

**“The Whirlygig”**  
**by: DL Cowen**

IT WAS JUST too hot. He didn't know it but the air was already saturated with water. The air surrounding him was saturated with water which meant sweat couldn't leave his pores and move the heat away from his body. It was just TOO HOT.

Too hot for sweat. He didn't know this and he didn't care. When the alarm goes off you get to shelter, and if you can't get to shelter then you find a wirlygigg. Find a wirlygigg or die. Luckily, even though he was far from the house, he knew there was an emergency wirlygigg out by the burnpit. Not more than ten minutes away on foot, he should have time if he moved now.

And he did. The moment he heard the alarm he dropped his shovel and turned back in the direction of the burn pit, towards the whirlygig. He wasn't going to end up like his father.

He was the one who found his father, pink and swollen like a sausage, his eyes popped out like a Panic Pete squeezed in your hand. That day his father had a disagreement with his mother, over nothing, really. His father said he hadn't slept the night prior and his mother knew full well he had, and not only had he slept but she hadn't been able to wake him out of his snoring. So when the alarm went off his father thought to hell with it, he was staying in the Malabar. By the time he reconsidered his position it was too late. Unable to shed the heat his autonomic nervous system shut down and the blood in his veins broke through his vascular walls. His brain boiled in his skull, and after death his body quickly putrefied as volatile gasses desperately tried to burst his casing. He didn't know this and he didn't care. He still ate sausages.

He pushed his way through the Malabar and into the waist-high grasses beyond, not running, carefully walking to the burnpit making sure each footstep was firm and stable before taking the next. He had ten minutes and that was enough time, but not if he twisted his ankle or fell into the grass and lost his bearings. He wasn't going to end up like his aunt.

She lost power at her house and tried to make it through the high grass to his house, panicked, and ran around in a circle until she ended up another sausage. She wasn't really his aunt. She was his uncle's wife, but his uncle also wasn't his uncle, just a childhood friend of his mother's who ran the local pulgeria. He didn't know this and he didn't care. His uncle married again, a bride as young as the propriety of the day would allow, and she had already bore him two new children. Cousins.

The entire trek he chastised himself for not mowing the lawn sooner. It had been three days since the last time and the grasses were almost up to his chest. Another day and they would be taller than him. He wouldn't have any chance at all then, would take too long. A day's mow away from death, that's where he is, he thought, and it would be his fault too.

Letting the lawn go was just another symptom of this malaise he's found himself ensnared in for the last two weeks. He used to refill the water tank at 75%, but it must be below that now. In fact, he knew it was below that. The water tank's at 55%. He checks it every day even as he fails to refill it. "I'm detached," he thought. "I'm not living my own life. I'm inside myself watching

me fail." Watching as the water levels go down and the grasses rise until he chokes on his own moisture.

He was a little more than halfway to the wirlygigg when he realized for himself he wasn't sweating anymore. He could still make it, so long as he was past the septic he would make it, but the bloated,

burning feeling of his sweat unable to leave his body was a further reminder that he's not taking care of himself or planning for a future anymore. And it's hard, it's too hot, too hot to think of a real future.

The only point in living he could think of was for the week of Winter when the temps got cool enough for all the women to cover their flesh in clothing. He liked clothes. Most of the year everybody's got it all hanging out for everyone to see, but when it gets cold, cold enough, all the people in town cover themselves in dresses and jumpsuits and body stockings and all manner of clothing that hides and/or accentuates the human form. You almost forget you've seen it already. Maybe they got new titties under those clothes. Something different.

In the end it only took nine minutes for him to reach the burnpit wirlygigg and he was grateful. His face was purple and he was having trouble breathing from the effort of forcing the relatively cooler air of his lungs into the hot space surrounding him, but he didn't know any of this, he only knew he had ten minutes.

The wirlygigg itself was a small fake automobile made from a mixture of Melmac and hard plastic that was originally an amusement children could ride outside of the grocery store for twenty-five cents. The car had been disconnected and attached to a folded twelve-foot jib. He strapped himself into the car, pressed the button, and the wirlygigg began to move: slowly at first but increasing in speed. Within 45 seconds he was spinning in a circle on the end of the jib, strapped into the little fake car, at a speed of 25 miles per hour.

Two minutes later the wirlygigg reached 40 miles per hour. He touched his forehead and it came away wet.

Sweat.

He was sweating.

He was going to be okay.