

A REFRIGERATOR STORY

-Snehit Sah

"What kind of a refrigerator do you have?" Ever been asked such a question? People do ask whether you have an iPhone, whether chickens love KFC or the number of fathers Bill Harmsen had. But the refrigerator thing – nobody asks that. At least my school guys didn't ask me that before admission.

So, one day, when I was talking to a cousin over a video call and he saw my refrigerator and asked, "Bro, what kind of refrigerator do you have?", I had no answer.

"Umm...A white refrigerator", I said.

"It's so small, and it doesn't even have a screen."

I didn't want this conversation to move forward, so I took the wrong way out.

"I can't hear you, man. I guess the network is playing pranks on me...", I said and hung up.

My refrigerator. A small white refrigerator which doesn't have much white left on it. But I never thought it was old. It hasn't even required a single repair in its more than a decade of operation, so it was natural of me to think that it wasn't old.

I went for a walk that day. Special thing, because I rarely step out of the house. I don't know the way around the locality and Google Maps is not supported on my pre – Mughal era dumb-phone.

Strolling around what looked like a government school, I met a friend of mine. He looked quite happy, and his XXL smile made me feel nervous.

"Hey Snehit, what's up! Do you know what my father promised me today?", he started out.

"Of course not. I have no interest in tapping into your father's phone."

"Then I'll tell you. He promised that he'd give me a car if I get into an IIT!"

"You're expecting me to be excited?"

"Bhai, can't you understand? A car. A car of my own. To use it anytime on want."

"Petrol sells at double the milk prices."

"Oh...can't you show some excitement? I'll give you a ride when I get my car. That'll make you happy. Meanwhile, I'm going to raid the bookstore. I'll get all the JEE guides. Ha Ha Ha!"

"Good luck"

He looked really happy. Why? Because he could get a car that year. Should I be happy? What was I getting? A refrigerator? Yes! I could get a refrigerator.

A dumb idea had finally popped into my mind. I could ask my father for a refrigerator when I get into IIT. A refrigerator. A refrigerator of my own. To use it anytime I wanted...

I went home and logged into my Amazon account. Searched for "smart refrigerator".

The products I saw looked straight out of a science fiction movie. Compared to them, my refrigerator really looked like a caveman's icebox.

Refrigerators with intelli-sense (whatever that means), a temperature indicator, bad smell remover, a peep-inside window and some of them even had a 10-inch touchscreen with Alexa built in. I obviously didn't know what the heck these features did. So, I troubled Google.

Re-search results:

These refrigerators can decide the right temperature for the foodstuff that is inside it and cool accordingly. Some other type of refrigerator automatically kept an account of what food items are inside it and let you access the data through the phone. You'll even get a notification if you're running low on some items. Cool!

Then I finally came to these refrigerators with screens. Turned out that these do nothing more than telling the time, the weather outside your home and inside the refrigerator and all the useless things that your dumb smartphone has been letting you do all these years. There was even a demonstration video. "Suppose you've cracked the eggs. But you don't know how to make an omelette. All you've to do is to say - ('scream' was a more appropriate description for what he did) - "Hey Google, tell me how to cook an egg.", and there you have it!"

Of course, the instructor had to kick the refrigerator and shout a few words that had to be muted. Then, the refrigerator showed something about Easter eggs.

There was even a list of 'other use cases' -

- Watch what the astronauts at ISS are eating
- Listen to Nicki Minaj while searching for carrots
- Use amazon.com to order a brand-new refrigerator if you aren't satisfied

I wasn't on board with any of these uses. So, I went back to being content with my old refrigerator. What do these scientists think? That I don't know how to cook an omelette?

Then one fine morning, I opened the refrigerator door and felt more pumped up than Ranveer Singh from the Close-Up advertisement. The first thing that popped into my mind was 'bakery' and I noticed that the vanilla extract bottle had developed a small crack near the base. The liquid was leaking, very slowly - not more than a couple of drops could escape the bottle per day. That small amount of vanilla extract imparted a sweet, bakery like fragrance to the insides of the refrigerator.

And that was enough!

I would find reasons to roam around the refrigerator. Would sometimes open the door and take a whiff. If there had been a CCTV in my house, then you could have seen me dancing in the most absurd ways near the refrigerator. (I'm not a good dancer, you know)

I no longer wanted a new refrigerator. My old caveman-icebox was better than anything else in the market.

Nothing lasts forever. And I realized that 'forever' lasts no longer than a week. My mother bought lots of spinach from the weekly market and stocked it up in the fridge.

I must admit that those tasteless leaves have real iron. The refrigerator started smelling like an old rusted bus, and even going near it made me feel like throwing up. The smell also reminded me of one of the features I saw on amazon. (bad smell remover, remember?)

So, I finally did not get a new refrigerator. And I've developed some great levels of hate for my icebox.

In other news, I've started watching omelette recipes on YouTube. And I swear, they are no less interesting than the crazy features these modern refrigerators come with.

Disclaimer: This work is a piece of fiction.

(okay, I do have the caveman's icebox; that was the inspiration.)