

## FEUD INSECURITY: WHY DOESN'T JOANIE EAT BREAKFAST? (a very special episode of *Clone High*)

by Supercake Studio (<http://www.patreon.com/supercakestudio>)

Joan looked into the brown paper bag and shuddered. *He tries, he really does, but...*

Cleo must have noticed her expression. God knows how; the girl was wrapped around Abe like silly putty, her face buried in his scraggly beard.

*Like some kind of bosomy beige schnauzer*, Joan thought. *If only I could be that schnauzer.*

And yet somehow Little Miss Spreads Her Legs Like An Egyptian had picked up on that split second of vulnerability. It must be the lunchroom. It heightened her senses. The popular kids always knew when someone was about to be humiliated in the lunchroom, in front of the entire student body *and* their lifelong secret crush. It was like a sixth sense.

"What'd you bring today, Of Arc?" Cleo asked, her perfect red lips curling up in just enough of a sneer that Abe wouldn't notice.

"Nothing," Joan said, hastily closing the bag again. "Uh, I mean, just a sandwich."

"Aren't you going to eat it?"

"Nah, I'm, uh, on a diet," Joan said, feeling the beginnings of a prickle on the back of her neck. *Drop it, Cleo, just drop it, please...*

"Good for you," Cleo said sweetly. "It's *soooo* great that you're *finally* doing something about your weight. "

"Excuse me? What the hell is that supposed to mean?" Joan snapped.

"Nothing!" Cleo curled protectively around Abe. "*God!* What's your problem? I was *agreeing* with you. Fat people are way too sensitive."

*"You're calling me fat? You-- you zeppelin-chested-- pumpkin-assed--"*

"Girls! Settle down!" Abe said. "There's no need to fight. Cleo, Joan needs our support right now. And Joan, you'll always be my friend; I don't care about your weight!"

"But, but you should!" Joan said, boggling. "You *should* care, because I'm *thin!* I'm wearing a freaking belly shirt... sweater...shirt thing! Do I *look* like I've gained weight to you?"

"Oh, Joan! You know I would never keep track of a trivial thing like what your body looks like. You're my pal, and that's all that's important."

*"Grrrrr."*

"Joan. Look at me." Abe took her hand in his own. "You are who you are. It's time to stop starving yourself, Joan. It's time to eat your lunch. It's time to say to the world, 'here I am, world, big, sassy, and proud, and if you don't like it--'"

*"Arrrrgh!* Fine! You want to see what I brought for lunch?" Joan ripped the bag open and slammed the contents down on the table. "Here it is, okay?"

There was silence in the lunchroom, except for the sound of Cleo nibbling away at Abe's ear. Joan sat down quickly. Then the laughter began.

"Oh my god! Joan of Arc brought a deck of playing cards between two linoleum tiles for lunch! Oh, the incredibility!"

"Sh-shut up, clone of the Hindenburg announcer guy!" Joan said, feeling the color rise in her cheeks. "Just shut up!"

"Thanks a lot, *Joan*," Cleo said, disengaging long enough to roll her eyes. "Now people are going to think this is the crazy table."

Abe looked at the pathetic sandwich. "Joan, you're my friend. All my life I've had stereotypes about pica sufferers. I told the usual pica jokes, avoided people with pica on the bus; I never dreamed that someone I cared about in such a deep, platonic way could--"

"No, Abe, it's not that." Joan sighed. "I didn't make this sandwich. Toots did. He wanted to make

me a special lunch and -- and he worked so hard, I didn't have the heart to tell him it wasn't really food."

"Your *dad* made *that*?" Cleo gasped. "Oh my god. What is he, blind?"

"*Yes!* Yes, he's blind! You *insensitive skank!*"

"Well, excuse me," Cleo said, looking wounded. "How was I supposed to know?"

"*We live. In the same. HOUSE!*"

"Oh riiiiight." Cleo shrugged. "Thank God *I* can afford to have all my meals catered. Well, you'd better get in line, hadn't you?"

"For cafeteria food? Are you kidding?" Joan threw up her hands. "Oh, that's right, you've never tried it. Because you're rich. Well, take it from me, the food here is... it's not good. Trust me. You'd have to be completely out of your mind to eat this slop."

"Awright! Cafeteria chili burritos!" Gandhi said, plopping his tray down on the other side of the table. "What's new, dawgs?"

"Joan's poor and hungry," Cleo piped up.

"That's not new."

"Uh, yeah, neither are those burritos. I'm pretty sure they came from the same lab as we did. " Joan pointed out. "In the same year. Wait, aren't you a vegetarian?"

"That's the beauty of cafeteria beef, ma jizzle of arcizzle--contains no actual animal products of any kind! Or plant products!" He sank his teeth into of the burritos. "Oh yeah! One hundred percent synthetic means one hundred percent cruelty-free!"

"See?" Joan crossed her arms. "I *guess* I'll just have to go hungry."

"Why don't you just--ow, bit into a long-string carbon nanorod, ow, ow--why don't you just have some of Cleo's leftovers? She's got piles of the stuff."

Joan looked over at where Cleo had been sitting before climbing into Abe's lap. It was true; most of the fancy catered lunch hadn't even been touched. She's eaten a bit off the end of the thick, juicy deli sandwich and had about half of the grapes, but she'd left the cheese platter, the dish of applesauce, the salad, the bananas, the french fries, the soda, and the cherry pie. Cleo always brought enough to feed an army and ended up throwing most of it away.

"Well, I guess..." Joan said, reaching hesitantly for the leftover grapes. She hated to owe Cleo one, but she was starving.

Cleo jabbed her hand with a fork.

"OW!" Joan yanked her hand back. "What was that for?"

"Hello?" Cleo snorted. "Excuse me, Miss Grabby, but that food is *mine*."

"But you're just going to throw it away!"

"So? It's *my* food. I can do what *I* want with it, you panhandler."

"Actually, you can't," Gandhi said, gesturing with the stump of a burrito at the large poster glaring down at them from the nearest wall. Beneath the scowling countenance of the school's reclusive principal was the legend:

WASTING FOOD ISN'T COOL!

CLEAN YOUR PLATE, OR WE'LL CLEAN IT FOR YOU.

"Whatever," Cleo shrugged.

"No, the poster's right, Cleo" Abe said. "Wasting food just *isn't* cool. If you're not going to eat any more, than you really should share--"

"Who says I'm not going to eat more?" Cleo countered, sliding off Abe's lap and scooping up the spread protectively into her arms. "I never said I was done. I was taking a break, that's all. Can't I even do that without you swooping in like a big, fat, vaguely gothy vulture?"

"Well, okay, but whatever you don't eat..."

"It's my lunch! All of it! *It belongs to me*, dammit!"

Joan was taken aback. "Come on, Cleo. You're not seriously going to eat all that? It's like fifteen pounds of food."

Cleo leaned over. "If eating it myself is what it takes to keep your greedy hands off my property," she hissed, "then you bet your butt I'm going to eat it, Of Arc. Every. Last. *Bite*."

"You'll never finish before the end of lunch period," Joan scoffed.

Staring daggers at her rival, the Egyptian girl scooped up one of the bananas and peeled it in a few quick, expert motions.

"You just watch me." And she swallowed it whole.

Gandhi dropped his burrito. "Hot damn!"

*She's not even chewing*, Joan thought. *She could make herself really sick. I can't let that happen, not even to Cleo. How could I live with myself?*

"Cleo--" she began.

"How'd you do that? You took that thing like a snake!" interrupted Gandhi excitedly. "Didn't even bite down!"

Cleo snuggled up to Abe. "Oh...let's just say I've had a lot of *practice*."

*You know, I bet I'll be able to live with myself just fine*, Joan thought. *Go ahead and stuff yourself with bananas until they're coming out your ears, bitch!*

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Cleopatra swallowed another banana, feeling it slide down her throat and into her stomach. She'd been telling the truth when she said she'd been practicing; banana-gulping was one of the exercises recommended in *Ten Steps To A Stronger And More Sensual Throat*. She knew she could put ten or twelve away no problem. This was the first time she'd done it with an audience, though. She wasn't sure what she liked more: seeing that little creep Gandhi freaking out every time she slurped down another one, or knowing what must be going through her boyfriend-until-something-better-comes-along Abe's mind right now.

She knew what she liked *most* though, and that was seeing Joan stew. *Poor chunky Joan*, she thought gleefully, *her one pleasure in life is food and I'm denying it to her. You know, once in a while, I guess I can be just a little bit of a bitch.*

Something far back in her mind told her that it was a more than a little bit. Something even further reminded her about the time she'd tried to borrow Joan's jeans on Tacky Outfit Day and been unable to zip then up, and that she probably outweighed Joan by a good ten to fifteen pounds if she was being honest, but she stomped that voice back down into the dust, the way she did every day.

She'd finished the bananas off, and most of the grapes besides, dangling them into her mouth and stripping the juicy globes from the stems like the pampered queen she was. Her stomach was starting to feel a little like a bowl of fruit salad. For a moment, she considered relenting and letting Joan have the rest of her lunch. God knows she was going to have to spend enough time on the exercycle this week already without gorging herself.

Then she thought, *Nah. Crush her.*

She hefted the sandwich. It was thick, juicy, stuffed with lunchmeat and dripping with grease and oil. Just the end of it had been plenty for her. She was pretty sure she could take the whole thing, though; it was really just a bigger banana made of bread and meat, wasn't it?

Wrapping her lips around the end of it, she tried to inhale it using the same method. Almost at once she realized it wasn't going to work; it was too big around. She'd choke herself.

Gandhi was oblivious. In fact, he was still in cheerleading mode. "Cle-o!" he chanted. "Cle-o! Cle-o! Cle-o! Cle-o! Cle-o!"

Now Abe was picking it up, cheering her on, like a barely-acceptable-for-now boyfriend should.

And the other tables were noticing them. Some of them were beginning to chant along.

And there was Joan. *Smirking* at her. Like Cleo had already failed.

Now she *had* to do it, or she'd look like an idiot.

She took a tremendous bite out of the end--she never actually said she was going to swallow it *whole*, after all, that was *crazy*, it was the size of a football--chewed it a couple of token times, and forced it down. She worked the next couple of inches into her mouth. A thin stream of oil ran into her nostril.

*Ugh, now I know how a boa constrictor feels. Too bad I can't unhinge my jaw.* She'd thought that before, during the week she hooked up with Genghis, but this was the first time she'd ever thought it about feed. Gamely, she kept cramming in the sandwich, ripping off huge hunks and gulping them down. She was getting uncomfortably full.

It only took a couple of minutes to finish the sandwich via feeding frenzy, but to Cleo it felt like time was stretching along with her stomach. Conscious of everyone's eyes on her, she stood up, licked her lips and winked. The chants turned into cheers.

*That's how you do it, beautiful. You're in control. You're always perfection.*

The fast, sloppy gulps had left her bloated with air, and she realized that she was about to belch. Loudly. She thumped herself on the chest a couple of times before releasing it theatrically to further applause. *That* was how you did it; act like you were in control, and nobody realized you weren't.

She carefully settled back onto the bench. An audience was all well and good, but (she confirmed with a quick downward glance) her stomach was bulging visibly now, and it wasn't all air in there. Cleo was stuffed, and it showed. That wasn't exactly the image she wanted to project; the boys might love the throat action but most of them weren't too wild about with the results. She tugged down her white tank top. For once she didn't want it clinging tightly to her curves.

Joan raised an eyebrow. "Getting full?"

"Oh, in your dreams, Of Arc," Cleo sneered, scooping up a handful of cheese cubes and shoveling them into her mouth. *Dammit*, she'd hoped to be able to make an excuse and leave gracefully to sleep it off in class, but apparently Frenchy McHeadvoices was determined to drive her to the bitter ends of her endurance.

Ha! Cleo would show *her*.

Worked her way through the rest of the food was sheer torment. It wasn't fun anymore, and she didn't feel any sense of accomplishment, just fuller and sicker with every bite. *Stupid rotten lousy slut bitch frog*, she swore in her head, *making me do this!* By the time she chewed her miserable way to the cherry pie, she was struggling not to vomit.

"Cleo, sweetie?," Abe asked, "Is my little snugglecakes okay?"

"I'm...fine...*dear*..." she groaned. *Oh god, don't mention cake. I'm gonna lose it.*

She leaned back, taking shallow breaths. She knew her stomach was disgustingly bloated, but she didn't care anymore. She only wanted one thing, now, and that was to make it to class without bursting at the seams.

"Looks like you're done, so I'll just have that last slice of pie--" Joan began.

Correction: she wanted two things. Not to burst, and *to keep that little foo whore from stealing her pie.*

She sat up straight (oh god, the pressure as she shifted positions) and yanked the tin away from Joan. One more piece. She could do it. She could do it.

She felt the tickle in the back of her throat. She couldn't do it. She was so packed with food it was practically spilling back out her mouth; she'd erupt if she put something else in there.

But she had to. It would be such a *waste* otherwise. She'd already embarrassed herself. She'd already pushed herself to a state of semi-comatose nausea. And her figure! Her beautiful figure! She'd be lucky if she had a pair of jeans she could squeeze into after this nightmare. It was going to take *days* of aerobics to get back into shape.

She wasn't...going to let Joan...*win*.

Cleo didn't know herself how she did it. Somehow, some way, bite after grueling bite, she forced the last slice of pie down and managed not to lose everything underneath it.

"Wow," Joan said. "Guess you were hungry."

*Guess you're going to go hungry*, Cleo thought nastily, putting her head down on the table. She felt *gigantic*. Like a beached whale stuffed with a dozen elephants. She put a hand to her mouth, stifling a belch, and hiding a smile. *Screw you, Of Arc*.

She didn't fight the ongoing food coma; she welcomed it. The last thing she wanted to do was stay conscious while this monster food baby slowly churned through her guts. *At least*, she thought, *at least that skank's going to go hungry*. She almost envied that--she couldn't quite believe she herself would ever feel hungry again. But it would bother Joan, and that was better than nothing.

"Hey, you never did get anything for lunch, did you, Joan?" she heard Abe saying from a million miles away through a fog of grease and stomach acid.

"I didn't. I'm starved!"

"You know, Cleo and I were going out for pizza tonight... somehow I think she's probably going to cancel on me. You want to come instead? Gandhi can't split a Meat Lovers with me, and I hate to eat pizza alone. My treat!"

"I...I..." Even through the grease-fog, Cleo could hear the delight in Joan's voice. "I'd love to, Abe! It's a date!"

*Screw you, Of Arc. Screw you.*