

Wow In The World - A Fantastic Plastic Feast **By Thomas van Kalken**

<<we're in a busy supermarket>> <<ding dang dong of intercom coming to life>>

Intercom: Welcome to Healthway - your local neighbourhood all-natural eco-conscious food pantry. Remember, a sustainable future is just a mouthful away <<ding dang dong>>

Guy: Okay, let me just check my shopping list here ... <<paper sfx>> Quinoa, check ... kale, check ... tomatoes, check ... aaaaaand ...

Mindy: Marshmallows! <<Mindy throws several bags of marshmallows into the shopping cart>>

Guy: Mindy!

Mindy: What?

Guy: I thought we were supposed to be making a salad tonight?

Mindy: We are? Don't worry, these are green marshmallows ...

Guy: What kind of salad has marshmallows in it?

Mindy: Uhhhh, a good one?

Guy: Put them back.

Mindy: Ughhh, fine. But I'm keeping the maple syrup. <<mindy collects the bags of marshmallows and heads off>>

Guy: Okay ... let's see, where was I ... ah, yes; tomatoes ... check ... that's that looks like it's everything. Now where to pay ... ah, this check out line doesn't seem to long <<guy walks off>>

Fingerling: <<fading in>> Okee doke ... there's your receipt and have a healthy day!

<<customer walks off>>

Guy: Thomas Fingerling?

Fingerling: oh hey there mister razzzy.

Guy: What are you doing here?

Fingerling: what do you mean? I work here.

Guy: you work at the health-way grocery store

Fingerling: sure.

Guy: Why?

Fingerling: well, nobody else could seem to manage g-force.

G-force: I'm back from my bathroom break ...<<toots>> excuse me.

Guy: g-force you work here too?

G-force: no ... I just take the money. That'll be 75 dollars.

Fingerling: you should probably just give her the money ... you don't wanna see her get angry.

G-force: I'm already angry.

Guy: <<confused>> uh huh

Mindy: <<walking back in>> okay, I put the marshmallows back guy raz but I really think we should get these double choc fudge brownies for the ... <<noticing>> thomas fingering?

Fingerling: what?

Mindy: Grandma g-force! Hugs.

G-force: no.

Mindy: What are you two doing here?

Guy: They work here.

Fingerling: we work here.

Mindy: you do?

Guy: Apparently.

G-force: I just take the money.

Fingerling: she's just being modest. She's the fastest grocery bagger this side of the wherever we are.

G-force: whatever.

Fingerling: speaking of which. You need a reusable bag for all these vegetables, guy razy?

Mindy: oh no, that's alright ... I brought my own bags ... they're here somewhere <<mindy rummages around in her pocket and then pulls out a handful of plastic bags>> ah there we go.

<<the room goes entirely quiet>> <<a beat>>

Random: are those... p ... p ... plastic ... baaaaaaags!

Fingerling: uh oh.

<<the room bursts into chaos>> <<people run left and right, screaming as they run>>

Mindy: uuuuuuuuh what just happened?

Guy: Mindy! This is an all-natural eco-conscious food pantry ...

Mindy: Really? I thought it was a supermarket?

Guy: they take their environmental issues very seriously here ... and plastic bags? They're a big no no ...

Mindy: But guy raz! These plastic bags are different!

Guy: How?

Mindy: well ...

Random: there she is! There's the lady that hates the environment! Get her!

Fingerling: you two better get outta here ...

Guy: come on mindy! Let's get out of here!

Mindy: You don't have to tell me twice! Run run run run run ..

<<mindy ang guy make a dash for the door>> <<food flies around them>>

Mindy: watch out guy raz! They're throwing tomatoes at us!

Guy: I can see that mindy!

Mindy:<<while running>> you know for a bunch of environmentally conscious consumers they don't seem to really care about food wastage.

<<bing bong of store doors opening>>

Intercom: thank you for shopping at healthway - eat better ... because you are better, and you know it!

<<the automatic doors close behind them>> <<the world goes quiet again>>

Mindy: phew ... that was a close one.

Guy: Well I guess that's what we get for forgetting our reusable bags!

Mindy: well, if the people in there had actually given me a second to explain myself they'd learn that these plastic bags <<waves bags around>> aren't actually all too bad for the environment.

Guy: What do you mean?

Mindy: I'll tell you about it on the way home ... come on - let's ambulate and pontificate.

Guy: What?

Mindy: walk and talk

Guy: ah

Mindy: You see guy raz, these bags are bio-degradable.

Guy: bio-degradable ... you mean they breakdown in nature

Mindy: yeah, just like a banana peel or compost or an apple core.

Guy: the bag breaks down just like that?

Mindy: Yeah, they're based on these plastic bags that they developed at Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology. Oof. That was a mouthful!

Guy: You mean JAMSTEC?

Mindy: yeah that's much easier to say. I was excited to try out these new bio-degradable bags they developed ... I didn't realise people would freak out so much.

Guy: uh huh ... so, how long does it take for these bags to fully disintegrate?

Mindy: Well, this research found that the bags lost 80% of their mass in just over a year.

Guy: huh ... that's super fast considering that normal plastic bags can take tens, hundreds, or even a thousand years to fully break down.

Mindy: I know!

Guy: So how does it all work?

Mindy: Well, guy raz... I could tell you....

Guy: yessssss ...

Mindy: But I'd rather show you. Look, we made it back to my gingerbread mansion.

Guy: oh yeah

Mindy: <<deep inhale>> I freshly baked the front door this morning ... follow me guy raz ... heeeee-yah ... <<gingerbread door collapses>> come on in ...

<<mindy and guy transition into her living room>> <<we hear sloshing from the massive tank in the middle of the room>>

Guy: what in the ...

Mindy: What?

Guy: Mindy, why is there a giant tank of water in the middle of your living room?

Mindy: for science guy raz

Guy: for science? You needed a bus-sized tank of water in your living room for science?

Mindy: yeah, you wanted to know how these bio-degradable bags worked so we're gonna run a little science experiment ... just like they did at jamstec ...

Gr: a science experiment about plastic bags....In this aquarium?

Mindy: Yeah! Part of developing these biodegradable plastic bags, mean that the researchers and to observe how they broke down in sea water. How these bags get broken down in sea water ...

Gr: Okay...

Mindy: And we're gonna do the same!

Guy: Wait ... this is seawater?

Mindy: Yup, Reggie and I brought this sea water home from our trip to the beach last week. I was going to use it to cook the potatoes for our salad tonight.

Guy: So let me just see if I understand the experiment and our method here mindy ...

Mindy: Okay...

Guy: we're going to take some of your plastic bags ...

Mindy: uh huh ...

Guy: put them in this giant tank of sea water ...

Mindy: yeah

Guy: and then observe them as they breakdown over time

Mindy: you know it! Let me just climb up this ladder here ... <<exertion>> okay ...now gotta pull the bags out of my pocket <<loose change falls out>>And drop them...in the sea water. Dropping in bags ... <<bags are dropped in water>>

Guy: But mindy, didn't you say that it takes just over a year for these plastic bags to break down?

Mindy: uh huh

Guy: So we're just gonna stand around here for a year?

Mindy: yes of course we're not going to stand around here for a year guy raz ... that's what the wow machine is for?

Guy: wow machine? Where are we going?

Mindy: in here! <<splashes the water>>

Guy: in the seawater tank?

Mindy: yup, we're gonna get up close and personal guy raz to see just how this plastic bag breaks down in the ocean ... follow me - wow machine's in the garage.

<<mindy and guy walk towards the garage>>

Mindy: walk walk walk walk ... oooooopening the door ... <<door opens>> <<heavy metal music plays through a speaker>> <<speaking over music>> sorry ... Reggie's been making a couple of tweaks to the wow machine. Hey Reggie! <<yelling louder>> Reggie!!

Reg: coo coo! <<speaker is turned off>>

Mindy: the wow machine ready yet?

Reg: coo!

Mindy: That's good enough for me. Come on guy raz.

Guy: <<nervous>> okay ...

Reg: coo coo ...

Mindy: yeah, we'll be back in like 13 minutes ... you can reinstall the temporal stabilizer when we get back.

Reg: coo!

Mindy: It'll be fine. Stop worrying! <<exertion as mindy unlocks the hatch door>> come on, hop on in guy raz ...

<<mindy and guy hop in the wow machine>> <<mindy closes the hatch>>

Mindy: <<deep inhale>> ah! Smells like home. Alright, strap in guy raz ... it's time to shrinkify!

Guy: shrinkify?

Mindy: <<while calibrating buttons>> yeah ... in order to see how this bag gets broken down we have to shrink down to the microscopic level.

Guy: if you say so mindy.

Mindy: <<pushes final button>> I do say so. All strapped in?

Guy: there's nothing to strap in with mindy!

Mindy: oh yeah, I forgot I asked Reggie to replace the candy straps ... <<a beat>> welp! Hold onto something ... because here ... we ... gooooooo!

<<guy and mindy travel through time and space>>

<<the atmosphere changes>> <<we hear muted bubbles>> <<it sounds like we're underwater in a submarine>>

Mindy: alright ... let's see if we made it shall we?

Guy: alright.

Mindy: open the blinds mr. Raz!

Guy: opening the blinds <<wizzing up of blinds>> woah ...

Mindy: oh yeah

Guy: where are we mindy ?

Mindy: We're in my giant living room sea water aquarium!

Guy: And that giant jellyfish looking wall in front of us ...

Mindy: That's our plastic bag ...

Guy: woah, we really are small ...

Mindy: yup we're on the microscopic scale now buddy ... you could fit about 5 million wow machines on the head of a needle at this size.

Guy: And so when does this plastic bag start to break down mindy?

Mindy: in a couple of months ... let me just see if I can speed us up a bit with a little bit of good ol fashion time travel ... Now where did I put that fast-forward button ... <<mindy starts rummaging around>> ah! Found it ... alright ... Here we go! <<mindy presses the fast forward button>> <<sounds like we're scrubbing through an audio track>> okay ... we should be coming up on 3 months now ...

<<swoosh - suddenly something very large swims past the wow machine>> <<the whole thing shakes>>

Guy and mindy: <<falling over>> woooooaaahh!

Guy: ughh, what was that mindy ...

Mindy: weeeeelllll ...

<<jaws like duh-duh plays>>

Guy: What's that sound?

Mindy: It's the wow machine's proximity alarm! Something's approaching us!

<<jaws theme gets faster and faster>>

Mindy: here it comes!

Guy: I have a bad feeling about this!

<<the jaws theme climaxes>> <<something large swims into view. Sounds like a large whale>>

Guy: woooooaaaahhhh ... what in the ...

Mindy: guy raz ... behold the bag eating microbe ...

Guy: a microbe? You mean those microscopic teeny tiny little creatures that live on and inside our bodies?

Mindy: yeah, but they don't just live on our bodies guy raz ... they also live out in nature ... They're like nature's invisible workers; some live in the soil where they break down dead plants and animals, turning them into nutrients that help new things grow. In the ocean, some microbes make oxygen for us to breath ...

Guy: and these ocean microbes?

Mindy: They're the reason why these bags are able to be broken down.

Guy: because they break down this biodegradable plastic in the same way that other microbes break down other tough materials.

Mindy: Exactoritos ...these scientists from jamstec knew that there are microbes out there that eat oil ... wood ... even some metals ... so they thought; if they can eat up those things ... maybe they could add this newly developed biodegradable plastic to the menu too!

Guy: So these microbes just eat up the plastic bags?

Mindy: Well, sort off ... keep watching and you'll find out.

Guy: look mindy, that microbe is heading straight for the bag ...

Mindy: oh yeah ... wait for it ... wait for it ... waaaaaaaait for iiiiiit ...

<<big chomp sfx>> <<chewing>>

Guy: uhhhhhh ...

Mindy: hungry little buddy huh?

Guy: uh, is that microbe eating that plastic bag?

Mindy; yuh-huh ... that's how the plastic bag is able to lose 80% or most of its of its mass in just a little over a year ...

Gr: Look! Here comes another one ... <<distant chomping and chewing sfx>>

Mindy: ooh! These microbes sure are hungry today!

Guy: you know mindy they actually look kind of cute!

Mindy: yeah, some of the most adorable micro-organisms I've ever seen.

Guy: But mindy, where does all that plastic go exactly after it gets eaten by these microbes?

Mindy: weeeeeellll ...

<<distant farting sfx>> <<fart bubbles>>

Mindy: Does that answer your question?

Guy: uuuuuh, did that microbe just ...

Mindy: fart out that plastic bag? Yeah, yeah it did.

<<more distant farting starts up as more microbes join>>

Guy: Uggghhh ... gross mindy!

Mindy: it's not gross guy raz, it's science! These microbes are taking the plastic bag ... digesting it and then converting it into chemicals like carbon dioxide and water!

<<more farting and chomping from outside>>

Mindy: <<yelling out to them>> great job buddies. Keep up the good work!

<<distant toot>> <<another couple of swooshes rock the wow machine as more microbes arrive to eat up the bag>> <<chomping and farting intensify>>

Mindy: woah ... we better get outta here guy raz ... before this becomes a feeding frenzy!

Guy: good idea mindy ...

Mindy: strap in!

Guy: again ... mindy ... There are no straps.

Mindy: oh yeah ... well then hold onto something.

<<mindy and guy travel back through space and time>>

Reg: coo!

<<the wow machine pops back into the garage accompanied by a large slosh of water>> <<the hatch opens up and mindy and guy step out>>

Mindy: see Reggie! I told you it would be fine.

Reggie: <<shaking off water>> <<annoyed>> cooooo ...

Mindy: Sorry about the water.

Reggie: Coo ... <<door opens and closes as reggie leaves>>

Mindy: <<calling out>> hey reggie! Where you going? <<to guy>> gosh, I hope he's not mad at me.

Guy: So mindy, what does this new technology mean for the future of plastic bags?

Mindy: Well, single use plastic or plastic that you use once and throw away, is still a big problem for our planet.

Guy: particularly in the ocean.

Mindy: right ... have you heard of the great pacific garbage patch?

Guy: yeah, it's a huge area in the ocean where ocean currents trap plastic and other trash.

Mindy: right, it's super big too ... like twice the size of texas big.

Guy: and super dangerous because animals mistake the plastic for food or get tangled in it, and the garbage never really goes away.

Mindy: yeah, but if more of that trash was made out of the same sort of plastic these plastic bags are made up of.

Guy: then a lot of them would break down in just over a year ...

Mindy: and pose less of a threat to the environment and sea-life.

Guy: So how far away are we from replacing our everyday plastic with this bio-degradable stuff?

Mindy: well ... I mean, we're a long way for now ... I mean, there's a lot of plastic in the world! But it's a good first step.

Guy: You gotta start somewhere!

<<the door bursts back open again>>

Mindy: Reggie? You came back!

Reg: cool!

<<a mop is thrown on the floor>>

Mindy: well guy ... looks like we're on mopping duty.

Guy: Oh brother.

Mindy: Come on, if we get started now we can still get out to the all natural eco-conscious food pantry to get those ingredients for tonight's salad ...

Guy: alright fine ... hand me that mop ...

Mindy: That's the spirit!

Guy: But maybe we should bring a couple of my reusable tote bags this time ... just to be safe.

<<slopping sfx as guy and mindy start to mop up>>

Reg: coo coo!

<<THE END>>