perhaps a ransom?

The Chimera studies Jean-Yele as he flips a page. His gaze shifts and he sees some mercenaries shake their head sideways. Unsure, the Lackey studies the ceiling for a solution.

LACKEY

I would need--

CHIMERA

--Too complicated. Dispose of them. Far away.
Bring more when you return.

The Chimera studies his face for dissention.

Disappointed, the Lackey drops his gaze and tugs his sagging pants. He glances and sees Merci bury her face and slumber on the girl's shoulder next to her. He gulps, turns and shuffles away.

CHIMERA

Don't slam...

The door slams and the mercenaries react.

Jean-Yele sits straight and wags a finger at the slouching men.

JEAN-YELE

God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart
from Himself, because it is not there. There is
no such thing.

Jean-Yele returns to the book as the mercenaries share confused glances.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY – DAY

Russ paces and stares at a closed door. He decides and makes a call. He presses his ear to the door and hears the phone ring and some noises inside. Frustrated, he bangs the door.

RUSS

Come on. Come on. We got to roll.

Impatient, he looks at his watch and shakes his head. He scratches his jaw and decides. He takes out a room key and swipes the door lock green. Cautious, he peeks inside.

INT. HOTEL ROOM – DAY

Bothered, Jared yanks the door open and cinches his robe.

JARED

What? What is it?

Exhausted, he wipes the sweat from his forehead shakes his head as Russ dodges eye contact.

RUSS

You're supposed to be on.

Russ squirms past Jared and takes it all in. He squints and sees Melissa hide among the sheets.

JARED

On. When?

RUSS

Five minutes ago.

JARED

Shit. You should have got me.

RUSS

Man, I text you like 10 times.

Russ kicks a pizza box and rummages for clean clothes.

JARED

Yeah. Yeah. Just finished. Gimme me like 5. I'll be right down.

RUSS

They're rowdy, J. You got 2. Clean up. Crap, you smell like day old tuna.

Jared grabs some wrinkled cloths from Russ's outstretched hand and studies himself in a mirror.

RUSS

Jesus, you look like shit. What are they going to think?

JARED

Probably that I was up since the crack of dawn baking fresh Italian rolls.

Russ taps his foot and hovers as Jared chuckles and brushes his hair back. Russ scoffs as Jared looks himself over. Satisfied, Jared's lankly legs strides for the door.

Russ studies Melissa and licks his lips. He decides and throws Melissa some money and sings.

RUSS

Hun. Get gone. Don't call us.

Russ jumps as the door slams. He dashes as he realizes Jared has left. .

INT. EXT. DAD'S CAR – DAY

Mom and Dad in the modest sedan parked curbside at the church.

DAD

That's what the Pastor recommends. Then we do it. I'm sick of—

MOM

--Shush. She coming.

DAD

I'm sick of these make-believe doctors. Quacks. They don't know. They can't relate. They were kids decades ago. A different time.

MOM

So was he.

DAD

But he works with these kids every day. Not for money to pay for some fancy degree. Out of the goodness of our Lord. Their support programs. Part of the community. Who we turn to in our time of need?

Distraught, Nicole tugs the locked door. Dad hits the unlock button as Nicole flails and tugs again. She battles tears as the door opens.

DAD

Our Lord. This is the last time.

She pulls the door shut on her foot and yelps. Her face twists as tears pour down her cheek.

MOM

Honey. Are you okay? Let me see.

NICOLE

No. I'm fine. I'm fine!

Mom spins to her seat and stares out the window for an answer as Nicole checks her injury. She glares at Dad.

MOM

You need to get the door fixed.

Dad sighs and throws up a hand in surrender.

INT. EXT. DAD'S CAR – DAY – MOVING

Dad takes a calming breath as he rehearses what he's about to say as blocks flash past. He studies Nicole out of the corner of his eye and sees her cry and stare out the window.

DAD

Hun. I can stop and get some ice or a band aid.

NICOLE

No. I'm fine dad.

MOM

No, you're not! Let me see.

NICOLE

No. I said I'm fine!

DAD

Did you want something to eat? We have a few minutes before your appointment.

NICOLE

I'm not hungry. Do I have to go? Can I just skip?

MOM

No. You are going. Its helps. I promise you. You just need to tell him what's bothering you. So he can fix you.

NICOLE

This is a waste. Nothing bothering me.

DAD

Hun. It's clearly something. And we really want to help. We can't unless we know what it is. You can talk to the Pastor, to him, to us. We're all here to help.

NICOLE

What if I don't know what it is?

MOM

What? Ridiculous. No. Of course you know.

DAD

Maybe, she doesn't dear. I don't know, honey. But we'll get you whatever you need.

Dad studies her in the rear-view mirror. He alerts and braces as a truck cut them off. He slams the brakes and cuts the wheel. The car skids to safety as Mom yelps as her head slams the window.

DAD

Whoa!

MOM

Damn it!

DAD

You okay? Everyone okay?

Dad pounds the steering wheel as Mom clutches her head.

MOM

Watch the road! You're gonna kill us all.

DAD

It wasn't me. The guy came out of nowhere!

MOM

It's your fault! You!

Nicole leans over Mom's shoulder and comforts her. Dad notices self-inflicted gouges on Nicole's arm as her sleeve rises.

NICOLE

You okay?

Dad sucks his teeth as his eyes dart between Nicole's arm and the road.

MOM

No. I'm not okay! If your father just watched the God damn road like I always tell him. Instead of looking all around. Playing with the radio. This wouldn't have happened. None of this. He's gonna get us all killed.

DAD

He cut me off! It's not my fault.

Mom trembles as she waves a threatening finger and jabs Dad's temple. He cringes and raises an arm in defense.

MOM

No, it's your fault! It's your God Damn fault!
You're driving. Your fault!

INT. HOTEL AUDITORIUM – DAY

Excited, the Clerk marches on stage and grins. He hunches and licks his lip. He scans the audience into silence.

CLERK

Jared, Jared, Jared—

The Audience in a fervor joins the chant. The Woman scans stage right and sees nothing. She looks left as a DOCTOR, 45, greasy and cunning, hands her another cup of coffee and seeks acknowledgement.

WOMAN

Oh. Thank you. Where is he? Do you see him?
He'll be here, right?

DOCTOR

Yes, he's here. He said he'd on by now. But I got to see my next patient soon.

The Doctor studies the Woman for a reaction. He sees her face break a smile as she glances at him.

The Clerk, a showman, stands and feigns disappointment.

CLERK
Oh, wait. Not yet?

A collective sigh and an elbow knocks the Woman's coffee cup from her hand. It strikes the floor and spills.

WOMAN
Shit. Not again.

The Doctor rolls his eyes and scans the empty podium.

DOCTOR
Geez J. Get it together. I don't have all day.

CLERK
Kidding. Here he is!

INT. SEVITE ROOM - DAY

Canvas and tarps hang from rustic lumber beams above a wavy dirt floor. A breeze sways the flames of some mismatched candles adorned upon figures shaped from mud.

Cautious, a rooster struts and cocks its head to scan. A cockroach flees sanctity from under a throw rug. The rooster runs it down and pecks the insect between its toes into pieces.

SEVITE, 35, petite and pained, prepares a room. He muddles a wooden bowl and dips his fingers. He dabs and paints half his face white with gypsum.

He pours a thick dark liquid in a circle around him. He kneels and closes his eyes. He mumbles and sways. His eyes snap open and he stands.

He stares into the distance and lifts the tent flap. He alerts a COUPLE seated on a bench. The Woman sobs and wipes tears and mucus as Sevite's eyes gloss past. Inquisitive, she raises her hand about to speak and the Man tugs her arm down.

He sees Merci pick at lint on her clean pink dress as she waits at the doorway. He offers his hand. Reluctant, she studies his hand and looks Sevite over as the Couple share a puzzled look.

SEVITE
You are ready. Come in my daughter.

Merci creeps inside and takes it all in. Sevite kneels and gestures for her to stand before him.

MERCI

What am I to do?

SEVITE

You need to as I can not do this without you and this must be done.

MERCI

But I am—

SEVITE

For the others.

He nods and she understands and holds our her hand. He drops a handful of dirt.

SEVITE

Make the man. The earth binds his limbs. He will harm no more in this world, or in yours.

Merci kneels and pours the dirt into a pile. She shapes and fashions the dirt into a crude figure and glances as the rooster struts past.

SEVITE

Come.

INT. HOTEL AUDITORIUM – DAY

Jared stands off-stage and paces. He glances at a giant hanging Subway banner and smiles. Russ nods to the Clerk.

CLERK (O.S.)

Ladies and gentlemen. Let's give a supersized Subway welcome to our special guest.

Russ crosses his arms and forces a smile.

RUSS

You look great. Just marvelous. How do you feel?

JARED

Like a million bucks.

The audience applause rises, crests, drowns the Clerk's voice.

Jared swings his lanky arms and pumps himself up, a few hops, some amateur boxing jabs, a smile. He trots out.

A room at capacity, applause, bright lights. An enthusiastic clerk on stage eyes a figure off-stage.

CLERK

Jared!

Jared jogs on stage, arms raised as a champion and the crowd goes wild. The Woman grins as she jumps and claps. The Doctor smiles and golf claps.

DOCTOR

Told you.

WOMAN

You sure did!

DOCTOR

What do you say we get together later?

Jared takes a victory lap. The applause settles. Jared positions at the podium, he smiles. He scans the audience. His mouth upon the microphone, his hands grip the podium rails. Something catches his eye. A bloody scratch along his wrist. He conceals a gasp. He snaps back, recovers.

JARED

I need to thank you! Each and every one of you. Without you, I wouldn't be here today. Unable to do the things I can do. To help those I help. Making healthy meals. Impacting kids everywhere. Awareness. Making Subway the single largest fast-food chain in America.

Wild applause. The crowd loves him and goes insane. Jared works the crowd in a victory lap. He waves his arms, shakes some peoples hands. A woman smells her fingers after and scrunches her nose and suspicious, glares at him as he returns to the podium.

The crowd applauds as Russell wanders to the shadows alongside the stage. Amazed, he watches Jared excite the crowd.

The Woman jumps with glee and claps as she tramples the spilt coffee cup.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE- DAY

Nicole clings to her Dad's arm as they wait. As the door opens, she jumps and squeezes his hand.

DAD

It's okay. I'll be right outside.

A suited PSYCHIATRIST studies Nicole. Reluctant, she releases her grip and glances at Dad as she wanders inside.

PSYCHIATRIST

I'll leave the door ajar. Is that okay, Nicole?

Nicole stares out the window.

The Psychiatrist huffs and claps.

PSYCHIATRIST

Where do you go?

His question met with silence.

PSYCHIATRIST

I can't help if you don't talk to me. Whatever it is I can assure you, you are not the first. You are not alone.

He studies her watery eyes as she stares into the distance.

PSYCHIATRIST

An associate came to me for advice. A patient had sought him out. A young woman, like yourself, claimed abuse by a relatively famous person. He was skeptical as people have their motives. He was worried he was being manipulated, used and may wind up a spectacle in some civil suit. The strangest thing. Cautious, I felt a grounded, measurable solution would be best. He never really considered the validity of her problem. Never treated her condition. She took her life. Tragic. Such a shame. I told him his suspicions were not relevant. That he should seek solutions, not distractions. I suspected. But he clung.

Unsure, her eyes water and she clenches her hands. She raises her hand to wipe her tears and glances at the doorway.

PSYCHIATRIST

I am here for you. I will not judge whatever you tell me. Did someone hurt you?

He watches Nicole wring her hands as her lips tremble. He notices her eyes dart towards the doorway.

PSYCHIATRIST

Did your parents?

He sees Nicole shake her head sideways and her face soften as she stares at the floor.

INT. HOTEL ROOM – DAY

Jared sits in a dank room and hits speed-dial as Sponge Bob plays on the TV.

JARED

I don't fuckin care. Get another.

He paces and open the curtains. Light pours over several half-eaten trays of room service and soiled clothes. He smells a Hello Kitty T-shirt and smiles. He sees the TV and frowns.

JARED

Man. How do they watch this shit?

INT./EXT. RUSS'S CAR – DAY

Russell hangs up the phone and rubs his brow. He scans a seedy convenience store sees a PIMP pace the sidewalk. Russ reaches for his wallet as he dashes across the street.

INT. SEVITE ROOM – DAY

Sevite gestures and Merci shuffles over and stands before him. Jittery, Sevite rears back as Merci leans forward and kneels.

SEVITE

Close your eyes, my daughter.

Sevite mumbles a prayer as Merci squints. The rooster draws close and Sevite grabs it by its neck. Merci alerts as the rooster cackles and her eyes snap open.

MERCIE

You will not hurt it.

SEVITE

No. Who would I be to harm the innocent?

He aligns the rooster's head and strokes its crown. Four eyes on Merci.

SEVITE

The eyes of the rooster are everywhere.

The faint sound of a hammer striking a nail and the ting of its echo. Now two. A distant chorus.

Merci canters her head and studies the haphazard lump of dirt. She sees the contours of the effigy resemble a dirt trail.

MERCI (O.S.)

It does not look like him.

SEVITE (O.S.)

It does not matter. Bondye will know the man
you seek. Just breathe.

MERCI (O.S.)

I can not.

SEVITE (O.S.)

Yes. You may.

Sevite hears her breath and lifts his head. He opens his eyes and realizes Merci is gone. He studies the effigy and his jaw hangs.

EXT. SLUMS – DAY

Some chickens and roosters scratch for feed along a dirt trail outside a hut. A rooster perched atop a garbage heap peeks in the window and cocks his head. A distant clacking of hammered nails and the hut's door flings open.

Disheveled and half-dressed, Lackey dashes as he tugs his falling pants. Confused, he stops and looks back at the hut. Panicked, he scans and wipes sweat from his face. Unsure, he gasps and shakes his head sideways. The sound of clacking nails grows loud and he runs.

He looks behind him as the sky darkens and some haze settles around him. He pulls out a gun and shoots at an unseen target. He spins and pauses and sees nothing but a smoldering wasteland enveloped in fog.

Puzzled, he takes a step and white gypsum crumbles beneath his feet. He strains to lift his gun. He clenches his jaw as panic sets in. He seizes up and falls.

A group of children shuffle close and encircle him. Merci glides through the circle and stands over his writhing body. His eyes dart as he struggles to understand. He sees Merci and wiggles his head sideways as he knows.

He breaks his stare and lower his gaze. His eyes are glued to her hands as she takes out a mallet and a railroad spike. Despondent, she pauses and runs her fingers along the spike's rusty edge.

SEVITE (V.O.)

Do it my daughter. Free your soul.

She considers and kneels. She positions the spike at caruncle of Lackey's wide-eye.

SEVITE (V.O.)

Drive the demons. Free the others.

She raises the mallet and pauses. She swings the mallet. The sound of a mallet as it drives the spike through cartilage and the Lackey screams. She raises her hand and swings and the Lackey yelps as his foot trembles. A series of short swings. The clangs pierce a primal scream.

EXT. DRY VILLAGE – DAY

Squatting near a fire, EVANSTON, 40, sedate giant, reacts to the distant echo of the Lackey's scream. A piece of chicken falls from his plate as he stands and scans the valley and mountains.

He spins and stares beyond his hulking shadow at the lit homes of a distant village. He recognizes something familiar and some concern spreads across his face. He studies the ground and sighs.

His giant fingers pick up the dirty chicken. He examines it and wipes off some dirt. Bothered, he squints at the distant village and takes a bite. He kicks a water bucket and douses the fire.