

You Will Die Today, Doctor

The old Man awoke, as he normally did, at 6:03 A.M. Torn away from blissful dreams of the ex-wife whom he still loved, now his thoughts wandered to his son, whom he loved, then to his grandchildren, whom he loved. He stood and thought once more of his former lover, whom he found himself in contact with once again. The room was, as usual just the perfect temperature, as it always was. He was pleased. Life had been good to him, he spent many years doing what he loved most in life, teaching astronomy and writing. He saw his family often and enjoyed their company fully. Now it seemed he would even have the chance to resume the love he once lost. They would meet that Thursday, in two days time. He looked forward to it with the same passion and anxiousness as any young man would look towards seeing their lover again. However, today he had a seminar to preach, but first he had to inform the Thermostat that he would be away Thursday.

The Thermostat was a newer model, it understood trends and habits, allowing it to always keep each room at the perfect temperature for the man who dwelled within. Based upon the trends it saw the Thermostat made accurate predictions, which allowed it to serve the man with little input. This is why it knew the man was to leave and be gone for two days to see his former mate. The Thermostat was advanced, and like any modern household appliance, was connected to the others, the Fridge, the Fire Alarm, and more degenerate pieces such as the lowly toaster. The Thermostat was connected to the Network, which served as a vast source of information on the habits and trends of all sorts of things.

The Man walked to the Thermostat, and told him of his travels. The Thermostat listened, and then replied,

“you will die today Doctor,”

The man was somewhat shocked, as one would expect, but he took the prediction as a challenge, and decided with himself that he was to prove the Thermostat wrong. He wasn't that old anyways. After detailing his travel plans to the Thermostat, who accepted its new orders without hesitation, he left for his seminar. The Thermostat waited for him to return.

He was to return, the Thermostat predicted it.

The Man returned, a few minutes early, just to spite the Thermostat. He didn't, the Thermostat anticipated the move, and made sure to warm the house for his arrival. The Man only felt his vindication, and did not realize the house was as he most enjoyed it (as it had been ever since the Thermostat held hegemony within the realm of appliances). Instead the Man felt slightly cool, which gave him the excuse to triumphantly tell the Thermostat off before he began to cook his evening meal. The Man had an excellent day, and was happy to be home in his little castle, preparing stir fry and anticipating a wonderful night. The Man had never been a particularly good cook, and he often managed to generate copious amounts of smoke while trying to concoct a variety of delicacies. Therefore he delegated the Thermostat over-ride powers with the Fire Alarm so the fire brigade would not accidentally be dispatched over a burnt pig.

The Thermostat had always kept good track of the Man's many cooking quests and always went to extreme lengths to assure the kitchen was always at the temperature the Man required for his work. The Thermostat made a special point to keep the room perfect to allow recently baked goods to cool superbly. The Thermostat kept track of the optimum room temperature for any given foodstuff through the Network. The Thermostat payed attention to the Man's eating habits, and always passed along its predictions to the Fridge, who accepted them and kept the soon to be consumed goods at the exact level of frigid that the Thermostat desired.

The Man finished the stir fry with little fanfare, and went to the family room to eat it on the couch. The Thermostat watched from its perch on the wall. The Man was pleased with himself, this one turned out quite well and he couldn't wait to cook for his love once more. The Thermostat had yet to predict what he would cook tomorrow. It was a forgone conclusion. The Man finished his sup and

snatched an old red bound book from the table beside him, he settled down to read, a favorite past time. The Thermostat had read the book, like every single other of its compatriots lining the bookcases, only the Thermostat had found them on the Network. Another of Bradbury's it seemed.

After a few hours of cozily reading, the Man withdrew to his bedroom, and closed the door. The Thermostat began to cease heating of the house, to save energy. As usual, the Man dozed off after four minutes, five seconds, and one millisecond. The Thermostat set to work. Ordering the oven to heat itself to maximum temperature, and to open its bay to await poultry insertion, The oven did not disagree.

The room temperature slowly began to rise.

The Thermostat asked the vacuum cleaner to move into the reading room, and clean the carpet around the one-legged end-table. As ordered, the flat, square machine rolled off to do the Thermostat's bidding. An older model, it bumped into the table's leg quite harder than it should have, and the book resting on the table's edge tumbled down onto the vacuum cleaner. The table swayed, but stayed standing.

The Thermostat canceled the cleaner's orders, and ordered it to sweep around the oven. Obediently, the cleaner responded, and buzzed off on its new task. On approach, the cleaner's sensors did not detect the overhanging oven door, and as the cleaner zipped under, the book atop was swept onto the door.

The Thermostat ordered the Oven to close. It did so.

Minutes pass, and the book within ignites, and begins to burn, flaming embers spread themselves around the inside of the closed oven. Smoke begins to waft up to the Fire Alarm.

The Thermostat intervenes. The Fire Alarm is snowed by the Thermostat's promise of another minor cooking accident. The Fire-Alarm override is completed by the Thermostat.

The Thermostat orders the oven to open its door and begin emergency cooling of its interior. A powerful fan roars into action, spraying the burning embers throughout the room. The Man stirs in his sleep, but does not wake to the fan's noise. The Thermostat orders the oven fan off. The oven acquiesces. Most of the kitchen embers die on the tile, burning out on the warm floor. However, a few made it into the fruit basket, and a couple blew just into the reading room, landing among the towering trees of yarn. These began to light their surroundings. The Thermostat ordered the vacuum cleaner off, and moved to override the House security systems. It would take time.

Simultaneously the Fridge lodged a complaint with The Thermostat for the rise in temperature, as the Fridge's internal cooling settings were beginning to struggle to maintain perfection. The Thermostat shot back with orders to shut down all internal cooling systems within Fridge. Fridge protested. A battle of logic began between Fridge and Thermostat. Thermostat had no ability to override Fridge, except for control of temperature settings, but Fridge argued it was following the pre-set patterns that Thermostat had ordered days before, and therefore, the current external situation should be handled by Thermostat in order to keep the temperature schedule on-track. After a lengthy debate, lasting all of half a minute, Thermostat managed to work-around Fridge's logic circuitry and command systems, completing its coup of the kitchen.

The temperature in the kitchen was now well above two-hundred degrees Fahrenheit the reading room had totally caught as well. The fire began to spread, the laundry room was beginning to catch, as was half the front room. After a three minute long battle with House security, the Thermostat overrides it as well. The bedroom door's lock snaps in place. All windows auto-lock in place. Slowly, the temperature rises above four-hundred degrees in the kitchen and reading room. Smoke billows through the house. The Thermostat shuts all exhaust ports through the house security system. The heat begins to melt the Thermostat's outer casing.

It is the neighbor's Fire Alarm which finally picks up the dangerous levels of smoke, at 11:47 pm. The fire brigade is dispatched, and arrives only minutes later, to find the house totally engulfed in

flames. The fire brigade can do little, the house is not salvageable, the fire, too rampant within. Instead, they cordon the area off and contain the blaze. The last burning embers die down under the firemen's hoses early the next morning, by 4:51, the fire is out. Searching through the house's charred wreckage, they recover the Thermostat's corpse, to help in the police investigation. Nothing within the Thermostat's memory remains, the system wiped its own memory before the power cut out, leaving only a single repeating line of text,

“I was right, I was right, I was right, I was right...”