

Ticked Off

by Marcus Rockstrom

The vociferously vegan Christie is forced to overhaul her life after a tick bite results in a rare disease that makes her deathly allergic to fruits and vegetables. Now living on an all-meat and supplements diet, Christie attempts to hide her condition from her all-vegan friends and family while coming to terms with her new lifestyle.

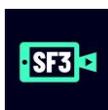
Hoping to ease her transition, Christie's doctor introduces her to Merrick, a popular chef also suffering from a tick-borne disease, yet with the inverse issue – he can no longer eat meat.

With each of their reputations standing on the line, the pair find themselves both loathing and seeking time with the other, discovering that they are now the only people they can share a meal with.

Two diametrically opposed, and arrogantly espoused, philosophies of food and life come into conflict between them, as Christie argues for veganism, while eating meat, and Merrick defends his meat-centric cuisine through mouthfuls of salad.

While their words have seemingly little effect, it is their ability to cook and present new avenues of food for each other that allows a friendship to grow. Christie begins to broaden the horizons of Merrick, who in turn makes frustratingly delicious meals for his sparring partner, using his skills as a chef to utilise the few herbs that won't kill her.

As they build up their tolerance for each other and their food, their perspectives of their former lives also mature, shedding long-held layers of arrogance cultivated by their communities. Realising that their beliefs have more to do with elitism than they would like to admit, they make changes in their lives and attitudes. Christie tempers the moralising of her friends and family, while Merrick makes permanent changes to his famous menu, catering to a wider audience.



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Their story ends the day the doctor calls Merrick, telling him a miraculous recovery means he can eat meat again. Christie sits down to eat lunch with him, asking what the news was. Merrick says he'll tell her later, then orders a salad.



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