

FUTURE HOPE'S

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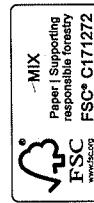
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We have a responsibility to help those communities who are suffering from the changes in our ecosystems, and it's especially important to listen to them and ask what they need. We must work to protect our planet not just for our own benefit, but to help protect people around the globe. Remember, there is always going to be someone somewhere, whose life will be improved by every effort we make.

FOOD OF THE FUTURE

by M. G. Leonard

"I've got exciting news, children."

I looked at Borneo Brown, who was sitting next to me, and rolled my eyes. Borneo grinned. We were sitting in our first assembly after the Easter holidays, watching Mr Burke, our headmaster, stride about waving his hands enthusiastically. Borneo lives next door to me and, for the longest time, we were deadly enemies, but that's another story. We're best friends now. And we both know that Mr Burke's idea of "exciting" is not the same as ours.

Mr Burke smoothed down his slick grey hair and cleared his throat for dramatic effect. His bulging, watery eyes were magnified by his thick glasses as he surveyed the hall. "This term, our school, along with every school in the borough, is taking part in an important project. It's called Food of the Future!" He paused, as if he expected us to cheer or clap. No one did. "You will be learning about the food you eat, how it is made and where it comes from."

So far, so boring. Although, I did like the idea of eating food in class. There is never enough time at lunch break to eat all of your meal. Mrs Crumble, our dinner lady, says it's 'cause I spend too much time talking and not enough time eating, but it's a fact that if you eat too quickly you can get a tummy ache. I have tried to explain to her that chatting whilst you eat is good for you, but she doesn't agree.

"As part of the project, you will get into pairs and create" – Mr Burke raised his arms, his fingers splayed wide – "your food of the future!"

I glanced at my teacher, Miss Webb, who looked as if she were trying to work out a complicated puzzle, such as how she was meant to teach a class of ten year olds maths, writing, reading, religious studies, PE, and all the other things, as well as do a project about food.

"In two weeks," Mr Burke went on, "there will be a special festival where you will bring in your food of the future for a grand tasting." He patted his stomach. "A panel of judges, made up of me and your teachers, will taste your wonderful dishes."

Miss Webb frowned. I could tell she didn't like this idea. "You'll get marks for sustainability and innovation as well as deliciousness, and" – he paused dramatically – "there will be a grand prize for the best food of the future!" He smacked his lips.

We were all listening now.

"Imagine if it's an extra week of summer holiday," I whispered to Borneo. "They'd never give us that," Borneo said out of the side

of his mouth. "It's probably something lame."

"The best sustainable dish in the school will win tickets to see our local Albion Football Club play Chester United in the League Cup final," Mr Burke announced. "Albion are interested in healthy and sustainable food and we're very excited that they are sponsoring the competition."

There was a shocked silence followed by a hiss of astonished gasps.

Borneo and I stared at each other with wide eyes. We were supporters of Albion FC. In fact, we were their biggest fans. Until now, we had only ever *dreamed* of seeing a cup final!

"That is not all!" Mr Burke said, looking delighted by the sudden current of excitement zapping around the hall. "Every school in the borough will then enter their winning dish into the overall Food of the Future competition, which will be judged by our esteemed councillors. The most delicious and sustainable entry will win a family season ticket for Albion FC and a chance to meet the team."

Mrs Lemon, our head of year and a total suck-up, burst into applause. A second later we all joined in. Bubbles of excited chatter popped all over the hall.

"Borneo," I hissed. My mind was whirring at a hundred miles an hour. I felt like my tangle of curls was standing on end. "We *have* to win this."

The determined look on Borneo's face mirrored my own. "We *need* that prize."

"We deserve it," I agreed.

* * *

"What does *sustainable* mean exactly, Miss Webb?" I asked as soon as we got back to our classroom.

"Sustainable food is food that doesn't use up the resources that people in the future might need," she explained.

"What kind of resources?" Borneo asked.

"Well, like ... water. Nearly all foods need water. The less water a food needs, the more sustainable it is."

"What food doesn't need water?" Nicki Fletcher piped up.

A spark of anger fizzed in my chest. Nicki Fletcher is smart and mean. When she wins prizes — which she does all the time — she shows off and loves to rub it in everyone's face, particularly mine.

"Mushrooms," Miss Webb replied after a moment's thought. "Mushrooms are a good example of a sustainable food. They don't need much water, or land, to grow." "Mushrooms!" Borneo growled in disgust. "I hate mushrooms. They look like slugs and taste like mud." He pulled a face. "How are we supposed to make mushrooms delicious enough to win Albion FC season tickets?"

"I don't know, but if we have to, we will. We're going to win this competition. We're Albion FC's biggest fans!"

"You? Win!" Nicki laughed, loud and fake. "That's the funniest joke I've ever heard."

"Why is that funny?" I spun round in my seat.

"Have you even cooked before?" Nicki lifted an eyebrow. "And I'm not talking about mud pies."

"I haven't cooked," I admitted, "but I've eaten. I know what tastes delicious. And anyway, Borneo and I are going to be a team. He is a *brilliant* chef."

"I'm not a chef!" Borneo whispered.

I kicked his ankle under the desk to make him be quiet. "We *will* win those tickets. You'll see."

"You'll have to beat me and Helen," Nicki said, turning and smiling at the timid girl who sat beside her. "We bake all the time, don't we, Helen? Helen's got her Girl Guides' badge for cooking."

Helen looked anxiously at Nicki and nodded.

"But you don't even like football!" Borneo protested.

"I like winning," Nicki smirked.

"How about we let you win in exchange for the prize?" I suggested.

"Nice try," Nicki sneered. "I'm going to win those tickets. Beating you will make the victory even sweeter."

My blood was boiling. Nicki was so spiteful. Before I knew it, I was on my feet, lurching forwards. Borneo grabbed my school jumper and yanked me back into my seat.

"Leave it," he hissed. "You'll get into trouble again."

Nicki stuck out her tongue then turned her back to me.

"We're going to win," I said in a whisper. "Just you wait and see."

"What food are we going to make for the competition?"

Borneo asked as we walked home from school.

We'd had a double lesson on sustainable food that afternoon. It turns out, it's quite hard to make food without using up lots of resources. For example, Miss Webb said you need two hundred square metres of land just to make one

kilogram of beef. You need less land for pork—about a quarter of what you need for beef—but it's still a lot. Chicken needs less than pork, but it still needs some. And you have to count the land you use to grow the crops to feed the animals. Plus, you've got to think about the water those crops need and the water the animals drink. All the numbers made my head dizzy. I had no idea making meat took so much maths!

"I think we need to make something vegetarian. Meat doesn't seem to be very sustainable," I told Borneo. "What can you cook, with no meat, that is delicious?"

"I can bake cakes," Borneo replied. "I make flapjacks with my dad sometimes."

"What ingredients are in flapjacks?"

"Butter, oats, syrup, eggs, dates and raisins; that kind of thing."

"We need to find out if those things are sustainable."

"Miss Webb gave us that sheet of questions to answer." Borneo rummaged around in his bag and pulled out a crumpled piece of paper. "Here. The questions are: Where do the ingredients come from? Are they organic? How much water and land do they require to produce? How much nutrition do they provide? How much protein?"

"Are flapjacks nutritious?" I wondered. I knew they were delicious, but that is not the same thing.

"I don't think so," Borneo replied. "Oats might be sustainable, though. I think you can buy ones from Scotland. I've seen boxes in the supermarket that have a man wearing a kilt on them. That's kind of locally sourced."

"It's the United Kingdom," I agreed.

"We can make sure the egg is free-range, from a local farm."

"We're going to win this, Borneo," I told him. "I can feel it in my bones."

"Imagine if we got to go to the League Cup final!" Borneo punched the air and did a little jump.

I pictured myself in my full blue kit and striped scarf, marching into the stadium waving my season ticket at the ushers. "It would be brilliant!"

"So, should we make flapjacks?"

"Yes, flapjacks." I counted the reasons on my fingers. "One, they're yummy. Two, not hard to make. Three, we should be able to come up with a sustainable recipe."

"We need to do a practice bake," Borneo said, as we turned the corner into Swallowtail Street.

"This Saturday. We'll turn my kitchen into a flapjack laboratory."

"I've got dance class on Saturday."

"Only in the morning. Come round afterwards." A high-pitched squeal of pain made us spin around. We saw Helen Trent sprawled on the pavement. She scrambled onto all fours and half crawled, half limped hurriedly through a gate into someone's front garden.

"We can see you, Helen," I told her. Her white-blond hair was visible over the fence.

She slowly got to her feet.

"Are you all right?" Borneo asked, looking at the nasty graze on her knee.

Helen looked down.

"Were you following us?" I asked.

"No." Helen's neck flushed pink. The colour climbed to her face and into her cheeks.

"You're not a good liar," I told her. "Why are you spying on us?"

"I wasn't!" Her voice was a mouse squeak. "I was walking home when I tripped over and fell."

"You don't live this way." Borneo frowned.

"Nicki made me," she admitted with a whimper, coming out of the front garden and back onto the pavement. "She wants to know what you're going to cook for the Food of the Future competition."

"What does she care what we're going to make?" I asked.

"She wants to beat you."

"Tell Nicki I'm going to boil her head and serve it to the judges on a big silver plate with an apple stuffed in her mouth."

Borneo laughed.

"She's locally sourced," I added, "and a resource that no future humans could possibly want."

"You said you were going to make flapjacks." Helen glanced over her shoulder as if thinking of making a run for it. "I heard you."

"Earwigger." Borneo shook his head.

"If you tell Nicki what we're making, you'll regret it for the rest of your life." I waved my fist.

Helen made a wailing sound and scampered away.

"I wasn't really going to thump her," I said as we watched Helen sprint off. "I just wanted to scare her, so she won't tell Nicki."

"I don't know why Helen is friends with that girl," Borneo said with a sigh. "Nicki treats her like a servant."

That week, after school, Borneo and I worked hard on perfecting our flapjack recipe. We decided to use local honey instead of syrup. It had been disappointing to discover that dates and raisins are grown in faraway places like America, Egypt or Iran, because the transportation burns fossil fuels, which is not sustainable, so we couldn't use them. We planned to try chunks of dried apple in a batch of flapjacks instead.

By Friday, Borneo and I were feeling confident that we were close to having a winning recipe for a delicious flapjack of the future.

"What time do you get back from dance class tomorrow?" I asked Borneo at lunch.

"Eleven fifteen."

"Come straight over to mine. Dad said he'd get us the ingredients for our cooking experiments as long as we let him help with the flapjack eating."

"I'm always hungry after ballet." Borneo grinned.

The bell rang and the playground emptied as we filed back to our classroom.

"Come on, everybody. Sit down." Miss Webb was standing at the front of the class as we came in. "I've been asked by the headmaster to remind you that you need to have come up with a recipe for your food of the future before next Friday, which is tasting day."

Borneo looked at me. I winked back.

"Some of you have already decided what you're making. Once you know, you need to write out the recipe with details of where the ingredients are from. You must answer all the questions on the sheet I gave you at the beginning of the week."

Nicki's hand shot up.

"Yes, Nicki?"

"Helen and I have done ours already, Miss Webb." She pulled a plastic sleeve from her rucksack. The paper inside was covered in her neat handwriting. She marched to the front and handed it to the teacher with a sugary sweet smile.

"Well done, Nicki and Helen," Miss Webb said, withdrawing the paper and reading it. "This is very impressive. I see you're making flapjacks!"

My jaw dropped.

Nicki turned and smiled right at us.

"But, Miss Webb" – I jumped to my feet – "we're making flapjacks. Nicki's copied us!"

"She got Helen to spy on us!" Borneo cried.

Everyone looked at Helen, who was staring down at her desk.

"Oh, please. I would never copy you two!" Nicki looked at Miss Webb, her blue eyes wide and innocent. "How do we know *they* aren't planning to copy *me*?" She pointed to the paper. "I had the idea to make flapjacks from the start, and I've already written out my recipe."

"You're such a liar!" I glared at Nicki, my heart pounding. She didn't even care about Albion FC. She was doing this to be mean.

"Calm down, Francesca." Miss Webb indicated that Nicki should go back to her seat. "I'm sure the competition can manage two sets of flapjacks. If they are equally sustainable, the judges will have to choose whose is the most delicious."

"Which will be mine," Nicki said under her breath as she walked past our desks, her nose in the air.

Borneo and I dropped down into our chairs and exchanged a miserable look.

"We can't make flapjacks now," I whispered to him. "Not if we want to win."

"We need to come up with something better than flapjacks," Borneo agreed.

"Something that will blow Nicki's flapjacks out of the water," I said through gritted teeth. "But what?"

I woke up early on Saturday morning, a kaleidoscope of butterflies inside my chest. Our flapjack recipe had been shot down in flames. Today we had to come up with a new idea – one that was bold, brilliant and Nicki-beating. I stared at the poster of Albion FC at the foot of my bed. We had to win. If we didn't, I'd never forgive myself.

I wasn't as good a cook as Borneo, but time wasn't on our side, so I thought I should make a start. I got dressed and headed down to the kitchen. Dad had left the flapjack ingredients on the sideboard. I looked around the room, unsure of where to begin. I tied my curly hair up in a bun, washed my hands and put on the purple apron that hung on the back of the door.

"Now to work my magic!" I told the kitchen.

Opening a cupboard, I took out the largest bowl I could find. I dragged a chair over to the sideboard and climbed up, so I could get a good look at the ingredients in the cupboard above.

"Custard's nice," I muttered, taking out a tin. "Oooh, I like jelly." In a flash, an idea came to me. "We'll make a delicious, sustainable trifle!"

I had never made a trifle, but I had eaten plenty. I imagined a huge red strawberry one topped with foamy cream and rainbow sprinkles. "Trifle beats boring old flapjacks!" I declared as I set the tin of custard and the packet of jelly on the sideboard. "I need a sponge cake for the bottom layer," I muttered, pulling out a bag of flour.

Soon the side was covered with ingredients. I was buzzing. I took a large wooden spoon from the cutlery drawer and waved it like a magic wand. "Let the mixing begin!"

I dumped a heap of flour into the bowl. I wasn't sure how much was needed, so I added a bit more. A puff of flour wafted up my nostrils, making me sneeze into the mixture. "Snot is sustainable!" I shrugged.

I had planned to use six eggs, but my fingers became slippery with egg white after I cracked open the first one. I dropped one of them on the floor. It was difficult to stop bits of shell going in with the egg, but I was sure it would disappear when cooked. I tried to stir my trifle sponge mix. It was like cement.

"Hmm, it needs to be more"—I eyed the fridge—"juicy." As I took out the carton of orange juice to add a glug,

I spied a block of butter. I added the whole pat. "Sugar to make it sweet." I emptied a packet into the bowl. The mixture was lumpy and stringy at the same time, but it smelled yummy and orangey.

"Cooking is actually fun," I marvelled as I checked the cupboard to be sure I hadn't missed a vital ingredient. I spotted a small pot labelled *Baking Powder*. "I must need that. I'm baking!" I emptied it into the bowl. Next to the baking powder was a very similar pot labelled *Bicarbonate of Soda*. I opened it. Inside was a white powder that looked exactly the same as baking powder. I emptied it into the mix, just to be safe. Then, I took down a tiny brown bottle of vanilla essence and sprinkled it over the orange sludge. "Vanilla makes everything tasty."

Next I turned the oven on, found a giant casserole dish and poured the mixture into it. I didn't put the lid on because I knew the sponge cake would need to rise. Carefully, I slid the heavy pot into the oven, shut the door and turned the heat up to max.

"Fran!"

I spun around at the sound of my mum's voice. She was standing in the kitchen doorway with Borneo beside her. "Oh, hi Mum! Hi Borneo."

"What on earth are you doing?"

"Baking a trifle for our school project." I looked at Borneo. "Wait till you taste it. It's going to be delicious. I'm not sure how sustainable it is yet..." I paused as I saw the shocked looks on their faces. Glancing around, I saw the kitchen through their eyes. Flour was scattered everywhere.

There was a splattered egg on the floor. Empty packets, pots and tins were strewn across the sideboard. "I'll clean up," I said hurriedly.

Mum went over to the fridge and opened the door, then looked at me with an alarmed expression. "Where's the trifle?"

"I'm baking the sponge part in the oven." I stepped aside so she could see. "I haven't done the jelly yet. That's next." At that moment, the door to the oven blew open with a *bang!* and a thick brown bubbling foam oozed out.

"Will you stop laughing!"

Borneo and I had been banished to the back garden while my mum sorted out the mess in the kitchen.

"You're the worst cook ever!" Borneo looked delighted.

"This is a disaster!" I wailed. "We're never going to win those tickets." I could picture Nicki's snug smile as the tickets were presented to her for our flapjacks. "It's so unfair!"

"Yeah." Borneo sat on the swing that hung from the big tree at the bottom of my garden.

"Come on, think. Use that big brain of yours. What is a genius food of the future? We must be able to come up with something better than flapjacks."

"How about ... exploding trifles! Ha ha!"

"If you're not going to be helpful..." I was about to suggest he go home and stick his head down the toilet, when a thought popped into my head and I jumped to my feet. "I've had an idea!" I hurried to our side gate. "Come on!"

Borneo stopped swinging. "Where are we going?"

"Organic Planet." I was walking so fast, I was almost running.

"The health food shop?"

"I don't know why I didn't think of it before. They've got lots of sustainable stuff in there. We're bound to find something we can cook."

We reached the pelican crossing at the top of the high street.

"Keep your eyes peeled for anyone in our class," I told him. "We don't want anyone stealing our idea."

Borneo looked about furtively. "All clear!"

We rushed into the shop. I'd been here plenty of times with Mum, but I'd never looked at the food before.

"You take that aisle; I'll take this one."

I walked past lentils, chickpeas, beans and bags of whole-meal pasta. Nothing was jumping out at me. Then I spotted something curious. A green paper packet with the words "cricket flour" on the side.

"Excuse me," I said, taking the bag to the counter. "Is this made from real crickets? The insects, I mean."

"Oh yes," said the rosy-cheeked bald man behind the counter. "That's crickets farmed for human consumption, all ground up. It's very healthy, full of protein."

"People eat bugs?" I was surprised to hear this.

"Of course. We eat all the other creatures on the planet: birds, mammals, snails, sea creatures. Why not insects?"

"But ... they're..."

"Highly nutritious?" The man chuckled. "Many other

countries eat insects, you know. In Thailand they deep-fry crickets!" I frowned as I thought about this. "On this wonderful planet, there are over a thousand varieties of edible insect. Think about it – you're bound to like the taste of one of them!"

"I've never thought of insects as food before," I admitted. "Try one of these." There was a stand by the till containing silver packets with zingy green writing that said *Sweet Chilli and Lime Roasted Grasshoppers*. The man tore one open and

poured a couple of grasshoppers onto my palm. I stared at them. I could see their serrated back legs and everything.

"What are you doing?" Borneo came up behind me. "I'm going to eat a grasshopper," I told him, and before I could change my mind, I shoved the two critters into my mouth, crunching them up and swallowing fast. I waited to see if my stomach complained, or if the taste was going to make me throw up, but the hot limey flavour was nice.

"Would you like to try one?" The man offered the packet to Borneo, who shot me a suspicious glance. "They're actually ... quite nice," I admitted. I held out my hand for more.

Borneo, not wanting to look like a chicken, took the packet and put a grasshopper into his mouth. His expression changed as he chewed. "These are good."

"Are crickets sustainable?" I asked the man behind the counter.

"Insects are the most sustainable food on the planet. In fact, if humans could get over the idea that insects are disgusting, they could solve world hunger."

"How?" He had my full attention.

"Well, there are forty tonnes of insects for every human on Earth. They're easy to farm on a large scale without damaging the environment. If we ate them, we'd never run out of food."

"Explain about the farming," Borneo said. I could tell from the excitement in his voice that he'd caught on to my idea. "There are insect farms?"

"Of course! You shouldn't harvest wild insects for food. They need to be bred for human consumption. But you don't need much land because you can farm them vertically in tall buildings. They need very little water, or light, and of course they multiply rapidly. You do have to feed them, but ten kilograms of feed will get you nine kilograms of protein from a crop of crickets, whereas it will only get you one kilogram of protein from beef."

Borneo and I grimmed at each other.

"I wish people would get over their revulsion of insects." The shopkeeper sighed. "I mean, they've no problem eating other invertebrates like lobsters and prawns."

"We might be able to help with that," I said.

"What can you make out of insects that's super delicious?" Borneo asked him.

After the exploding trifle, we decided that I should work on our presentation while Borneo refined our recipe. We treated the project as a top-secret stealth mission. We didn't discuss our food at school. Instead, we pretended to still be making flapjacks.

On the morning of the festival, Borneo's dad drove us to school early. We'd asked Miss Webb for permission to bring in and use a plug-in electric grill. We were going to cook our food of the future in front of everybody. Borneo's mum had got him a white apron and chef's hat.

Miss Webb escorted us to the school hall. Trestle tables had been set out around the edges. "You can use that one, in front of the plug sockets. You'll need them for the grill." Borneo's dad handed me the portfolio folder he'd carried in, and set the grill down on the floor beneath the table. "I've got to get off to work now. Good luck, you two."

I pulled out the green tablecloth I'd brought from home and covered the table. Borneo unpacked the food. We worked in concentrated silence. On the presentation board behind our table, I put up the sign I'd spent hours making. Below it, I pinned our recipe.

"You've got to be kidding me!" Nicki's shrill voice carried across the hall. "BUG BURGERS!" she cried, reading our sign.

We ignored her and carried on getting our stand ready. We'd already decided to pretend we couldn't hear or see her. We had our eyes on the prize.

An odd thing had happened during the week as we'd learned more about insects as food: Borneo and I had become convinced that they really should be the food of the future. Today was about more than football tickets, or beating Nicki. We wanted everybody to see that sustainable food is possible if they keep an open mind.

I heard the slap of Nicki's shoes as she marched across the hall towards us.

"Nicki, our table is over here," Helen called out weakly. "Bug burgers! No one is going to eat those! That's a disgusting idea."

Borneo and I said nothing. I stapled my drawings of crickets around the edge of the board, while Borneo laid out his square Tupperware pots containing our ingredients. Nicki read our recipe in a sarcastic voice. "One onion, one stick of celery, one medium carrot, one small courgette, all grown in Borneo's nana's allotment." She broke off and winced at Borneo. "Isn't that sweet?"

She went on, "Two large mushrooms and one clove of garlic from Organic Planet – the weirdest shop in the world. One hundred grams of homemade breadcrumbs. Ewwww!

Fifty grams of mealworms farmed in Wales." She stopped to make vomiting noises. "Fifty grams of crickets farmed in Wales." More vomiting noises. "One teaspoon of sea salt, two free-range eggs from Windham's Farm, and a teaspoon of chopped fresh parsley and thyme from Francesca's garden."

She paused to watch Borneo plug in the electric grill. "That sounds DISGUSTING! You don't expect the judges to actually eat this, do you? They'll die of food poisoning!" We said nothing.

The fuss Nicki was making was attracting other kids to our table. Soon there was a crowd.

"Have you really made a burger out of bugs?"

"Have you tasted it?"
"I'm not eating it!"

"I'm not scared. I'll try anything. I'd eat a tarantula."

Our table was getting so much attention that Miss Webb blew a whistle and ordered everyone back to their own tables to set up their food of the future. The judges would be assembling soon to sample our dishes.

Nicki and Helen didn't have much to do. They had brought their flapjacks in baking trays and displayed them on a big plate. But Borneo and I had ambitious plans. We wanted to cook and serve our bug burgers hot.

Switching on the grill, Borneo took out the tray of burger patties from his little cool box. I set out the plates and homemade burger buns, going over the things the man in Organic Planet had told us about insects being the solution to world hunger. I wanted to get this right. Borneo emptied a packet of the lime and chilli-flavoured crickets into a little dish for a garnish.

"The judging has started," Borneo said. I looked up to see Mr Burke, Miss Webb, Mrs Lemon and three other teachers at the first stand. "I'm going to put the burgers on the grill. They need four minutes on each side." Borneo had practised and timed the cooking to perfection. There was a gentle sizzle as he lowered each patty onto the grill, and soon the smell of cooking was wafting across the hall. It smelled good. Other people had noticed and were looking our way.

"Are you ready?" Borneo whispered, as the judges finally approached our table.

"Ready as I'll ever be." I nodded.

"Well now, what have we here? Bug burgers, eh?" Mr

Burke sounded delighted. "I must say, they smell good.

How do you make them?"

"We made the burger patties yesterday, sir, and kept them in the fridge overnight. I put all the vegetables and the garlic into a mixer" – Borneo pointed to the recipe on the board – "and whizzed them up for about ten seconds. Then fried them in a tiny bit of oil for a few minutes. The veg then goes into a mixing bowl with the breadcrumbs, salt and eggs. Next, I whizzed the crickets and mealworms together for a few seconds."

"Interesting," Mr Burke murmured. "And where did you get the insects?"

"We bought them in Organic Planet, sir," I replied. "They come from an insect farm in Wales."

"I added the blitzed bugs to the bowl with the vegetable mix in," Borneo continued, "and combined them with my hands. Then I pressed the mixture into patties, dusted them with cricket flour and put them in the fridge."

"And you're cooking one right now?" Mrs Lemon asked, a horrified look on her face. She was obviously not looking forward to having to taste one.

"Yes," I replied. "But whilst Borneo is making the burger, why don't you taste one of these?" I held up the dish of sweet chilli lime crickets.

"They're crickets!" She jerked back.

Mr Burke reached for one immediately and popped it into his mouth. "Oh! I must say, that's really rather good!"

He chuckled. "Come on, judges," he cajoled. "Dive in."

They each took one. Miss Webb ate hers immediately

and I saw her eyebrows lift with approval. Mrs Lemon delayed but eventually braved the cricket. Whilst they chewed, I told them about how, if we thought about insects differently, they could be the food of the future and solve world hunger.

Borneo laid a burger on a bun, then added sliced onion, lettuce and tomato, and garnished it with a couple of sweet chilli lime crickets. "There you go, one bug burger."

"Marvellous!" Mr Burke exclaimed, cutting it into six portions. Lifting his slice, he took a big bite. The hall fell silent as everyone watched him chew and swallow. "Delicious!" he proclaimed with delight. "Absolutely ingenious!" He beamed at us. "Come on, everyone, tuck in."

Mrs Lemon's nostrils curled as she looked at her slice. "Do you like prawns, Mrs Lemon?" I asked her. "Yes."

"How about lobster?"
"Well, of course."

"They are the invertebrates of the sea," I told her. "The insects of the ocean." I pointed at the crickets. "These are the invertebrates of the land. There really is no difference. If you are happy to eat one, why would you be frightened of eating the other?"

"I'm not frightened." She eyed me indignantly, then lifted her piece of burger and took a tiny bite.

"It's a bit like a delicious veggie burger," Miss Webb said with a surprised smile. "This is some really impressive work you two have done."

Borneo and I exchanged a smile.

The judges moved on and some of our class came over and asked to try our bug burgers. Borneo cooked them all. Within half an hour, we had nothing left. All of our insects had been eaten.

A tinkling sound drew my attention and I saw Mrs Lemon ringing a bell. The hall fell silent as Mr Burke stepped forward.

My heart was booming in my ears. This was it!

"We judges have been delighted by the food you have brought in today. It's clear how hard you have all worked to understand where our food comes from and how important sustainable food production is going to be in the future.

The judges would like to commend Harry and Ben for their mushroom stew, which really was fantastic. However, for inventiveness, sustainability and sheer innovation, our school winners, and the winners of the tickets to the League Cup final, are..."

All the children in the hall stamped their feet to make a drum roll.
I held my breath.

"Francesca Attisdale and Borneo Brown with their brilliant bug burgers!"

Everybody cheered. Borneo punched the air. I did my football goal celebration dance and grinned at Nicki, who was scowling.

Things were a bit of a blur after that. There was a man with a flashing camera who took our picture in front of our bug burger sign as Mr Burke handed us the tickets to the cup final. The story was in the paper a few days later.

Yesterday, Borneo and I got an invitation to cook our bug burgers for the council. We've got our fingers and toes crossed that they're brave enough to eat them. I can almost smell those Albion FC season tickets. Bugs are brilliant. They're tasty, they can stop humans starving *and* they got me and Borneo to the cup final!

EDITOR'S NOTE

In "Food of the Future", we learn about the impact of what we eat on our planet. With so many different types of food being exported from countries around the world, most of us don't eat very sustainably. But there are simple steps that we can take to help address that. As the characters discuss in the story, reducing our meat consumption is one easy way of reducing our carbon emissions. You could also try to buy fruit and vegetables that are in season and have been grown locally. Just like the characters in "Saving Olumide", you could even try growing some of your own.

There are many fun skills we can learn that will also benefit our planet. From bike-riding and engineering, to dressmaking, cookery and gardening, there are all sorts of ways that we can make the most out of the resources around us.

It is natural to feel anxious about climate change and the future of the planet. If you are feeling worried, it might help to think of some simple steps you can take to live more sustainably. You might also want to talk about your feelings with your friends and family and encourage them to make lifestyle changes. It will all add up. Don't forget that you aren't responsible for fixing