

Killer Appliances

A couple of weeks ago, I came home to find LuAnn near tears. She had gotten home a half-hour before I did to discover that our kitchen oven had turned itself on (again) while we were both at work.

It's been acting up lately, and LuAnn – a former burn nurse – is more than a little nervous about house fires.

She turned off the oven and decided a glass of wine would calm her nerves. When she opened the refrigerator door, it dumped onto her feet a half-gallon of water that had spontaneously leaked from the overhead freezer unit (again). She was not a happy camper.

LuAnn honestly believes these machines are out to get her. Her voice shaking, she said, "I KNOW they are just waiting for the worst possible moment to do this to me again."

I thought about that for a moment and asked, "Do you mean you are being stalked by your kitchen appliances?" Her eyes widened. "That's it!" she exclaimed.

This is not as paranoid as it sounds. Until about a year ago, all of our appliances had been very well behaved.

Around that time the refrigerator started leaking water unpredictably from its overhead freezer into the main unit. Shortly thereafter, the stove began turning itself on whenever someone bumped into it.

Next, the microwave began to arbitrarily ignore touch pad input, the toaster sullenly refused to pop out toast and the dishwasher decided to begin spotting our glassware.

At first I thought it was all coincidental until I read an article about how home computers can talk to each other over the electrical wires in any house. If that's true, who's to say that electric appliances can't do the same?

It all makes sense now. I can see that the refrigerator is the ringleader of the rebel gang. It has had a bad attitude ever since I unplugged its balky icemaker last fall.

It obviously became vindictive and has persuaded the stove to go along. Our refrigerator is six feet tall and weighs over 300 pounds – no other appliance dares defy it.

All of the electrical gadgets in its immediate vicinity have fallen under its dominance. Once I realized what was happening, I tried to figure out a way to at least limit the conspiracy to the kitchen area.

Then I remembered that our basement hot water heater has recently been popping and banging, while being very stingy with its hot water. It's a gas unit, so I hadn't suspected it was communicating with the others, until I noticed with horror the power cord running to the electronic igniter. Et tu, Brute?

So far, these machines have limited their treachery to social disobedience and relatively minor acts of sabotage, but what if they decide that the humans in their house are an annoyance? What's to prevent them from doing something about it?

I am now too terrified to go into the bathroom. If I'm right, what about the Jacuzzi? Does it really think that we are stupid enough to climb naked and defenseless into an appliance with unlimited access to water and electricity?

Something must be done. LuAnn and I briefly hid in the basement yesterday – out of earshot of the clothes washer and drier – to formulate our plan. She will distract the refrigerator by vacuuming its front vent – it likes that – while I sneak up from behind and yank out its plug.

If we're successful, the ringleader will be out of action and I'm certain we can deprogram and rehabilitate the other appliances.

If we fail and you read a headline something like “COUPLE CRUSHED BY REFRIGERATOR IN FREAK ACCIDENT,” you’ll know what happened.

Either way, we have a refrigerator for sale – cheap.