



# Our Hen House Podcast: Transcript for Episode 676, Interview with Camille Deangelis

**Jasmin Singer:** Welcome to Our Hen House, Camille.

**Camille Deangelis:** Thank you so much for having me, Jasmin, delighted to be here!

**Jasmin:** Well, we have so much to talk about, and I just want to start by saying congratulations. There's been such a tremendous amount of success coming your way, and I know that it's funny to me when people say, "Oh, they just made it, like they just broke through."

Not necessarily realizing the amount of work that goes into making it. Do you know what I mean? It's not like you woke up one day and just had success. You've been working really hard for a really long time.

**Camille:** Yeah. Something like 22 years, I've been writing for publication. Yeah. So I just feel lucky that no one has yet said to me. "Oh, so this was your debut novel? What's that like?!"

**Jasmin:** Right, totally.

Well, we do have a lot to talk about, but let's start out with your current incredible success with *Bones and All*. First, without too many spoilers, can you tell us about the book?

**Camille:** Well, my elevator pitch, which is not accurate at all...well, it's a little bit accurate...is that it's my teen cannibal road trip novel. It's a young adult novel and I conceived of it as a sort of inverted fairy tale with a sympathetic girl monster protagonist. And so they're not actually cannibals in the novel, but interestingly, the screenwriter, David Kajganich changed the rules of "eating" so that they are cannibals in the film.

**Jasmin:** Wow! I have so many questions. So first of all, have you always been interested in horror and how did you decide to go with horror in the YA genre?

**Camille:** I write Cozy Fantasy, but this is the book that has taken off. And people joke about my writing a sequel and I say, “Absolutely not.” And I don't know that I'll ever write another horror novel. I enjoy watching horror, I enjoy reading other people's horror novels. I will probably not write another one.

**Jasmin:** Okay, interesting. But what about YA? Will you write more YA?

**Camille:** Possibly. I am more interested in writing for a younger audience. Well, I'm working on an adult novel right now, it's my time-travel screwball comedy with a full cast of vegan characters, which I'm super excited about. But apart from that, I'm interested in writing for a middle grade audience. Which is, let's say, precocious eight year olds to 12 year olds. Eight to nine to 12.

So I have one middle grade novel, *The Boy from Tomorrow*, which came out in 2018, which I was writing alongside *Bones and All*, going back and forth. So *The Boy from Tomorrow* was my Cozy Fantasy project. And *Bones and All* was the novel that I got the idea and it wouldn't let go so I exorcised it.

But moving forward, once I'm done with the adult time travel screwball comedy, I want to get back to writing middle grade fiction.

**Jasmin:** So, did you ever get confused when you were writing both of them? Like, start to put horror in this like this Pollyanna type book? Like suddenly the character's eating someone?

**Camille:** No, that never happened. Although now I'm...what's the veganized version of easter eggs in a movie or a book? Where you have a little inside “wink wink, nudge nudge.” What's that called when you're vegan?

**Jasmin:** Oh, I see what you mean. Like finding the easter egg in it.

Yeah. I guess it's finding the Just egg.

**Camille:** Finding the Just egg! And so I did put a *Bones and All* joke in. It's kind of an ongoing *Bones* joke because there's this sort of specter of cannibal gangs, which is what I think of when I think of the future of America.

Sorry, we shouldn't go there. It's too depressing.

**Jasmin:** No, please! I just interviewed someone the other day and the bonus content, I said, “What gives you hope?” And she said, “You're going to need to give me a minute because nothing. Nothing gives me hope.” And she's like a brilliant scientist and I was like, “You know what? Let's talk about that.”

Because I think that actually validates things that a lot of our listeners feel so I think is an interesting thing to focus on the creative arts, to focus on fiction, especially if you know what's going on in the world. Like how do you blend those two things? Does it come out in your writing?

**Camille:** Yeah. I mean, inevitably it does. So, I was thinking about that because I knew you were going to ask me that question, too. And I also think I don't have an answer, but that is the answer. That I find hope in my creativity. I find hope in other people's creativity. Nothing gives me more joy.

On the one hand, it's me expressing my creativity to the fullest of my potential. And not too product oriented. I mean, I'm a professional, so I have to be product oriented, but to be primarily process oriented and then to watch other people doing what they do best, expressing their creativity to the fullest. That gives me hope.

And, drawing everything, pulling everything together and making connections and helping other folks hopefully start to make those connections to connect the dots, in terms of the way we see ourselves in relation to the non-human world, in our relationships to each other.

So yeah, I don't know if that's a satisfying answer, but that's all I've got for you.

**Jasmin:** Well, I have a related question. But first, let me quote you. In the acknowledgements section you say, “When people who know I'm vegan hear I've written a novel about cannibals (ghouls, really, but “cannibals” is easier), they think it's bizarre, hilarious, or both.”

Okay. So I'm wondering how much did your personal views play into the decision to write a story about “eaters,” as you call them?

**Camille:** Yeah. I wouldn't have written this book if I hadn't gone vegan. Which is kind of a terrifying...not the first part, the second part is a terrifying prospect.

I just, I love who I am now and I did not before, you know?

**Jasmin:** So how long have you been vegan?

**Camille:** 11 years. I was vegetarian for a long time before then, but it was like putting that off until I subconsciously put myself in a position where I willingly backed myself into a corner where the right person at the right time could come to me and say, “What is holding you back?”

And ask me to connect the dots because I was right...Like I just felt I had this moment of cosmic clarity, you know? And I felt this sense of kismet that I had asked this person to come to me at this time, which makes me wonder why couldn't I have had this conversation 10 years before that? But, you know, it is what it is.

**Jasmin:** So many people say that to me, like, “I just wish it had been sooner.” But the flip side of that is, “What if it was 20 years later?” You did get here.

**Camille:** Mmhmm, I did.

**Jasmin:** And I'm so glad you did. And I can't imagine a world where you're not vegan.

So I feel like you would've gone vegan even if you didn't have that person at that time. I think you were open because, as it shows in your writing, you bring a lot of empathy to the way you see the world, and you could see that through your characters.

So in the novel, each eater has a sort of type that they go after. Can you give us a glimpse into the thought process of creating Lee to be a sort of anti-hero?

**Camille:** Well, the core of his character, which is also true in the film, although it's not, I think it's not quite as sharp as it is in the novel.

All Lee wants in life is to set his sister up for a good life. And he wants her to be safe. He wants her to be free. So there's this preoccupation with having a car that runs and having the keys in your hand. Because, a car is agency, that's a pretty obvious symbol of a personal agency. And so that's his preoccupation throughout the book is that he teaches his sister how to drive and wants to get her a car so that she's free and she can live the life that she wants to live, and that's all he cares about. And so that was the...I don't know how much that has to do with like feeling a sense of protectiveness over my younger sister. Maybe, maybe not, maybe just a little bit.

But that was the core of his character...Am I answering your question?

**Jasmin:** Yeah, yeah! We're talking about what you're putting of yourself into (it), your own views. And I think it's interesting that even the way you're talking about it, I'll be curious if you listen to this interview. The way you're talking about it, you're floating between the story you've created and your story. I love tapping into that part of a novelist's brain because I find it fascinating.

We could talk about this offline, but I wrote my first YA book. It's not published yet, but my agent provided notes, so I'm in that process. I'd love to talk to you about it. But I felt like a crazy person and still, all I'm thinking about is this world that I built. But it feels so real that I'm like, am I civil? How do you deal with that?

**Camille:** Well, you've caught me in a weird place right now because I want to be living in the time travel screwball comedy universe a lot more so than I am because of the film. Because it's kind of tugging me back to like, "Please answer some questions for me," which I'm delighted to do, but I would rather be...because, you know, I wrote that novel a decade ago.

I'm not that person anymore. You know, I can do better now. And so it's ancient history for me, creatively speaking. So I wanna be in my work in progress, which I like to say that I'm completely obsessed with it, but lately, since I have finished the revision of the first section, and so it's with my agent now, so she's gathering her notes.

I am now kind of, because we're recording this in the run up to the holidays. And so I'm in frantic knitting mode. I love to make hand knit gifts. The downside of that is that sometimes you promise more than you can deliver by the 25th. So that and the movie stuff, and I'm also working on this *YouTube* series called "No Bones at All," which is my vegan lifestyle, cooking, travel, vlog thing. I just dropped the first batch of videos the day that the movie went wide, which was November 23rd. And so again, not answering your question, Jasmin.

**Jasmin:** No, actually, I do have a question. I do want to talk about your *YouTube* series as well, and I'm gonna get to that in a minute. But I have a few more questions about this book.

In the novel, each eater has this sort of type, as we mentioned, right? And so I wanna talk about Maren. Maren's uncontrollable urges help illustrate her very relatable struggle with loneliness and self-acceptance and, dare I say, feminism.

Was all of that fully intentional when you created her character?

**Camille:** I honestly can't remember. I wanna say no cuz I think so much of this work happens subliminally. And it's only been in the last couple years, like since the movie has been in active development that I really was able to like... Maybe I would say on an intellectual level, the novel is about self-loathing and it's about a lot of things, but it's only really been in the last couple years that I have really felt that and thought about different experiences in my teen years that I kind of drew upon in order to create her character, or develop her character.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, that makes sense. I mean, especially that it was so long ago, it must be weird because you have changed and now you see this and I would love to know a little bit more about how this turned into a film.

Can you tell us about that process?

**Camille:** Yeah, yeah, definitely. Whenever a film producer contacts your agent and says, "I would like to purchase the film option." You have to think, "Okay, this is never gonna happen!" Because that's realistic, you know? So for a bunch of years, I was just grateful to have that option renewal payment every 18 months, you know?

Because this has been in the works since the summer... The book came out March, 2015, and then Theresa Park, the producer who acquired the rights, she got in touch with us I think in June of 2015. And then Dave came on board the following year. So for up until January, 2021, I didn't think this was actually gonna happen even though Dave is a very well respected Hollywood screenwriter. Lots of successful Hollywood screenwriters have scripts that don't get made.

I've told this story a bunch of times now, so for anyone who's already watched the video on my *YouTube* channel, I apologize. You're catching my reruns. But I had this wonderful moment being in the Whole Foods checkout line with my niece, who was not quite two at the time, and I had Miyoko's cheese for her and some crackers, and she was like, "I wasn't my crackers! I want my cheese!" And I have like 1% battery life left on my phone. And then I get this text from my agent with a link to a *Deadline* article announcing that this project is happening.

**Jasmin:** Oh my God.

**Camille:** Because they forget to update me because they spend so long with tentatively good news. And so they're not gonna tell me when it's tentative. And even then, it was technically tentative.

**Jasmin:** Like, did you tell your two-year old niece, did you tell the checkout person?! Like, what did you do? I would've gotten on the loudspeaker!

**Camille:** Yeah. That was what was so wonderful about it, was that I didn't freak out. I was like, "oh, wow!" And at that point, I'd only ever seen Timothee Chalamet in *Ladybird* and so I didn't really know. I knew that he was an up and coming actor, but I didn't really know anything about him. And then I wasn't familiar with Luca's work or Taylor's work yet.

And so I was like, "Well, that's cool!" And then I was like, "Oh no, my battery's gonna die before I can scan my Whole Foods app to get my discount on the Miyoko's!" So it was such a wonderfully grounded moment for me and I was able to, because I've been doing loads of inner work, especially in the last I would say 10 years, to get to this point where you have that equanimity so if something great is happening, that's cool.

If something not good is happen, we'll write it out. It'll be cool, everything passes, which is something they tell us that we should remember at the good times as well, right? So that we fully appreciate them.

**Jasmin:** Wow. That's cool, Camille. I admire that. I am trying to do that work too, and it's not a linear path, I suppose, but I would like to know what it was like working with the screenwriter.

I have no idea what that process is like. Did you basically sell your soul? Like were you, like, "You do whatever you want," or was he able to kind of hold onto the integrity of it? Like how was it for you?

**Camille:** Yeah, when people ask me this I kind of have to offer the little asterisks there that, so I am told, this is not a typical experience because Dave has become one of my dearest friends.

He is, talking about integrity, he is so kind and so empathetic and so sincere. He is full of integrity. And so first of all, he said, "I don't know if I'm the right person for this. I see myself in this narrative, but that doesn't mean that I'm the right person to write this."

And so, it's a weird situation to be in where you're on this call with a producer and someone who might be the screenwriter whom the producer has selected. And it was funny because he had not met Theresa before. And so he got my novel out of the blue.



And she's like, "I think you're perfect for this project." And he's like, "How do you... What? Huh?" So we got on this call and he asked, "How do you feel about the prospect of two male filmmakers adapting your feminist novel?" And I said, "The most important thing is that you're asking me that question." And then my cynical voice inside is like, "Oh, I have no clout here. I have no clout."

And so I felt really lucky that I got paired... when I say paired, I mean we did no actual work together cuz my work was done. I have no interest in screenwriting because I would rather be working on the next novel. And also my philosophy is that when you're adapting a novel, your own work, I should say, your ideas about who the characters are, where they're going, where they've been, all of that, their relationships to each other. All of that is, at least for me, all of that is calcified in my imagination. Whereas, someone who appreciates the source material, who comes in and can think about new directions in translating to the screen, that's the person who is gonna do a better job than I can. So I've been very clear about that from the beginning, which of course made their job easier.

So I got on the phone with Dave, after we had the conversation about, "how do you feel about that?" And he thinks I'm gonna talk about feminism. And of course, it is a feminist novel. I mean, it's all tied together. But I said, "The only thing I care about, or my regret in publishing this novel is that the vegan subtext was entirely too subtle. And so that's all I'm looking for, I want you to make it more explicit. That's all I care about."

And he listened to me. He didn't have to listen to me, but he did. And I could not be happier with how the film turned out. To my mind, it is explicit. There is a scene that is set in a slaughterhouse. I don't know if you've had a chance to watch it yet.

**Jasmin:** No, not the film, but I do know about that scene and I was going to ask you about how the addition of that scene came about.

**Camille:** Yeah. Well, I wish I had written it. I had no input after that. We had a couple of conversations and then he was doing his thing and I was working on whatever novel I was working on at that point. And so then we circled back after the movie was in production and I'm wondering, "Wait, when is he gonna send me the script?"

And they were making plans for me to visit the set. I have a cameo, which is kind of a blink and you miss it kind of thing. But super glad I didn't get cut. That was fun.



**Jasmin:** That's so cool. Wait, where? When?

**Camille:** I'll tell you later.

**Jasmin:** Okay. That's so cool.

**Camille:** Yeah. And so he sent me the script like two days before I was coming and I stayed up late reading it and I was like, "Yes, he listened!" I mean, I knew he was gonna listen to me because I just knew, he is a really good apple. And so I was just completely elated and then had a wonderful, well mostly wonderful set visit.

The only thing that was not wonderful about it was that there was pork butt on the menu at the catering truck! What?

**Jasmin:** Wow.

**Camille:** That was distressing.

**Jasmin:** That is distressing. I always am like, when something like that happen, and I'm like, "Wow, everything is so aligned!" And then you see something like that, it's so jarring.

**Camille:** Yeah, and like people were eating pig's butt. Like, you are making a film about flesh eating.

**Jasmin:** Yeah. That's so weird.

**Camille:** It was so weird.

**Jasmin:** I remember once, you might appreciate this, I saw a production of *Little Shop of Horrors* and during intermission someone said, "I think I have to stop eating meat." Like I overheard them say, it was very funny.

So the film has been incredibly well received. It's gotten multiple nominations and awards from various film festivals. So incredible! Can you tell us about some of them?

**Camille:** Yeah. Well, the most exciting one was the first one, Venice, and Taylor, who's the star won. It was like the best young actor award. I know that's not technically what it's called, but I keep forgetting what it's called, which was really, really exciting because Dave had said to me several times, you were the

first link in this chain of creativity. And so it's very satisfying to get to see, like I said before, watching other people, not necessarily people I'm collaborating with, this was sort of a backwards collaboration, but getting to see someone else do their best creative work with my having given them a foundation to build upon is just, I have no words. It's just one of the most satisfying feelings that I've had as an artist and as a human.

So, and then Luca won best director. There was like a 10 minute standing ovation. I think somebody reported that it was only eight minutes, but the publicist, Bumble, she recorded it and she said it was 10 minutes and 40 seconds, which that was pretty gratifying. I was not expecting the film to be so well understood and so well received.

Even though Luca is a very highly regarded director with a very clear vision and a clear voice that many, many people have acknowledged and appreciated. I still wasn't expecting this to be quite as well received as it has been.

**Jasmin:** Yeah. Wow. I mean, why do you think it has been? Like, do you think this is the moment for something like that?

**Camille:** Honestly, I think some of it has to do with young people feeling really disconnected and lonely in the midst of the pandemic. And feeling left out, feeling isolated and the exhilaration of colliding with someone who can open their heart to you as well and say, “Me too. I also feel lonely and rejected and disconnected.”

That, I think, is why the film is resonating with so many people.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, I think that's true, and so when you look at the trajectory of when you started writing it to now, it kind of puts things in order. It makes them make sense. By the way, I should add here, because I will be murdered if I don't, that our Director of Operations, Vicki, read the book and wanted me to mention that she absolutely loved it and could not put it down. So there, I said that.

**Camille:** Thank you, Vicki.

**Jasmin:** So, we all hope that the success only continues for *Bones and All*.

Another of your books that I really wanna focus on is *A Bright, Clear Mind*.

Can you tell us what that book is and why you wrote it?

**Camille:** Yeah, so like I said, I've been doing this inner work for a long time. And when I say inner work, as an artist specifically, I mean... cuz we all start with the psychologist Eric Maisel talks about necessary arrogance. We need to start there. That's inevitable.

You know, if you think you have something worth saying, an image worth sharing, you have to begin with necessary arrogance, but you have to keep moving in order to feel fulfilled, no matter what is or isn't happening in your career. You need to make that transition at some point from seeking recognition to making a contribution.

And so I was working on that and then *Life Without Envy* came out of that. I'm getting to *Bright Clean...Life Without Envy: Ego Management for Creative People* came up in 2016 and as I was writing *Life Without Envy*, I kept thinking about writing a book, connecting ethical veganism and creativity.

And so I sort of conceived of it as my creativity quartet. I don't know if there will be four books, but there are only two as of right now. But I had wanted to write this book, probably since I went vegan, because I had this magical, it wasn't just the vegan epiphany, it was pushing through the last creative block that I have experienced, and it all happened at the same time.

So I wanted to share that. That epiphany, with as many people as were receptive to it because, unfortunately, a lot of folks aren't, and they are really, really committed, obsessed, with the double bacon cheeseburgers or whatever, and are not willing to think about what effect what they're putting into their body or who they're putting into their body (has).

**Jasmin:** Yeah, totally. And you make a compelling case for the connections between veganism and creativity, which I don't think is an obvious connection for most people, even for many vegans. So tell us a bit more about that.

**Camille:** Gosh, where do I begin? Yeah. I think to start super, super, super basic as creative individuals. We are, because everyone is, you know, I take a very holistic view of creativity. I believe we are creating our lives one decision at a time, and those decisions include how we choose to see or frame any given situation. And so when you are unconsciously choosing to consume "food" that is produced in a way that is violent and destructive, that is antithetical to who you are as a tenderhearted human, which is how we all start out.

And so I really think it is that basic, it is that fundamental. And, of course, then the response is, but it's unavoidable, "No ethical consumption under capitalism." And, "We can't get away from the way we treat..." Yeah, we can.

There's a whole spectrum of doing the most horrible things to animals and then people in the middle who still think it's okay to abuse them in some ways, but not others. And then, we've got people like us who are still trying to become more mindful and compassionate because they're folks who consider themselves vegan, who don't think about human labor. And the way that human animals are being exploited and abused in the whole food system, food production.

**Jasmin:** Let me quote you. You say, "Self-deception is the most powerful impediment to creativity." I love that line.

**Camille:** Still agree! Yes. Yes. I still agree with myself. \*both laugh\*

**Jasmin:** That's good. That's good. So that's just fascinating to me, especially when you think about the implications for the self-deception that most people embrace about animals.

So with that being said, who did you write this book for?

**Camille:** That is a question that, I feel like I had the answer initially, because everything I write, all the nonfiction, is for an earlier version of myself because I know that there are other people out there who are thinking the way that I used to think.

So that seems logical and the book, unfortunately, I don't think it's found the audience that I was hoping for. Because I'm always thinking and trying to draw seemingly disparate subjects together, I end up falling between the stools a little bit, because my books are so genre bending.

My fiction is genre bending, and then I'm trying to draw connections that seem bizarre to a lot of folks. I end up missing folks who are just like, "oh..." Well, let me tell you something, cuz this just reminded me. So this was June, 2020, I did a talk for a writer's group. And because I had so many extra copies of both *Bright Clean Mind* and...I used to be a travel writer in the before times...the third edition of my guidebook, *Moon Ireland*, had just come out.

Of course, nobody was going to be using it, and so I offered a copy of each book. We did a drawing or whatever and nobody wanted *A Bright Clean Mind*. There were two winners, and they both chose to get a free copy of a guidebook to a place that they would not be able to visit for at least a year over creative transformation through veganism.

“Transformation?! No, thank you!” Like, “I don't wanna give up my bacon cheeseburger.”

**Jasmin:** Yeah, I'm dealing with something similar. I mean, it's not exactly the same, but I have two books published and hopefully more very soon. But one is a memoir and one is like a vegan manifesto. And if I'm talking to any non-vegan and I too have a lot of copies of the memoir. And if I offer either, people take the memoir.

I get it on some level, but it's sort of like you don't get more straightforward about how to go vegan than *Fabulous Vegan*. The chapters are super short. There's these little sidebars for people who don't even want to read the super short chapters. There's recipes that, lucky for you, I did not write those. And the memoir, which like you're saying, I wrote that in 2014. It came out in 2016, and I want to put all of these caveats at the beginning, like, “This was me then, this was like a moment in time and it's memorialized in this book, but I'm very, very different now in all the ways.”

And I find it fascinating that you're talking about how you've changed, even as it relates to the way your fiction represents you. So going back to the inner work and like unleashing your creativity. What is it like when you read some of your earlier work? Are you feeling like, “Oh, that person was stifled, in a particular way?”

Or are you sort of appreciating the former Camille?

**Camille:** I mean, I try not to revisit. I guess I've swung too hard the other way where I see it all, like anything I've written more than three or four years ago feels like juvenilia, and I'm embarrassed of it. So I have a dear friend, Henry LeeAnn, who is an ethical vegan, and wonderful writer of speculative fiction, who I got to meet in person in LA when I was there for *The American Film Institute Film Festival*, was that last month? I don't know what day it is. But anyway, so Henry was like, “Oh, I wanna listen to another one of your novels. Which ones should I listen to?”

But he had already read *The Boy From Tomorrow*, which is a book that I'm not ashamed of yet. And honestly, I was like, "I don't know, Henry, I'm kind of nervous to recommend either of the other books that are available on audiobook because I wrote them such a long time ago."

And we're all just so much more aware now of racism and internalized misogyny and classism and all of these things that...I mean, my early work is so heteronormative and I don't know that I will ever go back and re-read any of those books. I didn't go back and re-read *Bones and All*. I mean, I dipped back into it and I was like, "Hey, this isn't so bad." I know that sounds like I'm being hard on myself, but I think that having that attitude hopefully will have me producing better quality fiction in the present. I hope.

**Jasmin:** Yeah. I'm sure that that's true because your books are just like a part of you and it is difficult to have people meet a former part of you. So going back to *A Bright, Clean Mind*, you have said ethical veganism may very well provide a philosophical framework that prevents your emotional pain from eclipsing the world around you.

That is a substantial claim. Can you expand on it a bit?

**Camille:** I didn't really understand how my life was so much bigger than me. My life, my choices, is so much bigger than me. I didn't understand that until after I went vegan, and that is a very personal statement when I wrote it. I was not familiar with the concept of emotional dysregulation, and there's just a lot of mental health stuff we don't have time for. But yeah, it's funny to hear you quote me because I wrote that in 2018 and I started dating a therapist after I finished drafting that book and he would watch me have a reaction, that I would be triggered by something and eventually he said, "I think that what you're experiencing is emotional dysregulation."

And it was a similar, it wasn't as powerful as the vegan epiphany, cuz I really did feel like there were light bulbs popping above my head when I had that pivotal conversation but there was at least one light bulb, though probably a few light bulbs, because I had never had the words for my overreactions before, and so it's funny to hear, to be revisiting that.

But I guess without getting too far into the weeds here, I would kind of lose my sense of myself as a participant in whatever social situation I was in, and I would melt down. And I was still doing that after I went vegan, but I had the sense that this behavior was destructive. Like no matter how I had developed this behavior, I did have a responsibility to improve my emotional hygiene,

which I've been able to do, but I think it would've taken me a lot longer if I hadn't reconfigured my sense of myself in relation to the rest of the world, including the non-human world.

So, again, not sure how well I've answered your question.

**Jasmin:** No, I think you are answering it beautifully. Thank you. In fact, I really appreciate kind of letting us into your process about how working on yourself translates into the actual work that you're putting into the world, the tangible work you're putting into the world.

Okay, I have a question for you that is a bit of a trick question because there is no answer. But, so this is just like, I wanna know your gut reaction. How do you account for the fact that there are people who do extraordinary things and live very good lives except for the fact that they aren't vegan?

**Camille:** Yeah. I think about that a lot. It just makes me wonder what they would be capable of if they did consider animal lives, animal suffering, animal pain and pleasure, et cetera. Because we always think about, say like, “Leonard Da Vinci was a vegetarian and he was one of the most creative and innovative, free thinking individuals who ever existed!”

And then somebody else can say, “What about Michelangelo? Michelangelo wasn't a vegetarian.”

Well, who knows what Michelangelo could have done? And I know it's like, how can you do better than Michelangelo? I don't know. But that's what I always come back with. Not that I've been asked this question that many times, but in my own head when I'm thinking about it. I'm like, it would be interesting to see what that person would do, how their art would change, evolve, you know, if they did.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, I think that's cool. I like that a lot.

So while you make the point that veganism is a huge contributor to creativity for you, sometimes of course vegans get stuck, vegans get depressed, et cetera. How do you find that balance between the enormous benefits of veganism, while not encouraging people to think it's a cure all for everything?

**Camille:** Yeah, that is a tough one. I, myself, I try to zoom in and look at the next useful thing I can do. There is a time and a place for thinking about the big picture, of course, but I think when we are feeling discouraged and



overwhelmed by the state of the world, I think it's the most helpful thing to zoom in. And sometimes zooming in is just like, "what's for dinner? How can I nourish my body so that I can get back to work?" Maybe joyful isn't possible that day. You know, there's work to be done, sometimes that's just the next right action. The next best action. The next kind action.

**Jasmin:** Oh, there's a lot here. I always find it such a unique and powerful experience to talk to artists, because I love to kind of get into their minds a little bit. So before you mentioned your video series, can you tell us a little bit more about that?

**Camille:** Well, I figured this would be the perfect time to talk about why I wrote the novel, why the novel exists.

And you know, of course most people are not interested, and I'm trying to limit my time on social media because folks are going on and on and on and on about the film, what the film is about, and what the novel is about. And they're, as far as I can see, they're just ignoring the whole point. The whole reason the novel exists, I do say this already, but I like the way that I formulated this. Whether you are cannibal or a law-abiding omnivore, you are consuming the flesh of a person who did not want to die.

And I say person purposefully because I believe that pigs are people too. Cows are people too. Chickens are people too. Whether or not a human acknowledges them as such.

**Jasmin:** Mm-hmm, we call all of our animals here in my house people, we assign personhood to them.

But even saying that we assign personhood to them is actually hierarchical. Like who am I to assign something to someone else? But yeah.

Okay. I have a random question for you. How do you feel about fan fiction? Like would you like to have people write fan fiction about your book? Is that already happening?

People who can't see Camille right now, because I get to see you while I'm interviewing, there's a wince happening.

**Camille:** Yeah. I would prefer that folks come up with their own stories. But you do need to start somewhere. I've never written fanfiction myself but I can understand how someone could be so enthusiastic about a particular world, and

I do appreciate the impulse to want to continue building out that world, even if it's in a way that like only you are ever going to get to experience.

But eventually I would like to see a writer like this moving on to developing their own narratives.

**Jasmin:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, that makes sense. I was talking to Mariann about that question before and we were like, “How is she gonna react to the fan fiction question?” Because I can imagine people have very strong opinions about it, and it's sort of new to me, honestly, even the concept of fan fiction, I just haven't been paying attention apparently and it's like a really big deal.

Is there a place in fanfiction for animal advocacy or vegan advocacy?

**Camille:** Well, you just reminded me that, having said that I'm kind of iffy on fanfiction that I actually have conceived of the time travel story as just one in a collection of narratives that all have this time travel bureau, but they're minor characters in my novel who will become protagonists in future novels.

And you could look at that and say, “Well this is just professionals writing fanfiction because you'd have to love my novel in order to care enough to want to take another character and run with them over 300 plus pages.”

And the time travel bureau has a canteen, all the food is vegan. And I think if someone wanted to write animal rights oriented fanfiction, I would be all on board. I think that the real reason that I winced is that I think fandom is only healthy to a point and I am a little bit concerned about folks developing parasocial relationships that are hindering their growth in real life and in the present moment with real people they actually know. Which might sound kind of cranky, or joking about being middle-aged, that definitely makes me feel middle-aged when I'm saying this. But yeah, though my elderly millennialism is showing, I think I'm technically a Gen Xer, but I was born at the very end of 1980.

**Jasmin:** So that's fascinating because I was born at the end of 79 and I very strongly identify as Gen X. But yeah, I think you are Gen X. Well, you're a Xillineal.

**Camille:** Yeah, I'm straddling, I don't feel like I'm either one.

**Jasmin:** But have you heard of Xellinial before? You have to look it up.

**Camille:** Okay. I will.

**Jasmin:** It's an actual thing. And it's for people who were born, don't quote me on this, but it's for people who were born like '77 to like '81 ish. And it's a microgeneration. And when I look at it, I'm like, "oh yeah, totally." Except I identify as Gen X probably because I'm just curmudgeonly like that. And I think I'm more curmudgeonly than millennials are. But anyway, look it up and you'll get back to me. I want to know your thoughts.

Okay. So I know that part of your process was Victoria Moran's Main Street Vegan program, which obviously I'm a huge fan of as an instructor there for many years, since it began.

And I love Victoria. I know you do too. Can you tell us about the role that this played in your life and what it was like to be part of this program?

**Camille:** Oh my gosh. I will never forget how fired up I felt, again, with things lighting up in my brain, feeling exhilarated on the cusp of a new way of living.

So it was soon after I went vegan, I went to the New York VegFest and I heard Victoria speak and she was only just organizing Main Street Vegan Academy. And you know, it was like with the full body tingles and the rightness and the yes-ness and I was like, "I'm gonna do that program. It is gonna be amazing."

And it is definitely one of the best decisions I ever made because not only are you learning about every aspect of ethical veganism and how to relay what you know in a way that is sympathetic and approachable and you're not turning anyone off with overly strident tactics, which have their time and place, I think.

But in the context of someone who may have gotten a health diagnosis that they are looking for dietary alternatives. Maybe they're not turned on to the animal rights piece and the environmental piece just yet. Tailoring your approach to each individual you speak to, that was very much a prominent part of the program. That is something that I don't know that you necessarily think to do if you're just on your own and haven't really found your group of vegan friends you can compare notes with. Which is the other wonderful thing, is that you have all of these Insta friends and I'm still in touch with a lot of the folks I met back in 2013 and then when I came back in 2018 to do the master certification.

Yeah. I just cannot recommend that program highly enough for anyone who is listening who has been thinking about doing it, do it!

**Jasmin:** Yeah, I would agree with that. Totally.

Well, Camille, this has been really eye-opening, in a lot of ways, and I'd love to keep you on for a little bit of bonus material.

But before we do that, can you tell our listeners how they can follow your work, how they can support your efforts, all the things?

**Camille:** Yeah, so I'm at cometparty.com. Which is a metaphor for living your brightest, sparkliest, most joyful life. And I'm also @cometparty on Instagram and Twitter, but I am, like I said, trying not to be on there too much. I don't wanna fill my head with, with other people's opinions. And I do have a newsletter, but it takes me so long to put something together and send it out that probably Instagram is the best.

**Jasmin:** Okay, got it. Yeah. Well, I can't thank you enough for joining us on Our Hen House and also, just once again, let me reiterate my congratulations.

It is very exciting to talk to you. It's very exciting to watch your success as a part of the vegan community, it's really cool to see this going on, and I hope you're very, very proud of yourself because we're all very proud of you.

**Camille:** Oh, thank you, Jasmin. Thank you so much for having me.