



Off the Shelf

I have spent the past couple of weeks over in Vancouver in Canada; it was family reunion time again. This kind of meeting always generates more story ideas than I can possibly use, so perhaps ('perhaps' ... hah!) the next couple of weeks we'll dip into that theme.

But actually, the first story I have to tell you about this trip has nothing to do with my family - it's all about my refrigerator! I had a few days free before leaving for Canada, so took the opportunity to do some long-neglected house-cleaning, and among the waiting jobs was that of cleaning the fridge. I'm not going to tell you how long it has been since I last did that job, but it was long overdue.

Now please relax - this isn't going to be a story about disgusting mold-covered left-overs found at the back of the shelves. Because I really don't do much cooking - aside from simple baking of muffins and cookies - but usually eat prepared dishes from the market, I never have a lot of left-overs. And honestly speaking, the fridge itself wasn't filthy by any means, simply it needed a good once-over and an airing out.

So I used up all the perishable food over the preceding few days, then unplugged it and started to strip it down for cleaning. I took out the shelves and washed them in the sink, and when I then started to wash inside the fridge itself, discovered that many of the other attachments were also removable. One by one, I pulled off this piece and that: a little shelf here, a little door there ... there were dozens of them. I then found that the bottom floor of the main compartment was removable, as were all the bins in the lower drawers. Everywhere I looked, the parts easily came off for cleaning.

After a half-hour or so had passed, the nearby table-top was completely covered in various plastic parts, all freshly washed, and the carcass of the fridge stood open and bare, and was easily washed and wiped. It felt wonderful to have everything in such nice new condition!

Because I was leaving for Canada the next morning, there was absolutely no need to plug it back in, so I decided to leave everything just as it was; giving the motor a two-week rest wouldn't hurt at all, and the subsequent electricity bill would of course be much lower.

Off I went.

I'm sure you can imagine how the rest of this story is going to go. Yes, I returned home late one evening, and headed straight for bed, tired after the long journey. But the next morning, one of the first jobs that faced me was putting the fridge back together again.

I tell you, this should be an Olympic event: I can easily imagine teams of competitors, each surrounded with a mound of strangely-shaped pieces of plastic, struggling not only to figure out which piece goes where, but which pieces have to go in first, in order that the rest will fit properly. Do you think that putting a fridge back together is easy? Try waiting *two weeks* between taking it apart and putting it back together. That's a whole different story!

At one point, I almost gave up and started hunting for the manual, but it seems that this was tossed out many years ago. I did eventually get it all back together, but I'm not going to tell you how long it took me. And I do have to admit that - yes - there is still one little white plastic piece left behind; I have not the slightest idea where it belongs.

A couple of years ago, Sadako replaced her fridge with a new model, one with multiple doors and multiple drawers - far more complicated than my own. But she should understand right now, if she wants help taking it apart for cleaning one day, I'm going to arrange to be out of town!

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