

## The Greenhouse – A Snapshot of the Future

It's dark. And cold. Early November, and the kind of night where the darkness is light, and the light is bright white and piercing. You walk along the canal and begin to hear the faint sound of chatting and laughter in the distance. Ahead of you, you see a place where the light is less white and more orange. A warm glow. You come around the corner of the first building into a courtyard and you're hit by the sound of 100, 200, 300 people, and you can tell every single one of them is at ease. The courtyard is dotted with flowerbeds and little gardens. On three sides are three single-storey wooden buildings, and on the fourth side is the river or canal – which you turn to overlook for a moment. The night now is soft as it's reflected in the river's surface.

You return to earth as you feel a friendly hand on your shoulder – the friend you're meeting here. They take you over to your two other friends, standing beside a small Christmas tree in the middle of the courtyard. They're engaged in a spirited discussion about something or other with two people you've never met before. Your friends haven't met them before either, they just got chatting at the bar. Which is where you're heading now, to get yourself a drink.

The bar is totally outside – set in the side of one of the buildings, and it's busy. Not too busy, but busy enough. You look up to see a list of wines, a fridge full of beers, a collection of spirits and alcohol-free drinks. All are organic and plastic free. You order a beer and you're served it in a glass – obviously – and you see everyone else is also holding glasses too. The bar, it seems, is plastic free. And the glass must be easier to wash and re-use. Considering your beer is organic, it's surprisingly cheap.

You join your friends as someone steps out of one of the buildings to announce the show is about to begin. You line up and filter your way inside and you breathe in. No matter how old this building gets – no matter how many times you enter, it always smells of freshly sawn wood. You love that. You take a second to take in the humility and grandeur of the space. Completely made of wood – of old, recycled, and re-used materials. It's a miracle. And a testament to its vision really. The waste we generate can be used to build a whole building that stays standing for quite a while. Not forever, but long enough to grow a reputation as a leading Fringe theatre in the UK. We should probably cut back...

It's set up in the round, and you sit down, ready. The show you see is kind, engaging, and thought-provoking. You feel inspired and empowered – you feel your strength and your significance, and you begin to understand the role you can play in combatting the climate crisis.

A performer comes on stage at the end to let you know about the upcoming workshops and events – all free – that you can attend in the next week or so. They're there to help you develop skills in sustainability, and feel connected to the community. You make a mental note that you'll be coming back for one. So you filter outside into the crisp evening air to see the bar is still open. "One for the road?" suggests your friend. They've seen the group they were chatting to before the show at the bar, and they make a beeline, keen to get their opinion on it. It is a Friday, and the music has just started. This place seems so welcoming. Really, you could stay here all night.

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It's the next Sunday morning, and you're walking up the river again. Things seem a little louder than on Friday, somehow. The sky is clear and blue, and reflecting off it is the sound of many people doing many things. As you approach now in the sunlight, you can see the complex is bigger than you thought it was. Out the back of the buildings are small gardens and vegetable patches, all teeming with greenery despite the time of year. And again you think – this place feels so alive.

You come around the corner and you see a throng of activity. Families sit in front of the bar enjoying lunch – families of all races and walks of life. Many from the local community, and some from further afield. You see friends sitting on benches and talking. In one corner, a group of people are taking a yoga class, and somewhere inside, you hear the sound of music being practiced. Then in the middle of the courtyard, there's even more. A handful of stalls to start with, selling a variety of sustainable lifestyle products. You're hit by the sounds and smells of frying, cooking, eating, as you see a collection of food stands as well – each boasting their own eco-friendly produce and cuisine from across the world. From Italian to Ethiopian. You step past them and stop to pick up a new bar of shampoo, when you hear someone coming out of a building, and shouting that the show is about to begin. After a few moments, you don't hear anyone shouting about a workshop. So, you go over to that person, and ask them where it is.

"Just one moment." They say – they pop their head inside and ask someone to man the door and say "I'll show you." They walk you to the other side of the courtyard, and a door that says 'Rehearsal Space' on it. As you're walking, she says "were you here to see the show the other night?"

"I was," you reply.

"What did you think?"