

The Cromer Special

By

Emma Zadow

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Characters

Maggie – Eighteen, a fish and chip shop staff member.

Lucy – Sixteen, her best friend. She speaks in a broader Norfolk accent than Maggie.

A chip shop in Cromer, the North Norfolk Coast. Christmas Day. 3pm. Maggie is slouched at the counter. She wears a hair net and company uniform. Lucy is twiddling her hair, sat in a plastic chair to the side. She wears a hoodie and a puffer jacket.

Maggie Why are we open on Christmas Day? I really don't see the point of it. Whose gonna come in here on the 25th of sodding December?

Lucy Why am I here with you again?

Maggie Because you hate your sister's cooking.

Lucy Oh yeah. She'll be dishing up her nut roast pretty much now. Ever since she went Vegan for her new fella, 'He's from London' (*makes a sick sound*) she's gotten into all of this 'healthy raw organic eating' shit.

Maggie Like that's going to slow down the aging process.

Lucy I tell you now, none of what she cooks looks anything like it does in Good Food Magazine. Her nut roast is like a casserole dish of burnt peanut butter with bits of parsley floating in it.

Maggie Gross.

Lucy Yeah. He went and brought an avocado from Waitrose the other day. Sits in our fruit bowl now like a fucking emperor.

Maggie I didn't know you had a fruit bowl.

Lucy We do now.

Maggie Bloody hell.

Lucy I know.

Besides, I want to be with my best mate, right? Couldn't leave you here all alone could I?

Maggie Love you Luce.

Lucy Love you too Mags.

Maggie All my family is right here.

Pause.

Lucy *hugs her.*

Lucy (Suddenly) I forgot! Close your eyes!

Maggie Why?

Lucy Just do it. You're going to love this! So...I turned up for my shift at the Fun Palace on Monday...//

Maggie //...I thought you were let go from there?

Lucy No! I was kicked out of Leisure Lands next to the Crab stall. You remember the whole slush puppy and American tourist episode?

Maggie Oh yeah! You must have worked in every arcade on this coast.

Lucy You wait. I'll be the arcade queen from King's Lynn to Great Yarmouth. I'll be just like Victoria Beckham. Post-Spice.

Maggie My eyes are still closed here.

Lucy Oh right. Well, I haven't seen one of these in ages, and you know how rare they are up here in Cromer, I mean, I couldn't believe my luck. There it was snuggled in between *Space Invaders* and *House of the Dead 4*. Should've taken it to lost property but I just couldn't resist! You'll know when you see it!

Lucy *stands in front of her and opens her coat.*

Maggie *gasps.*

Maggie How?!

Lucy I KNOW!

Lucy *struts to the other side of the café and whips her coat off with pride.*

She is wearing a University of East Anglia (UEA) hoodie with large lettering on the front.

I mean, when was the last time you saw one of them around here? Poor soul must have got seriously lost when he thought he'd explore the 'surrounding country villages' of Norfolk! What an idiot coming here!

Maggie What are you going to do with it?

Lucy Dunno. Might sell it in the gift shop, or try and wangle some of those discounts you can get, or...I might just walk up and down feeling like a queen. Your pick.

Maggie It says "SCI-FI SOCIETY" on the back Luce.

Lucy I could be in Sci Fi Society if I wanted to.

Maggie What is it then?

Lucy Basically Doctor Who innit?

Beat.

You wouldn't understand.

She promenades in the hoodie again.

If only you were at U-E-A.

Maggie (mockingly) University of East Anglia.

Lucy (in an exaggerated RP accent) University of East Anglia-ah I think you'll find!

They both laugh.

Maggie Can I borrow it? I wanna get that Nero's discount in it.

Lucy You bet. My mum can drive us to one next week.

Lucy *looks over to the menu board.*

What's the Christmas special? I'm starving after the Fun Palace.

Maggie Well, we've only got chips left now since the 20th, so what I've done is design a little Santa hat on top with the ketchup bottle on the counter. I'm calling it the Cromer Special.

Lucy I'll pass.

Lucy *takes a brightly coloured bag of marshmallows from her coat pocket and pops one in her mouth. She offers Maggie the bag.*

Maggie *declines.*

Very creative of you though. I do food tech and I wouldn't've thought of that.

Maggie I've learnt to *eco-no-mise* in my business management classes at college.

Lucy How's that going?

Maggie Alright.

Lucy I guess we all need a piece of paper at some point telling us we're smart, right?

Beat.

Maggie Have you seen my teacher?

Lucy I've seen him around.

Maggie So. Yeah. What do you think of him? Mr Basurto? He's a student teacher. I think he is well mysterious. Like, I asked him the other day how he was, and he just said 'Fine.' And it was in this Spanish or was it Russian, kind of accent you know? Dead European-Like.

Lucy Dead European-like.

Maggie Anyway. Right. Mr Basurto, or, Senor Basurto...what does he do? What does he fucking do? Him, in his Saab, which is why I think he might be French, cos who drives Saabs in North Norfolk anyway? He only pulls up outside of bloody chippy. And guess what? I'm behind the counter, sweating my way

through my shift. I'd just served fishcakes to this family and their dog. I mean, who orders fishcakes anymore anyway? Hair nappie on my head looking like a cherry cock and he comes in. I'm like, oh. My. God. Nothing fab city ever happens to me.

"Maggie?"

I'm going to die.

Hi Sir.

"What would you recommend?"

Um. Well. We're in a fish and chip shop.

"So...fish or chips?"

Or just fish, or just chips, or fish and chips. Or fishcakes. We have a holiday special.

"Just chips. Thanks. See you in the new year. Hope you've done the homework Maggie, it'll be interesting to hear your thoughts. Enjoy your break."

And I'm thinking break? Don't make me laugh. Nobody really has a break over Christmas. Unless you're on one of those BA whatchamacallits.

Lucy My cousin is doing one of those. Says he's forking out nine grand a year to read books he's already seen the movies of.

Maggie Yeah. I don't need a degree. I've got a library card.

Lucy Too right Mags.

Maggie Anyway, he turns, into his Saab and he's gone. He thinks I'm interesting. I'm interesting!

Lucy You are so interesting.

Maggie I know right? And I'm thinking shit. He is so hot. I'm going to make him fall in love with me. I'm also thinking...shit. Haven't done the homework. Bollocks.

Lucy So, what're you going to do?

Maggie Probably Wikipedia it.

Lucy No. Not that. Mr Bassett.

Maggie Basurto!

Lucy Yeah. Him.

Maggie Dunno.

Lucy eats another marshmallow.

Pause.

Lucy jumps out of her seat and begins pointing out of the window in a frenzy.

She drags **Maggie** to the window.

Maggie Luce, what is the matter with you now? I know it's boring, I know it's Christmas and you're stuck here with me, but I can't be putting up with your...//

Lucy //...It's a Saab!

Maggie freezes as they both stare out the window.

Maggie It can't be!

Lucy It's him!

Maggie It might not be.

Lucy How many Saabs do you see around here?

Maggie Just one.

Lucy So...

Maggie Shit!

Lucy What are we going to do?

Maggie What am I going to do?

Lucy Here put this on!

She begins to take the UEA hoodie off.

Maggie What?! Why?!

Lucy You said he was a teacher.

Maggie IT'LL JUST LOOK LIKE I'M SHAGGING ONE OF THEM LUCY!

Lucy smiles down coyly at the hoodie.

LUCY!!!

Lucy Talk to him!

Maggie About what?

Lucy I dunno, whatever comes into your head.

Maggie thinks hard.

Lucy Listen. This usually works. I'm very experienced with my sister's fella these days. One of them will bound to get him talking to you. They're like code words. Once I say one, he doesn't stop.

Lucy whispers in her ear.

Maggie nods.

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Good? You got this. What's he going to say, eh? It's Christmas.

Maggie *straightens up, pulls her hair net off and ruffles her hair.*

She sees him enter.

Maggie So...Avocados?

Beat.

(rapidly, one after another) Orange is the New Black.

Electro-swing.

Things in jars.

Charity shop-chique.

Cereal Cafés.

Craft beer.

Vintage.

Beards.

Organic.

Women in Film.

Unicorns.

Freelancing.

Non-binary.

Global warming.

Game of Thrones.

Barak Obama.

Gentrification.

Bee pollen lattes.

Bicycles.

Au-then-tic.

And almond milk is so bad for the environment, you know?

Lucy *nods enthusiastically whilst exposing the lettering on the hoodie for Mr Basurto.*

Lucy And I go to Sci Fi Society.

Slight Pause.

Marshmallow? Found them under the claw machine. They were unopened so they're still good.

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Lucy *shrugs and eats another marshmallow.*

Beat.

Maggie Ignore her. She goes to UEA.
So, will it be the Cromer Special for you?
It's authentically Norfolk for you.

Blackout.