

The Professor Nutkins Chronicles

1. Three Lemons

By David Silver

As usual on a Thursday afternoon I went to visit my inventor friend Professor Nutkins. He was hopping with excitement. "This time I've excelled myself" he said.

He took me to a refrigerator-sized box bearing an array of buttons, dials and flashing lights and emanating weird noises. A small seat was attached and on the right was a handle. "It's just a fruit machine!" I exclaimed. "Oh no, not just any fruit machine" he said. "Go on, try it".

Humouring him I sat down and pulled the handle. There was a crack of electricity and as the professor started to fade away I heard him cackle "It's a time machine and three lemons gets you home!" Buildings began to appear and disappear around me and I realised with dismay that he had indeed excelled himself.

Oh, there were many 'fruitless' attempts to return home. A pineapple, plum and cherry took me to 1856, a Cox's apple and two bananas transported me to 2130 and an orange, a bunch of grapes and a pear caused me to materialise in 1066. But finally two melons and a pomegranate took me to 2709.

There was not a human being in sight in this quiet and delightfully fragrant world. But three strange ovate beings approached me. They had dimpled yellow skin and moved with a rolling gait.

They explained how mankind's meddling had eventually gone too far and after the Great GM Catastrophe of 2580 the only life forms to survive were members of the citrus family, with lemons having become the super intelligent dominant species.

They quickly took stock of my situation, made some adjustments to the machine, told me to pull the handle and ... I grimly went to find the Professor and give him a slice of my mind.

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