

SEAN RAMESWARAM (host): Welcome back to Today, Explained to Kids. This one's for the children. Adults, if you're around, break out the earmuffs. I'm gonna hand it off to producers Kiarra and Sara, who may just be heading back to our favorite island.

[KIDS THEME]

[knocking, door opens]

KIARRA: Sara? You there?

SARA: Hey Kiarra, come on in. [clanging] I'm almost done making this guacamole for Izii's party.

KIARRA: Ugh. Did you read the part about bringing a vegan snack?

SARA: Yeah, guacamole is all fruits and veggies, so it's totally vegan. Nothing comes from animals. What are you bringing?

KIARRA: Well, that's the thing. I wanted to bring my all time favorite, *signature* dish: my meat lover's nachos. I mean... they have *everything*. Goopy cheese... crispy chips... steak and sausage and *the world's best* sour cream.

SARA: Stop, I am drooling.

KIARRA: Well, I *have* to stop. Because it turns out that almost nothing about that is vegan. Not the cheese. Not the sausage. Not the steak. Not the *world's best* sour cream. They ALL come from animals. So what I'm left with is plain *chips*.

SARA: Ah. Well... what if we went to the Island of Explained again? Izii told me they actually have a whole vegan community out there? Maybe we could find a recipe.

KIARRA: That's not a bad idea! Do you know where the nearest portal is?

SARA: Sure— I actually set one up near my computer. It is way more fun than looking stuff up.

[laptop opens]

[sfx in ... we're going to the island]

[wind, the vibe is: tumbleweeds]

KIARRA: Wow. This farm is huge! Look at all those *crops*. And ... what is this... giant... tree?

SARA: Oh, it's a beanstalk actually.

KIARRA: Like the fairytale?

SARA: Yeah, exactly like the fairytale. And I think this is the plant-based farming community that Izii was talking about. They're at the base of this giant plant... so they're called Plant Base...

KIARRA: Very literal. Nice. So should we talk to someone?

SARA: Uh all the farmers look pretty busy. But Izii told me that if I ever came to visit, I should go up the beanstalk to talk to Beans.

KIARRA: Who... or what... is Beans? Are beans?

SARA: I don't know. I guess we'll find out.

KIARRA: Do we have to climb *all* the way up? That's a long way.

SARA: Nah...look...There's an elevator. [elevator ding]

[elevator swoosh]

KIARRA: This elevator moves *fast*.

SARA: Oh my gosh, my ears are popping.

[elevator dings]

KIARRA: Oh *wow*.

SARA: We're literally *in the clouds right now*.

KIARRA: Can I really walk on them?

SARA: I mean... I'm not falling through...

[THUNDERING FOOTSTEPS]

KIARRA: Oh my gosh, *what's* that.

BEANS: FEE FI FO FUM

KIARRA: Uhhhhhh... hello? We're looking for... Beans?

BEANS: YES, THAT'S ME. I'M BEANS. THIS IS MY STALK.

KIARRA: Ok! Well... hi! I'm Kiarra.

SARA: Hi Mr. Beans. I'm SARA.

BEANS: MR BEANS IS MY FATHER. JUST BEANS IS FINE. NICE TO EAT YOU, UM, I MEAN, MEET YOU. SORRY. FORCE OF HABIT. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

KIARRA: Well, someone told us you were a good person to ask about plant-based eating?

BEANS: OH! THAT'S MY ALL TIME FAVORITE SUBJECT! LET ME SIT DOWN SO I CAN SEE YOU BETTER.

[Trembling thunk]

DO YOU HAVE TIME TO HEAR A STORY?

KIARRA: Sure!

BEAN: GREAT. SETTLE IN AND GET COMFORTABLE. YOU COMFORTABLE?

SARA: It is like resting on clouds.

BEANS: GOOD. SO. MY STORY STARTS WHEN I WAS A TINY BABY GIANT– ONLY ABOUT THE SIZE OF TWO HOUSES STACKED ON TOP OF EACH OTHER. EVEN AT THAT PIPSQUEAK SIZE, I WAS EATING PEOPLE WHOLE... I LOVED THE TASTE OF PEOPLE.

KIARRA: ... feeling a little less comfortable now.

BEANS: I LOVED THEIR YUMMY LITTLE BONES AND ESPECIALLY THEIR FEET. FEET ARE THE MOST DELICIOUS PART OF A PERSON.

KIARRA: Ok, feeling a LOT less comfortable.

BEANS: I GOT VERY BIG AND VERY STRONG EATING LOTS OF HUMANS. BUT THEN, ONE DAY, AROUND THE TIME THAT I WAS THE SIZE OF AN APARTMENT BUILDING, A HUMAN NAMED JACK CLIMBED UP MY STALK. IT WAS RIGHT AFTER I'D JUST HAD A BIG MEAL, SO I WAS TOO FULL TO EAT HIM RIGHT AWAY. AND HE EXPLAINED THAT I WAS ACTUALLY MAKING A LOT OF PEOPLE VERY, VERY UNHAPPY. IT TURNS OUT THAT PEOPLE DON'T LIKE IT WHEN YOU EAT THEIR FEET– OR REALLY ANY PART OF THEM. IT WAS VERY SURPRISING.

KIARRA: Mmm yeah, shocking.

BEANS: EVERYTHING JACK SAID GOT ME THINKING. MAYBE I DIDN'T *HAVE* TO EAT HUMANS. MAYBE I COULD EAT OTHER ANIMALS, LIKE COWS AND GOATS AND CHICKENS. THAT MADE JACK VERY HAPPY– AND HE SAID THAT THE PEOPLE OF PLANT BASE WOULD RAISE SOME ANIMALS TO FEED ME.

SARA: That's nice of them?

BEANS: SO THAT WORKED FOR A BIT...BUT THEN I STARTED THINKING *AGAIN*– EVEN THOUGH THESE COWS AND GOATS AND PIGS CAN'T TALK LIKE JACK CAN... MAYBE THEY DON'T LIKE BEING EATEN *EITHER*.

I TOLD JACK HOW I FELT, AND WE AGREED IT WOULD BE BEST IF I STOPPED EATING ANIMALS.

Kiarra: So then what did you eat?

BEANS: PLANTS! SO, INSTEAD OF GROWING FOOD TO FEED ANIMALS, AND RAISING THOSE ANIMALS TO FEED *ME*, THE FARMERS BEGAN TO USE THEIR LAND IN A DIFFERENT WAY. THEY STARTED GROWING PLANTS TO FEED *DIRECTLY* TO ME.

Kiarra: And you can really survive on **just** plants?

BEANS: OH YES! THERE'S SO MANY DIFFERENT KINDS. CARROTS AND SPINACH, BLUEBERRIES AND PEARS, SWEET POTATOES AND BEETS, OATS AND LENTILS! MMMMMM. I'M GETTING HUNGRY JUST THINKING ABOUT IT.

AND THERE'S ANOTHER GOOD REASON I STOPPED EATING ANIMALS...THE BURPS AND FARTS.

SARA: Uh, excuse me? Burps and farts?

BEANS: YES, BURPS AND FARTS. YOU SEE, IT TURNS OUT THAT COWS BURP AND FART A LOT. AND THEIR BURPS AND FARTS CONTAIN METHANE, WHICH IS VERY BAD FOR THE PLANET– IT GOES INTO THE ATMOSPHERE AND TRAPS LOTS OF HEAT...MORE HEAT THAN WE CAN HANDLE, AND THAT CAN THROW THE BALANCE OF NATURE OUT OF WHACK.

SO BECAUSE THE PEOPLE OF PLANT BASE WERE RAISING SO MANY COWS TO FEED ME, THAT MEANT THAT ALLLLLLL THOSE COWS WERE WANDERING AROUND FOR YEARS, BURPING AND FARTING AND FARTING AND BURPING... WHICH WAS VERY BAD FOR THE ISLAND OF EXPLAINED.

KIARRA: Woah... so... hold on, you realized animals might not like being eaten, AND THEN you learned about the burps and farts...and you figured it would just be *easier* to eat plants?

BEANS: EXACTLY. IF I STOPPED EATING MEAT– OR DRINKING MILK, OR EATING CHEESE– IT WOULD MAKE THINGS A LOT EASIER FOR THE PLANET.

KIARRA: Huh...well I'm not a giant like you... but I do eat meat a lot. And I love milk and butter. Is that bad? Should I *stop*?

BEANS: YOU CAN STOP IF YOU WANT TO, BUT EVEN JUST EATING LESS MEAT OR FEWER DAIRY PRODUCTS CAN MAKE A ***GIANT*** DIFFERENCE. IF A LOT OF PEOPLE CHANGE WHAT THEY DO, IT ADDS UP.

KIARRA: Okay, got it. But now I kind of *want* to try eating more plant based food. I just... my main issue is that I *love* food with meat and dairy in it. Like my signature meat lover's nachos dish is *full* of both. And this is what I'm struggling with– I'm supposed to bring a vegan dish to my friend Izii's party... and I don't know how to replace this dish I love with something else.

BEANS: WELL, YOU SHOULD TALK TO THE BEST COOK I KNOW, WITCH...

[beat]

SARA: Uh, which what?

BEANS: NO, NO. HER NAME IS WITCH. SHE ALSO USED TO EAT PEOPLE– AND ESPECIALLY CHILDREN. BUT AFTER THE WHOLE SITUATION WITH HANSEL AND GRETEL, WE SAT HER DOWN AND SHOWED HER THE ERROR OF HER WAYS, AND NOW SHE'S TURNED HER GINGERBREAD HOUSE INTO A VEGAN KITCHEN AT THE VERY EDGE OF THE VILLAGE OF PLANT BASE. HERE– LET ME CARRY YOU DOWN THERE. HOP INTO MY HANDS.

KIARRA: I– uh...

SARA: Here goes nothing, I guess.

[thundering footsteps]

BEANS: FEE FI FO FUM / EATING PEOPLE'S REALLY DUMB / I USED TO GRIND THEIR BONES FOR BREAD / NOW I'M GRINDING WHEAT INSTEAD / FEE FI FO FUM / EATING PEOPLE'S REALLY DUMB... [fade out]

BREAK

[THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE]

KIARRA: Looks like we're at the gingerbread house. Should we knock?

SARA: I'm a little nervous.

KIARRA: Come on, this place looks great. Look at all the gumdrops and candied decorations. It's super friendly.

SARA: Yeah, that's what Hansel and Gretel thought, and then the witch literally tried to turn them into dinner.

[knocking]

[door opens]

WITCH: Hello?

KIARRA: Oh, hi. I'm Kiarra.

SARA: Sara.

WITCH: I'm Helen, but my friends call me Witch. Welcome to the Gingerbread House! How can I help you?

KIARRA: I'm trying to figure out a plant based dish I can bring to my friend's party tonight.

WITCH: Oh, then you've come to the perfect place! Come in, come in.

[They enter. Kitchen sounds. Laughter]

KIARRA: [whispering] See? LOTS of kids here.

SARA: [whispering] Maybe she's saving them as a snack for later.

WITCH: As you can see, this is our test kitchen! All the kids in the community come here to work on their favorite plant based and vegan recipes. Everyone, come here, tell our guests what your favorite dish is

my favorite dish that is vegan is popcorn.

spiced apples

garlic pita chips, um dipped in hummus

tacos with cauliflower

lemon grass curry with noodles

salads and fruits and apricots

breaded tofu sticks because, well, they're good. It's a great alternative to chicken. You can dip them in ketchup or the barbecue sauce. They taste a little bit like chicken, and you can make them yourself and they're really good with rice...and broccoli.

KIARRA: Wow, all these dishes look amazing.

WITCH: Did you want to make one and take it to your party?

KIARRA: I guess? I'm just... I'm sad because I have this one *signature* dish that I always bring. It's so good. Nachos with cheesy-cheese, sour cream, bits of steak and sausage...

WITCH: Hey, you could make a vegan version of your signature nachos.

KIARRA: We could do that?

WITCH: Sure. Let's see. Spibbidy-Spobbidy SPUD – [snap] We'll start with some chips. Same as you're used to. And a little...shazam seitan! [magical sfx] We call this 'wheat meat', it's made from gluten. We'll use this to replace the ground beef. Then...Meeska-Weezo, Soy Chorizo! [magical sfx] That takes care of the sausage bits. Aaand hmmm what else?

KIARRA: There's the cheese and the sour cream.

WITCH: Let's try this, abracadabra-cashew [sparkly sound design]...we'll blend those nuts up with a couple other things...and there's your vegan sour cream. Annnnd...let me just poke around in the fridge here...

KIARRA: What are you looking for?

WITCH: Ah, I knew I had a bag of vegan cheddar cheese. This kind is made with coconut oil, tofu and a few more ingredients. Let's give it a little zap to heat it up, make it nice and melty... [zap sfx] That should do it.

KIARRA: Wait a second, did you actually need magic to make any of that stuff appear?

WITCH: Nah, a lot of grocery stores have vegan substitutes now, but I just thought it'd be more entertaining this way.

SARA: It was.

WITCH: Well, give it a taste!

[sound design of chips crunching]

KIARRA: Mmmm wow! Tastes pretty similar to the original, that's incredible!

SARA: [more crunching] That's delicious!

WITCH: Well don't eat it all here, you said you needed this dish for a party right?

KIARRA: Good point! Sara, we should probably get going.

WITCH: There's a portal right outside underneath the red gumdrop.

KIARRA: Thanks for all your help!

[mux in ... we're going to Izii's party]

[sound design din of a party]

IZII: Hey you two finally made it, what took you so long?

KIARRA: Hi Izii, sorry, I had to get my vegan dish together!

SARA: My guacamole was already good to go.

IZII: What do you mean you *had to*?

KIARRA: Isn't this party fully vegan? I thought the invitation said to bring a vegan snack?

IZII: Oh no, I meant like if you *had* a vegan snack that would be great! But I just, I wanted to make sure there were vegan options available. But it wasn't, like, mandatory.

KIARRA: Ohhhhhh.

IZII: But I really appreciate the effort. I mean, I love to skip meat whenever I can, it's such a small thing I can do to help out the planet... Anyways, *both* of these dishes look great. Nachos and guac is a classic!

SARA: Totally!

IZII: Wait, you said this was vegan? I see sausage and cheese and stuff?

KIARRA: I'll explain everything...

CREDITS: This episode was produced by Kiarra Powell, Byrd Pinkerton, and Noam Hassenfeld. The team at Transmitter Media includes Shoshi Shmulovitz, Isabel Carter, Kiarra Powell, Daphne Chen, and Sara Nics. The team at Vox includes Noam Hassenfeld and Byrd Pinkerton. Our executive producers are Gretta Cohn and Katherine Wells. Meral Agish is our fact checker. Sophia Lanman sound designed and mixed the series. Beans was played by Don McDonald. Special thanks to Liv Peterson, Junia Spelman, Lennox Conkling, Vivian Palmer, Asher Garcés Lopman, and Alex Bent. "You can hear all of our episodes, and find related activities, at [vox.com/today-explained-to-kids](https://www.vox.com/today-explained-to-kids)