

Food Freedom

Raina walked into her cooking class, giddy with excitement. The whole class was making tacos today! Of course, she had to be with her group, the one that always excluded her. Nothing could shatter her cheery mood today. After the teacher's instructions, Raina happily pulled on her apron and ran to her group kitchen.

“Ok, let’s make beef tacos! They’re my fave!” Nikki (the head queen of mean) ordered. “Chop Chop, everyone. We’re working at snails pace today.” she said glaring at Raina.

“Uh, Nikki. I’m allergic to beef. Can we please make something else?” Raina said in a small voice.

Mrs. Jenkins took one look at Nikki’s face and realized she had to step in before things got serious. Nikki was known to eventually bring the whole school into her problems. “Girls, how about we try to go veggie for one day?” she said, smiling to try to lighten the mood.

Nikki huffed and managed to squeeze in a strained, “Fine.” Raina wanted to hug Mrs. Jenkins. She kept it in and hopped over to the ingredient table. After she gathered everything, she went back to their

kitchen. Suddenly, she stopped at the door. Someone was talking. That voice was painstakingly familiar. It was Raina's best friend; Melody! Melody and Nikki were talking to each other like they were long lost sisters.

"Raina is such a dork, did you hear her? *I'm a vegetarian!*" Nikki mimicked in a high voice. "How are you even friends with her?" she said returning to her normal cold voice.

"It's cuz my mom and her mom are friends. My mom thinks Raina's a good example!" Melody exclaimed.

"Exactly, and plus Raina eats nuts and beans instead of meat because it's *healthy*" Nikki added.

"It represents her personality; a squirrel" Melody crowed.

Raina was shocked. Here was Melody who had been her best friend since when she was 2 betraying her for Nikki. How could she? Tears streamed down Raina's face. Now there wasn't anyone who she could trust or talk to. She quickly wiped away the tears and hurried over to Mrs. Jenkins' table.

“Mrs. Jenkins, I feel like throwing up, can I go see the nurse?” she asked practically kneeling on her knees.

“Of course, I have heard that there’s been a stomach bug going on. Bye sweetheart” she said. Raina walked up to the nurse’s office. After a quick checkup, the nurse called her mother and asked her to pick up Raina. The moment she got home, Raina ran to her bed and cried herself to sleep.

The next day Raina sat alone at a separate table from Melody; who was sitting at Nikki’s Table of Fame. She opened up her lunch to find the vegetable salad she had made in the morning. The moment her fork touched the food, something flew in. Raina gasped. Someone had thrown a sausage into her food. When she looked up, she saw Melody and Nikki smirking. Then they flipped their (suddenly) matching hair and went back to eating and talking. Raina sat in the bathroom and sobbed the whole lunch period.

When she got home, though, she was mad. She walked to her bedroom furiously, and slammed the door shut. She looked up at the corkboard on her wall. She started to rip off all the pictures of her and

Melody, when something caught her eye. There tacked up on her corkboard was a lime green flyer that read; *Start your own club*. Raina plopped down on her beanbag with the flyer in hand. Suddenly a plan was forming in her head.

The next day, Raina registered herself in the school club committee and signed all the papers. Bang! The Meat Freedom Club was in action! Soon the flyers were tacked up and the first meeting was about to take place. Raina sat in the school kitchen, biting her nails. *What if no one showed up?* Just then a group of 7th graders walked in.

“Is this the meatless club?” the red haired girl asked. Raina sighed with relief.

“Yes, yes it is. I’m Raina!” she said with a small smile.

“Cool, I’m Gabriella and this is Shreya. We’re newly transformed vegetarians!” she said.

Soon after that, Raina discovered that there were a lot of people who shared the same passion as her; cooking meatless and that they were similar to her in lots of ways. She soon had a big group of friends, who supported her in everything she did. What more could she ask for?