

### Hiding In Plain Sight

Flies, black, and glistening in anticipation, hover around the restaurant table. Ready to spurt saliva from spout-like mouths onto her solitary meal. Eager to suck and swallow the regurgitated food.

She doesn't notice.

The red and blue checked tablecloth is grimy, sticky and stained with the remnants of the past year's meals. Bacteria lurk undetected on its grainy surface. They respond and adapt, like her, to changes in their environment. In just five hours, one bacterium can become one million bacteria. E. Coli alone can cause nausea, fatigue, fever. MRSA can cause death.

She doesn't care.

It doesn't matter whether her cutlery has been washed by hand or by dishwasher, science has proved that a gastroenteritis-causing virus is present on all public silverware. Norovirus is not easy to get over and is extremely contagious. She lives now with her 79 year old grandma and her dad's immune system is compromised.

She's oblivious.

Her hands, ringless, are already germ ridden from the menu she touched earlier. Studies have shown that restaurant menus can have a bacteria count far higher than a toilet seat. Salmonella is commonly present. These bacteria can't be seen, smelt or tasted. There is no warning system in place. Instead, they hit you like a violent thunderbolt in the early hours.

She's indifferent.

Pretty, pale pink lipstick decorates the edge of her wine glass. It matches the colour of the one she found in her ex-fiancé's car. Both harbour dirty parasites. The sulky waiter is nowhere to be seen. He and his dirty white apron have disappeared behind the tattered, beaded curtain into, presumably, the kitchen. She could complain.

She doesn't bother.

Because the halloumi is divine. Salty, squeaky, chewy. Barbequed bliss. A strangely vulnerable looking creamy centre imprisoned behind a latticework of brown bars.