

## A SHORT STORY BY JESSICA THOMSON



# FOR BREAKFAST

It was a rainy morning in January, and Greg was making breakfast. Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, he stared blearily into the white glare of his kitchen fridge. Jam, a cucumber, steak, and apples stared back. Nothing inspired him. His stomach rumbled in protest as he slammed the fridge shut.

Grumpily filling up the kettle, he dipped his finger into the jar of Marmite sat next to the toaster and stuck it into his mouth, bareback, like a madman. He plopped a teabag into a mug as the kettle boiled, muttering to nobody in particular "Why is all food so bloody boring these days. Can't wait until 2080 when they have ostrich egg omelettes or whateve-"

Before he could finish his sentence, a wormhole opened up around him and he dropped like a stone into the void.

Greg slammed into the ground backwards as if someone had kicked the back of his knees. "What the fuck was that" he said, stumbling to his feet and looking around his kitchen for the culprit. But he wasn't in his kitchen at all.

He was stood in an entirely green room, with every wall covered in fuzzy, damp moss. The floor was no different from his lawn, with grass and daisies poking up between his bare toes. The kitchen counter was a great tangle of vines that had seemingly been moulded into a breakfast island, and where the oven had previously stood in the corner of the room was a bubbling cauldron of lilac and magenta plasma. There were two huge windows in the wall shaped like figures of eight, through which he could see that the sky was burnt terracotta. The air smelled distinctly like burning rubber. His eyes started to sting.

"What's HAPPENING?!" said Greg, backing away from the overwhelming sight of this strange room he had been somehow

dropped into, bumping blindly into a cold hard metal surface behind him. Whipping around, he let out a yelp and then a laugh as he saw it. The fridge! It was the only part of the room that was recognisable. On the front of the shiny chrome door was a holographic chart, which as Greg peered closer at it revealed to be a calendar. The day marked TODAY was January 12 2080, and it was apparently 35°C outside. Greg blinked.

He was in the future. In a kitchen.

"Bloody hell, they weren't joking about global warming, were they?" he said, looking out the window. To a Brit, good weather in the endless winter months is far more shocking than finding you've been launched 60 years into the future through a wormhole.

His stomach rumbled again. Regretting his dismissal of breakfast before he found himself in the wrong decade, he gripped the handle of the fridge door and pulled. The door swung open, and his mouth dropped as the bright pink light inside lit up his face.

"Welcome to your Golden Gate Fridge!" came the voice, smooth and robotic, vaguely feminine. "I am Maytre Dee, your personal culinary and healthcare assistant!"

"Uhhh...alright, love" said Greg, not really listening as he squinted into the strange collection of food inside.

"Pardon me, that's not very polite!" snapped the fridge. Greg jumped.

"You can understand me?"

"Loud and clear, asshole."

"S-sorry, I guess. I'm not really used to my fridge having a full conversation with me. Nice to meet you?" he stammered.

*"That's more like it."* The fridge made a noise that vaguely resembled a throat being cleared. *"Now, what would you like to eat?"*

Greg reached into the fridge, poking a cloudy pink jelly-like cube wrapped in a green leaf.

"Um, what's this?"

*"Well, since cows went extinct a few years back, we've started growing all our meat in labs!"* Maytre Dee chirpily replied. *"Eating real meat is considered quite barbaric these days. This one is a genetic combination between beef, lamb and duck, for maximum moistness! I'm surprised you haven't heard of it. Have you been hiding under a rock for the last decade?"*

"Something like that."

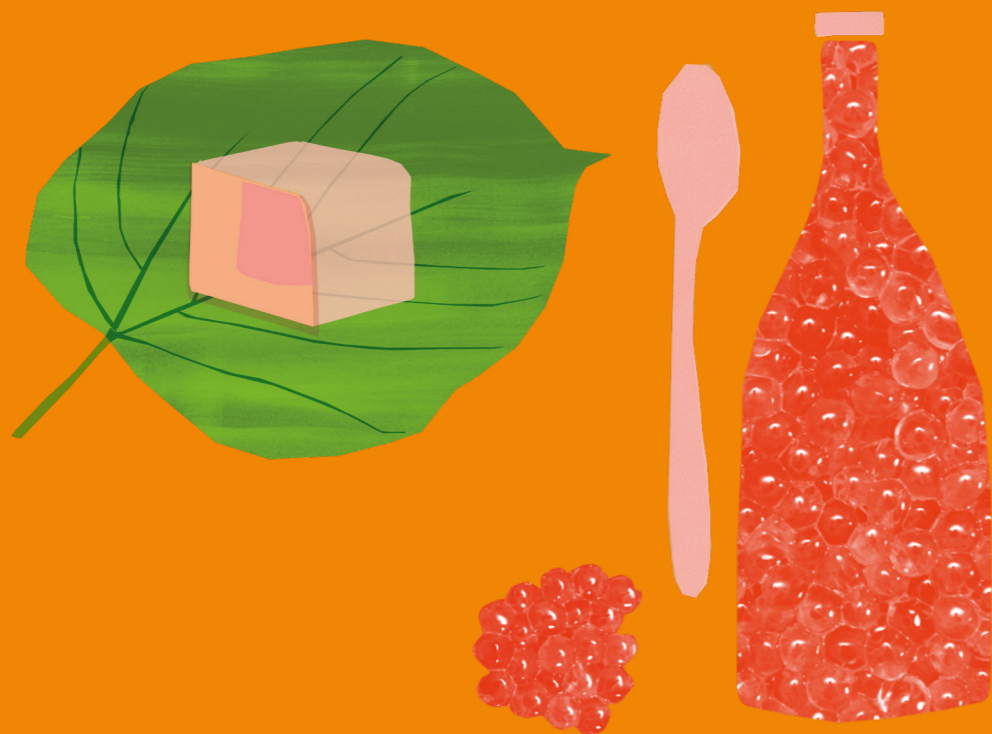
Greg's eyes scanned the rest of the fridge's contents. There was a jar full of gherkins

mixed with what looked like locusts, a bowl containing some strange apple-sized purple spheres, and a bottle full of –

hang on –

*"Yes, that's caviar!"* chimed Maytre Dee in her metallic Midatlantic accent. *"There was a supply and demand problem with sturgeon in the 2050s when the increased water temperatures caused a huge surge in the population size. People eat caviar like jam these days! Apparently, it tastes like fish guts nowadays. I wouldn't know, I don't have my taste bud upgrade yet."*

"Blimey, I knew those toffs were full of it," said Greg gleefully. He opened the bottle and took a pinch, popping the little spheres under his tongue. Maytre Dee was right. He spat it out. He grabbed what he thought was a banana from a shelf filled with a variety of other colourful fruit. "You know you're not supposed to keep bananas in the fridge, right?"



Maytre Dee laughed, which sounded a bit like the noise Greg's present-day fridge made when he left the door open too long. *"No, silly! The Cavendish bananas all died out from a fungal epidemic, since they were all clones of the same plant. These are a new strain, but you have to keep them in the fridge since they're hybridised with kale."*

"Why kale of all things?"

*"To increase the levels of antioxidants! You squishy little humans need as much help as you can get to not get cancer. Can't so much as get the hydrobus to the shop without bumping into a carcinogen these days. You poor things."* Maytre Dee sounded more amused than sympathetic.

"Right. Okay." Greg shook his head. The future wasn't sounding quite as utopian as he had hoped.

*"Have you chosen what you want to eat yet?"* said Maytre Dee, getting impatient. *"You're letting all my cold air out – it's not getting any easier to stay cool lately."*

Greg stared at the cornucopia of alien foods in disgust.

Toast was easy enough, right?

"You got any Nutella?"

*"I'm afraid they went out of business after we ran out of palm trees to make palm oil from. Anyway, chocolate is far too expensive! Special occasions only. I have some sunflower seed butter on the top shelf though."*

"I'll pass. You know what, I'll stick with Marmite. You still have that, right?!"

*"Of course! Be careful though, some people have reported side-effects of random wormholes opening up when they eat it."*

She chuckled. *"That's normally only linked to food containing a high concentration of neutrinos!"*

Greg grinned as the fridge burred on about neutrino anomalies and the North England Empire's changing food regulations. He turned around, looking at the lush green kitchen, bathed in red light pouring in through the windows from the rust-coloured midday sky. A rocket was flying overhead, spraying a deluge of some blue substance into the clouds. He wanted to go home. "See you in a few years, I guess. Thanks for all the advice," he said to the fridge, grabbing the jar of Marmite from the door shelf and plunging his finger into the tar-like contents.

*"What do you mea-"*

The wormhole opened again, and Greg braced for impact.

He sat up, woozy, on the kitchen floor. *His* kitchen floor. "Oh thank god," he gasped, crawling towards the fridge. It had stopped raining outside, and the fresh blue winter sky was smiling in at him through the skylight. He took a huge breath of fresh air, savouring the smell of basil and rosemary from the plants on his countertop, and the freezing cold draught coming through the gaps in his single glazed windows.

He made himself a crumpet, without Marmite, and sat down trembling at his kitchen table.

"Guess I should go vegan then".