

Cannibal Café

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When the order arrives, the patient's skin is bubbling at the shin. Delicately, he pulls his jean leg up and sees a burn the shape and size of an iron -- flesh comes loose from the body. He brings the order to the front.

"I didn't know they did this at places around here anymore," he says, showing his leg to the woman behind the counter.

"They don't, and here you need a certified cutter on to be able to do it."

She takes out a pair of scissors and inspects his wound.

"It almost looks like a pizza slice!"

She peels the skin back from the point by the ankle, up to the crust at mid-shin, where the flap is still attached. With the scissors she cuts across the crust, then pulls the rest off by hand. When the flesh is released, it seems to shrink, crinkle up, like looking for something of itself to hold onto. It is milky white when held up to the light. She puts the melting cheese flesh into a steaming pot of something and closes the lid.

"Give it a few minutes to soak."

She is a dumpy young woman with greasy hair, falling out of her top at the tit and stomach. He finds something attractive about her.

"Hey, you know you look familiar. Have you been in here ever?" she asks.

"No. Never. But I get that a lot."

"You remind me of that Wes guy, you know who."

"Wes Anderson. Wes Bailey. Wes Morgan. Wes Craven."

"Where's he from again?"

A man on the other side of the counter jumps in, "Lady, can I give my order?"

She looks back to the patient.

"The states. Western Massachusetts. Amherst."

"I had a friend who went to school there!"

"I went to school there."

"No way! Did you go with him?"

"Look lady," the man butts in again, "I'm here from the city and I'm very busy. Do you see me? Do you see this watch? What time do you get off, I wanna show it to you."

"In an hour," she says, looking to the patient again. Steam starts hissing from the pot. "Your order's up."

"Can I get it to-go?" he says, looking to his order.

"You're going home to share with someone?" she asks.

"No, it's just myself."

"Look lady, I'll just write my order down okay? And keep it on until you reach the bone."

"I'll stay here and eat until you're off the clock" the patient says.

"Okay, but I got another shift starting at midnight."

"That's just an hour in between."

"Plenty. Go enjoy your food. And save some for me," she says, and when she smiles he notices that she has dirty little teeth, like black beans without the skin on them. He hadn't noticed that before.

