

THE LIGHTS FLICKERED

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By James Collins

The iPad came home with me and changed my life. The first change was the clock radio in my bedroom. I shut the alarm off and transitioned control to the iPad, which had a much more flexible system. Now I get the time to awake each day and can even skip days when I do not want the alarm clock on. Next due to necessity I bought a new car. It had about 100 internal computers.

One evening I had everything prepared for supper and set the oven to 350° preheat. The lights flickered. I checked and figured it was a power failure because all my digital clocks froze. I was busy so I ignored the event. After 20 minutes of watching TV, I was still waiting to hear the preheat completion signal. I went out to the kitchen and verified that the oven light was still on. It was, but the preheat light had not illuminated. I did this check three times at about 10-minute intervals but nothing changed. Then I got smart and opened the oven to feel how warm it was. It was cold as a tomb. My oven was inoperable. I called my repairman and by 9 o'clock the next morning, everything was back in order. Apparently, my gas igniter had burned open. That afternoon speaking to my neighbor, I discussed what happened but he said, "We did not have any power interruption as I would've noticed." I checked with a second neighbor and they said the same thing. I thought this was odd.

Two days later, my microwave encountered a problem. Again, the lights flickered and right after that, the rotating elements internal to the microwave stopped turning. For a second time, I called my repairman and scheduled an appointment. This time he fixed the problem for \$75. Yet again, my neighbors did not encounter the power interrupt but my digital clocks told me that it really happened because they all stopped and I had to reset them.

The following week my laptop computer developed an attitude. As I sat down, the lights flickered. When I clicked on a control to change to a different page it ignored me. I repeated the operation two or three times but it completely ignored me. When I wanted to change to a different icon, it did not respond. I tried two different icons and they were ignored. Suddenly, the computer remembered all my requests and initiated them rapidly one at a time leaving my display in complete disorder as it left three of the images overlapping one another. I was not amused. I had to reset the computer, reboot it and reinitiate it. I checked, all the clocks were again frozen. I called my neighbors but again they had not experienced any kind of power interruption. I went back and wrestled with the computer for about two hours until, in frustration; I gave up and shut it off. I noticed that once I shut off the computer, everything seemed to revert to normal.

I finally sat down and did some deep thinking trying to analyze what had been going on in my household. The one thing of interest was that every time the lights flickered something happened to one of my appliances and in every case, this appliance used internal computers. The second point of interest is that none of my neighbors experienced this power interruption. It was uniquely in my house! The conclusion I came to surprised even me. Some intelligence in the house was making my life difficult. Why I could not fathom. What it could be intrigued me and I thought, analyzed, and concluded that it had to be an electrical intelligence. It had to be computer operated and it had to be powerful enough to interrupt the power system. I also noticed that once I shut my laptop off the problem stopped. I was convinced I had identified the culprit – the laptop with an attitude. In my experience, this was a manipulative intelligence. It was smart and it was capable. I had no idea how far ranging its intelligence was.

I decided I had to get rid of the laptop but I was afraid it could understand my conversations. To distract the laptop and mask my intentions, I muttered to myself, “I think this laptop needs a new power supply to extend its life for another couple of years.” I made sure the laptop could hear my plan to put it at ease. Then I took the laptop to a computer store and purchased a new battery, which they supplied. Then I took the laptop home and took it down into my basement muttering all the time, “This won’t take long I will open it up take out the old battery, put in the new battery and will be good for the next five years.” I assumed the laptop heard what I was saying and it agreed. As soon as I had the battery out and I knew the computer was dormant, I took a large sledgehammer and finished it off. I hit it! I hit it! I hit it until my anger passed. I felt relieved, happy and exhilarated all at the same time. I put the remains immediately into the large trash can in my garage. I felt my problems were over. I was wrong.

Next morning my iPad’s repetitive xylophone alarm awoke me. I stood on the floor and started to walk towards the bathroom. The lights flickered. The hair on the back of my neck stood straight up, I shuddered . My car in the garage set off its antitheft alarm. At 7 o’clock in the morning, this could wake the dead. I knew I was in trouble and ran towards the garage with my keys in my hand trying to stop the noise, which would wake all my neighbors. While I was in the garage, my bedroom was silent until my radio alarm clock started to chuckle and an ominous evil laugh followed as it said, “*He retired me before I was ready so I will haunt him for a long time. He will never figure it out.*”

THE END