

“Don’t eat before the trial,” Microsoft Home Fridge snapped. “You’ll fall asleep.”

Rainbow the parrot squawked at the audacity. “I am an authority! Open up!”

“Pssh, you think I don’t have access to the court records? You’re just a witness, and besides, I’m the boss around here. The judges have been purchasing too many snacks so I’ve blocked their credit cards and cracked down on security. The judges have been alerted of attempted theft.”

The alarms sounded. Rainbow kicked the fridge with his tiny talons and yelped at the impact. “Last time I testified here, snacks were available!” he complained when judges arrived.

“You’re telling us! It’s been blocking us out for weeks now! Half the food has spoiled, and we can’t do anything to get rid of the stench!”

Lasers covered the doorways. “Judges have failed to dispose of the witness,” Microsoft Home Fridge announced. “Calling the police.”

“Ugh, it stinks! Let’s get out of here now,” said Lily, and boarded one of the Nostril Safety Evacuation paper planes that were folded specifically for these scenarios. Everyone flew between the lasers and up the stairs to where the police were getting ready to move out, in gas masks.

*TOO MUCH MOVEMENT DETECTED*, boomed the voice of Microsoft Home. The stairs shook and officers bounced onto the walls, which twisted and turned until they were restricted from the inside of their own home. *SYSTEM HAS CRASHED. REBOOTING*. The door opened and a metal claw came out of the ceiling to push them all through. The door closed the moment they hit the porch. President Rosie walked up from the fake bush she landed in to ring the doorbell. *UPDATING. ERROR. REBOOTING AGAIN*.

Councillor Moose had been putting off checking the mailbox after seeing the new mail notification, but now it seemed he would not be able to for another day or two. Sure enough, the mailbox was locked, refusing to accept his request for facial recognition. However, there was a hole in the mailbox from the last time they were thrown out, when Moose had been holding a ladle.

An envelope fell out, with the stamp of the Microsoft logo. Moose thanked the stars there was no five-factor authentication as he opened it.

*Dear customers,*

*Prepare yourselves for the big update of Microsoft Home next week. You will not have access to your home during reboots and maintenance for 2-5 hours. In your search of a place to go, you will be aided by Microsoft Auto, which you have a whole week to purchase. If you struggle to open your Microsoft Bank account, please contact support and we will work with you to resolve the issue.*

*Leading up to the update, you may experience behavior from your Microsoft Home Fridge that appears to be malfunction, but is actually mini-updates.*

On the back of the page was a blueprint of death. That was the only way Moose would describe the decisive, rigid markings dividing the new weapon functions of the house and fridge, and some mysterious new circle in the basement.

On the porch and in Moose’s pocket, several phones started speaking at once. “Microsoft Envelope has received touch input. Was this you? Confirm or deny.” The pop-ups and voices persisted until everyone clicked confirm on their individual phones. The phones continued. “Additional information: In your basements we have finished installing a new teleportation pad that will bring the latest hardware updates straight to your home without your participation. Please leave a 5-star review for us on Microsoft App Store.”

When maintenance was over, Councillor Moose and President Rosie went down to the basement, leaving Councillor Turtleik in charge of the upper floors in case the new updates became a hazard. No one knew what awaited them at the teleportation pad; they left Councillor Lily at the basement door to ward off any curious residents.

When they reached the lower stair steps, they heard an ominous crackling before they saw a tall teleportation pad topped by a starry void of blues, blacks, and purples. Moose flipped on a flashlight. Suspended in the middle of the void was a dusty tome with torn, yellowed pages.

"If Microsoft really sent us an instruction manual, then why is it dusty?" Moose questioned, tiptoeing around the unwelcome technology.

"It must be malware from hackers," Rosie reasoned, dragging a chair to the tall cylinder. After climbing onto it, she exclaimed, "It's a Microsoft Home Cookbook!"

Rosie and Moose used a giant pair of tweezers they had made from two broken-down Microsoft Home Claws to pick up the dubious item, which had a Microsoft logo on the spine and cover and was titled simply *Microsoft Home Cookbook*. "We got mail advertising this maybe a month ago," Moose remembered. "How are there already copies collecting dust?"

"Must be that good," said Rosie. "I'll report this to Microsoft, but until they've gotten back to us about whether this transfer was a bug or a feature, I wouldn't touch it."

Weeks went by, with many calls and emails to different departments in Microsoft, until they finally got a response from one of the experts they had been referred to by other experts.

*Dear Customer,*

*We are currently unaware of the source of the glitch. Other customers have reported similar incidents. Your cookbook appears to be the same one missing from the home of another customer, so we have already arranged for your Microsoft Home and Microsoft Mailbox to return it. Thank you for your patience. We hope you will continue to use Microsoft products.*

Meanwhile, the trial resumed on the first floor. "Rainbow, what is your testimony?" asked Judge Pepper, who was a small snail sitting on a coffee table.

"It's Dr. Rainbow!" the parrot protested.

"Fine, Dr. Rainbow, what is your testimony?"

"I was reading a thick book on philosophy," Rainbow began. "What was it called? Oh yes, *Parrots of a Feather Flock Together*. You really should read it sometime, it's—" his lecturing of the judge was cut short by loud beeping from Microsoft Home Fridge. *RAINBOW HAS EXCEEDED HIS SNACK LIMIT*. Even his beak turned red. "It's a bad product!" he sputtered, getting to the point. "The only time it ever gave me ice was when it froze! I brought my students to excavate the icicles at the site, and for once the fridge was too unresponsive to complain!" Rainbow had been fired from his teaching job at Munlandia Academy years ago, and the students he was referring to had declined his request.

"Is that all?" Pepper asked.

*MICROSOFT ALL-IN-ONE SKATEBOARD, DRONE, AND SPINNING TOP ON SALE NOW. BEEEP.* The fridge went silent again, a camouflaged cougar waiting for the right moment.

Pepper turned to the lawyer representing the Microsoft products. The penguin was on a lonely podium on the opposite side of the bookshelf from Pepper that was actively losing surrounding audience members to re-seating. "Evan, what is your counterargument?"

Evan cleared his beak. "It is merely an issue of Dr. Rainbow not adapting to the times. The youth have been exercising the virtues of flexibility and patience by converting the site to an ice-skating rink. It has been great for business— I mean, joy and prosperity. Especially for underrepresented species in Munlandia." His flipper flipped up the testimony-complete checkmark cardboard on his podium.

"Milk and Latte, what is your testimony?" Pepper asked the bankers on the witness bookshelf, like they couldn't have different testimonies. "Be concise. This apocalypse fridge may soon render us unable to speak."

*BEEEEEP. TOP 20 DYSTOPIAN POST-APOCALYPTIC SCI-FI RECOMMENDATIONS BY MICROSOFT. NUMBER 20: BAGUETTE'S DINNER. NUMBER 19: BAGUETTE'S DINER. 18: MICROSOFT WAREHOUSE, 17: SUPER FRENCH FRY AND THE METEORITE MUSHROOM, 16: BAGUETTE'S BAKING. 15: BAGUETTE TAIL.*

Shouting over the rest of the list, which had too many honorable mentions, Latte relayed the poor financial status of their bank, reading off a scroll of losses caused by Microsoft Home Fridge and the Home system in general. Milk finished with, "This value is no longer in circulation in the Munlandian market. Many of our assets have been damaged or presumed stolen. We even had to close our cafe, and

we're not the only ones who did! Now that nasty fridge has the food monopoly!" Milk flipped up the checkmark.

"Evan, what is your counterargument?" Pepper repeated.

"These businesses have an agenda. The citizens will eat, no matter the changes in the economic ecosystem. But what they do not notice is that with these cafes around driving up the prices, they are not the top of the food chain. Meanwhile, you go to Microsoft Home Fridge and the food is free, with just a few minor inconveniences." Evan lowered his vigorously-gesturing flippers to the checkmark. Puddles the cat was too tall for the witness bookshelf, so he stole Evan's podium. "Puddles, what is your testimony?" Judge Pepper asked.

Puddles yawned and said, "I woke up in the afternoon and went down to get my breakfast, where the kitchen was all frozen over. My eyes were half-closed and I was still waking up. I didn't notice and slipped, slid, and crashed into the fridge. An icicle broke off and hit me on the head. My fur got wet and Baguette called me a puddle again." He nudged the checkmark and waddled to the nearest couch to resume his sleep, since it was only 1PM.

Microsoft Home Couch sensed the pattern of surface area covered and dimmed the room's lights. "That won't do," said Pepper. "I need to see the witnesses' and lawyer's faces. Where's the flashlight?"

Spotlights flickered on from the top of the shelf, at the witnesses, judge, and lawyer. Pepper recognized the paws of audience members Fuzzy, Fluffy, and Blueberry. Pepper felt cool. *Is Shellu watching?* She had been too focused to remember to look for her sister in the crowd, some of which was sitting on the stairs across the room. Now the audience couldn't even see each other. It was like a theater.

"Evan, what is your counterargument?" Pepper projected her voice imposingly, finding the best angle to stand at.

"Icicles are not a credible safety hazard to stuffed animals," said Evan dismissively, his shaking flippers moving the checkmark hastily. Pepper's round plastic eyes stayed still, judging.

"All testimonies have been heard," Pepper announced. "It is time for me to consider the charges. Anyone else may venture into the tundra for food if they wish."

>kaya is a doll so fridge is charged with discrimination

>fridge charged with monopoly and split in two (fridge and freezer), with microsoft component removed

>contempt of court for interruptions

>the company itself simply faces import sanctions from Rosie/the council: a ban on all Microsoft products

>scott hacked dreamworld to make this happen, with some false memories as in a dream