Bob's Beef Jerky
for Brie

(The stage lights come up on a woman chained to a vending machine with the large caption "Bob's Beef Jerky". She is holding note cards. A large padlock is draped across her chest.)

Giri
Today is the day I change the world. No longer am I willing to settle with just a vegetarian poster on my wall, eating healthy myself, or telling my friends. I'm going to tell everyone in the whole world! We're going to make everyone vegetarians! (Laughs maniacally) I'm going to stand here until the news comes, and the papers come, and I can convince America that I am right, and they are wrong.

(A man enters rifling through his pockets for change. He looks up and notices Giri blocking the change slot.)

Eric
Excuse me, but you've chained yourself to my future lunch. Could you move a little to the right so I can get the jerky out and then I'll be on my way and you can stay there.

Giri
(whips out a notecard) ehh-hem. Number three, for the hurried business executive who doesn't think he has time to become a vegetarian.

Eric
Excuse me?

Giri
You...

Eric
Me?

Giri
Yeah, you. The hurried business exec. who doesn't think he has time to become a vegetarian.

Eric
Who's talking about becoming a vegetarian? All I wanted was some beef jerky for lunch and now I'm going to be late for my meeting because you've chained yourself to the machine.
Giri
See, you've proven my point. Ok, business, I can do business too. I'll cut you a deal, you stay long enough for me to tell you why you should become a vegetarian, and I'll maybe get out of your way so that you can have some beef jerky.

Eric
You'll maybe get out of my way??!!?? I'll counter offer, I listen to your spiel, and you must get out of my way.

Giri
(hurriedly) We'll see. Ok, now, here are the reasons you should become a vegetarian. As you know, you are a hurried business executive with very little time. (She smiles knowingly at Eric) And since you have little time, you think that eating out of vending machines such as this one. (She gestures to the machine) is the only way to go. Guess again! An exciting alternative to this is Vegetarianism! Modern vegetarianism comes in many forms, first there are the vegans, who eat only....

Eric
(Cuts in) OK, OK, now how about the beef jerky?

Giri
I haven't finished yet!!! The deal was the whole speech for some beef jerky (under her breath maybe).

Eric
What did you say? Forget it, I'll go to the restaurant next door and treat myself to some Veal Parmesan.?

Giri
How could you possibly think of eating veal??

Eric
OK, no beef jerky, although I don't know why. WHY can't I eat veal?

Giri
Baby cows, separated from their mother at birth, fed a milk mixture that causes them to die at three weeks old, and while they're alive, they live in pens too small to move around in. never cleaned out. They get diseases, they suffer, they die, you eat them. Do you see anything wrong with this? Do YOU? I DO!!! DO YOU?!!!??!

Eric
But the cows are put on earth to be eaten!!!

Giri
They're what???? Are you NUTS???
Eric
Look, if cows were not made to be eaten, why would God have made them?

Giri
If you weren't made to be eaten why would God have made you?

Eric
You're psycho, I'm calling the cops.

Giri
Wait! You promised!! You said if you listened to my speech I would give you some beef jerky. And you haven't listened to my speech, so I'm not giving you any beef jerky.

Eric
I said I would get to the restaurant and eat something else!

(Enter a newswoman with a camera. She is busy adjusting her hair and checking a hand mirror for her makeup. She looks bored and begins setting up the camera)

Maria
Here we are live at the scene of a sit-in in process. This woman, (Holds microphone up to Giri's face)

Giri
Giri Thomas. (Pulls out a note card) And I'm here today to tell everyone about the miracles of Vegetarianism. Vegetarianism. Vegetarianism is not just for the hippies and beatniks people have thought it was at first...

Maria
This woman, Giri Thomas, a rabid vegetarian, is holding this man here hostage. The suspect has chained herself to the Bob's Bee Jerky machine, and refuses to be unchained. More updates in a while from WSAM News. We're there when the news is happening.

Giri
I'm not holding him hostage!!!

Maria
You're hanging onto his tie and you won't let him go. What do YOU call that?

Giri
I said I'd let him go if he'd just listen to my reasons for why he should become vegetarian! And now for you the modern woman who puts in a full day at the office, then goes home and cooks Note card #8.

Eric
Could you get her off of me? I can't breathe!
Giri
If you'll just turn that camera on for a moment (looks at note card) and let me tell the world about the wonderful, healthful, cruelty free lifestyle that is vegetarianism! Then I'll let this man go. That's why I called you and told you that a woman was chaining herself to beef jerky machine in the basement of this building. So I could spread the message! That's why you came!!

Maria
It was a slow news day.

Giri
Don't say that! You don't mean that! You came to hear the WORD!

Maria
(to Eric) And you are?

Eric
Eric...

Maria
(Turns the camera back on) This is Maria Scott reporting back from the hostage scene. The terrorist has made her demands and the SWAT team is now attempting to argue with her. The suspect still holds a man, believed to be named Eric, at gunpoint. We'll be back with more news from the scene in just a moment.

Giri
That's not TRUE! You can't say that! I don't have him at gunpoint! If he wanted to leave he could have just wrenched away from me! I'm chained to a machine! And there are no police here! I don't believe in guns! I'm anti-gun! I'm a pacifist! That's why I DON'T EAT ANIMALS! Don't you understand? Now all those people out there watching the news think that I'm some sort of awful insane woman! They won't listen to reasonable arguments from a woman they believe to be insane! It's all lost, all of it! I might as well go home! You've killed all my hopes, my plans, everything! How can you do something like that?

Maria
I told you! It was a slow news day! I just took the truth and embellished it a little! Nobody wants to hear about a story about a peaceful fanatic! You have to make it (Reverently) NEWSWORTHY!! I mean, do you really think the public would tune in every night if all the news had were people like you? We're competing against Hollywood! We don't have big stars, or gorgeous models, or the money! So we have to have PLOT!
Eric
Wait a minute! Now I thought she was nuts (gestures to Giri) but you're even nuttier! Aren't there laws against that?

Maria
Oh! Like anyone will care! The public doesn't want the boring old truth anymore! It wants drama, excitement, adventure!

Eric
Who are you to decide what the public wants?

Maria
WE have DEMOGRAPHICS! WE know what the public wants! Do you have DEMOGRAPHICS??

Eric
I am a demographic!!

Giri
Wait! Listen! I came here to tell the world about vegetarianism! Now YOU have destroyed my reputation! And YOU still don't want to become a vegetarian! What am I going to do? They'll send me to prison! I'll be locked up! Behind bars! Away from my animals! And who will protect them? Someone like you will come along, claim their sole purpose for existence is to feed you, and eat them! And then, someone like you will come along and film their bloody carcasses for the six o'clock news! I won't let you! You can't!

Maria
Sure I can! I am THE NEWS!

Eric
That doesn't mean you can get away with just anything! You're supposed to give the public the truth!

Maria
Why won't you listen to me? I told you! The public doesn't WANT the truth!

Giri
No kidding! I keep trying to tell people what meat does to their hearts! And do they listen to me? No, of course not! "Leave us alone Giri! We just want to enjoy our steaks!" "Be quiet Giri! We need that protein!" The average human being gets three times the protein he needs a day! And along with all that extra protein is fat, and the fat causes heart disease and osteoporosis, and then they die! Heart disease is one of the leading killers in America today! And it's things like beef jerky that cause a lot of it! Why don't you put that on your TV tabloid show you call news?
Eric

Are you serious? Meat causes heart disease? My grandfather died from a heart attack!

Giri

That's all the more reason why you should take steps to see that you never have a heart attack. If it runs in your family, then you have a great chance!

Eric

But what do I eat instead of meat? I mean, that is one major food group!

Giri

(begins to unchain herself from the machine) Well... there are lots of things that you could eat. For instance...

Maria

Wait a minute! If you're not chained up, how am I going to convince America that you're insane? And if you really start listening to her, then how am I going to say that she's holding you hostage? You'll wreck my story! Can't you please chain yourself back to that machine? Come on, I'll buy everyone beef jerky on WSAM! I have an expense account! Just please chain yourself back to the machine? Pretty please? Pretty please with a cherry on top?

Giri

I don't want any beef jerky! What part of vegetarianism don't you get?

Eric

So if I eat beef jerky I could die?!!?

Giri

Exactly!

Maria

So you're not going to chain yourself back to the machine?

Giri

There's no need to. I've given Eric my strongest arguments for not eating the beef jerky, and so if he wants to go ahead and kill himself, then fine!

Eric

(Realization slowly dawning) Wait! You're saying that if I eat this beef jerky I'll die. This minute? But I've eaten meat before and I'm still alive!

Maria

Yeah, and I eat meat all the time and my doctor says I'm as fit as a fiddle!
Giri
OK, Ok. So you won't die today, or tomorrow, but eventually your arteries will begin to shrink, you can almost hear them! "Stop Eric! Don't shrink us! We should stay big and healthy and allow blood to pass easily through us!" And eventually, your tiny pitiful arteries will give out, and that meat, over all the years will have killed you. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, maybe not for you. But with your family history of heart disease.... well....

Eric
Ohmigod! I'm gonna' die!

Maria
Get a grip. You aren't going to die. She's misleading you.

Giri
Oh, like you're one to talk!

Eric
I'm not going to die?

Maria
Trust me, you're not going to die.

Giri
How can you trust her? She said I was holding you at gunpoint.

Maria
Yeah, but that was for work. I'm really a very honest person.

Eric
If you'll lie for work you're not an honest person. And if you go around telling everyone that they're going to die today if they touch a hamburger, then you're not honest either.

Maria+Giri
But I was dishonest for a purpose!

Giri
If I don't give drastics, people won't listen!

Maria
Hey, the same for me!

Giri
Wait, I'm the same as you? I don't think so! I tell the people what could happen.
Maria
Are you saying that people don't hold others hostage at gunpoint? That could happen too!

Giri
I'm so confused. All I wanted to do was convince everyone that eating meat is bad.

Maria
(fakely) And all I wanted to do was tell everyone that taking hostages was bad.

Eric
You what?! Come on.

Maria
(Sullenly) OK, OK, so all I wanted was a story. But nobody ever would've known the difference.

Eric
That's not the point.

Giri
Yeah, the news is supposed to give the people the truth!

Maria
So if we'd put your story on, with you telling everyone what you told Eric, would that have been any better?

Giri
So we're both wrong?

Maria
Well, technically, but I always look at it as... hey! Have you ever considered being a TV newscaster? There are many openings for people with your talents.

Giri
I don't think I'd like to consider "embellishing the truth" as one of my talents.

Eric
If you're both wrong, that leaves Me to be right. So I think I'll have that beef jerky now.

Giri
After everything that I've told you?

Eric
Yeah, but how much of that was truth? I mean, meat's harmless right? You were just, umm.. Embellishing.
Giri
Except for the part about dying today I wasn't! Everything else I said was true, 100 percent.

Eric
They really treat cows that way?

Giri
Yeah, sad isn't it?

Maria
What way?

Eric
Giri says that they lock little cows up in dirty pens and starve them to make Veal Parmesan!

Maria
Hey! I bet I could get a story out of that! A big expose. I can see it now. (Switches to Newswoman voice). This is Maria Scott on the scene of one of man's greatest inhumanities, what do you call that?

Giri
Factory farming.

Maria
Factory farming. (Reverts to normal voice) And you could come along as my resident animal rights expert!

Giri
So I could really get the message to everyone?

Maria
Everyone who watches WSAM!

Giri
But you'd have to promise to be truthful. Only the truth. No embellishing.

Maria
I'd try. And if people really treat cows like that, why then the truth would be big and bloody enough! (Giri grimaces)

Giri
OK, here's how…
(The two exit chattering excitedly about their story. Eric is left alone with the beef jerky machine. He looks at it a long moment, glances around cautiously, then hurriedly sticks his money in the machine. He takes the beef jerky and runs out of the room embarrassed to have it. Lights go down)

-Jenny Kokai