

THE HAUNTED MICROWAVE by Stephen King

by Smiley McGroucpants, Jr-Esq-III

He lit a Chesterfield™, and turned on CCR on the radio. "When I was your age," he said, exhaling, holding the cigarette between his fingers, "I did everything I could to avoid doing my own rumble through the jungle," he nodded at the radio.

"It work?"

"I'm still here, aren't I?" He nodded, and reached for the ashtray to ash his cigarette.

"What about the microwave?" I asked.

"What?" he said, through a puff of smoke, looking up at me.

"What about the microwave?"

"Do you think it's haunted?"

"Pf," he said, one of those "pfffff" sounds that's be longer if not so shortened to indicate it didn't warrant attention — just "pf!" and on to the next thing. "No such thing!" he said, reaching for the ashtray again — the ash had grown incredibly long (how'd that happen?). "Never been any such thing ... never even *heard* of it!" and at the emphasis, he started to cough. He balled his fist and put it to his mouth, instantly, and when "huh! huh!" and then hawked a loogie and spat it clear across the room, where it hit the wall and dripped down, down the crappy wallpaper his wife had put there. I hated coming here - just for gasoline. "There! That feels better." He looked at me. "You *ready*?"

I nodded — it had been a long time coming, so what the hell, right? What the hell. "Sure," I said. "Let's go."

He nodded. "Get the tractor ready," he said. "Time's a wastin'."

And off we went ...

There wasn't any room on the top of the tractor, so I had to ride on the side, precariously, my hair blowing in the wind. I was scared for my life, but he seemed a good driver. "Louella — that was, before she died," he said, cackling, as though to clarify, which was strange behavior, I thought, "she used to ride up here on my lap — " (he patted it a couple times — ONE! TWO! — to make his point, taking his one hand off the steering wheel to do so, the other still gripping it, and a new Chesterfield™, too, I saw (how did this guy *smoke* so much??)) " — but you don't have as nice an ass as she did." He looked at me accusingly, as though it was my fault, as though I'd disappointed him . . .

"Sorry?" I said. I didn't know what to reply — I was holding on to the side, and fearing for my life as the wind rushed by and ruffled my hair as a *constant* . . .

"That's all right," he said, as though this was an acceptable answer, and looked faceforward to focus on his driving again. "That's all right," he added, as an afterthought, and then let the silence hang and became moody.

THEN:

"Here it is!" he said, as the headlights seemed to pick something out — the Nebraska October sure was dark, and it wasn't even midnight, rows of corn for miles around — and he slowed the tractor to a steadily-decreasing speed, the way you bring a boat into dock on water (if you've ever *been* . . .). He looked at me. "Boy are you in for a surprise!"

He killed me.

The End

