



appliance doctor

A thriller about consumer fraud



JOE GAGNON

For the past several months I have been fighting with myself as to whether or not I should write this short story. I've said to myself, "no you can't do this and if you do they'll send some professional hit man to take care

of you."

I tried to talk myself out of it, and yet the urge to do it became stronger than life itself. I'm doing it no matter what, so here it goes. It's a script about a guy who does a radio show on appliances and writes a column about everything in the world of consumerism. He's become syndicated across the country and is now big time commanding some pretty big bucks for his lectures across the world.

Act 1 - A phone call from a Mr. Doe

who is senior vice president for an appliance manufacturing firm. He wants to meet secretly to discuss some "very bad things that are happening at corporate headquarters. I meet him in an empty railroad boxcar which is attached to a moving train, probably to drown out voices in case of a tape recorder, or to dump my body over the proper river. With a diaper firmly attached to my oversize pants I sit across from Mr. Doe and ask firmly but politely what I can do for him. He stands up and points his finger at me and says, "I will give you information that will make you bigger than Ralph Nader, allow you to sue a manufacturer for over \$500 billion and let me die with piece of mind. You see, I have six months to live so I have to do some fast talking." End of first act.

Act 2 - In a large conference room with only the two of us in attendance, the camera is rolling as Mr. Doe describes the decisions made some 10

years ago by himself and other corporate officers. It was jointly agreed that because of the few manufacturers left in the appliance industry his company would try to force out the remaining few with some pretty dirty tricks. The board of directors knows nothing about what is happening, and neither does the Federal Trade Commission. He hands me copies of interoffice memos and letters explaining in detail, with signatures, how all this would happen from day one.

Act 3 - In the comfort and safety of my home town I play back the hours of tape I've collected from our conversation. I've had Mr. Doe checked out even to the size of his shoes, and yes he is dying. All the information he's given me leads to one unbelievable conclusion. His firm is intentionally building into an appliance a COMPONENT FAILURE which will require service in the first few years of operation. Already proven 10 years ago when his firm repaired

some 2 million defective door handles at a reduced price, consumers were quick to think that his firm was the best there is. Already done again in the last few years on four different component failures, consumers by the millions were buying service contracts from his firm like they were ice cream. I called a few dealer friends who said I was correct in my assumptions and their rapport with customers was going downhill, and yes they would testify in front of the Federal Trade Commission. Is it possible that in this great country of ours - this can happen? Stay in touch for Act 4 coming up in next weeks column.

Joe Gagnon, the Appliance Doctor, will answer your questions about maintaining and repairing large appliances. Gagnon is president of Carmack Appliances in Garden City and does a weekly radio program on WJR-AM. He is author of "First Aid from the Appliance Doctor," available at area bookstores.



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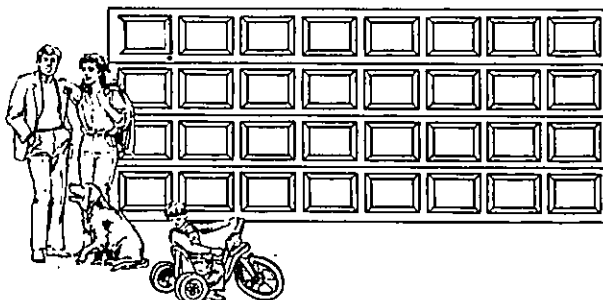
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