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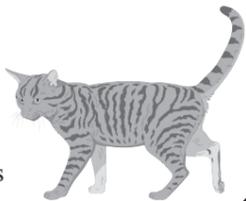
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## 'Shroomster(s) - Part two

by Mitch Dadd

Prologue:

"Life has a funny way of going the wrong way," opens Part One of 'Shroomsters. The author was finally able to camp in the northern Michigan Mesick hills and enjoy the fine art of hunting the elusive morel mushroom. Trouble begins almost immediately when his truck, Chev, suffers an attack of the Port-spiritors: The sneaky forest allies of the morels! The Porc-spiritors conspire with the morels to wreak havoc on the author's vacation, saving the morels from a certain culinary fate. Fellow 'shroomers identified the Porc-spiritors as forest porcupines and offered advice on controlling the varmints, yet more is going on in the woods than simple forest animal antics!

The main characters are: Chev, the diesel truck; Dale, the Springdale fifth wheel; Genny, the temperamental generator; the Fun-Guys (forest fungi - the morels); now Ele and Redhead.

We join the author in part two as he returns his third time to the woods, having been forced twice thus far to return home with physical and emotional damage to his beloved truck, Chev. Dale and Genny have not fared much better. This time he returns with Ol' Dog, the plow truck.

Will the author succeed in outwitting the Porc-spiritors? Will Ol' Dog fare better than Chev? Or, will the co-conspirators win the day? And now...

### Part Two

My reprieve began five days earlier, and the Porc-spiritors had so far saved many a Fun-Guy. Now with Ol' Dog and Ele (the new electric fence) I was heading back with a vengeance. Old .22 was also ready in case Ele didn't perform. Oh, I almost forgot. A young energetic friend of mine loaned me Genny 2 — very cute and responsive. Apparently, he knew how to select the right model. She was shapely in all the right parts and a redhead to boot! And she wasn't loud like Genny 1. I expected she could energize Dale in ways Genny 1 never dreamed of — nor Dale, for that matter!

We arrived after dark with no time to assemble Ele, so I stood guard over Ol' Dog and Dale. I was wrapped in sleeping bags and armed with a flashlight and a .22. At 11:38 p.m. I heard a strange gnawing sound from under Dale. Dale stayed quiet while I shined the light underneath him. Nothing. ... There it was again. ... Light. ... Nothing. ... Then again. I slowly moved toward the front of Dale and there was a Porc-spiritator gnawing at his jack! The Porc-spiritator just looked at me with his beady, conniving eyes. Then he disdainfully thrust his rear at me. I poked him with .22. He didn't move. I poked him again... he waddled over to Dale's left tires. I poked him again... now to Dale's right tires. He was not going to leave! He claimed Dale as his own, and I suspected he had already developed a sick desire to rend Ol' Dog!

Climbing under Dale, I was face-to-quill with the Porc-spiritator. Not wanting to permanently disable him, I continued to prod him with .22. This went on for ten minutes before he finally left Dale, but his intentions were obvious. He would be back. So .22 had to meet the Porc-spiritator and he met his demise. Dale was relieved. Ol' Dog didn't know what was going on, he was just happy to be out and about again. I slept better that night, knowing the Porc-spiritator would not be dismantling Ol' Dog, Dale or Gen 2, the new redhead. Dale did seem to like her a lot. His lights had never been brighter!

Well, I woke up again way past the crack of dawn and away Ol' Dog and I went. Finally, up the trail and not back home. "Hallelujah!" was being sung again, this time with Ol' Dog — just like the old days when I did wake up at the crack of dawn. We took out after the Fun-Guys, and to their dismay, we managed to catch a fair load of the black variety. MMMMMM. I could hardly wait to taste the little morsels. I would have offered some to Ol' Dog, but he had been steadily sipping his 87 octane all day and didn't seem to need anything else. He was perfectly content just to climb hills, go through mud and sand, and straddle deep ruts lesser trucks would shy at. He may be old, but he was reliving his most relished memories — and loving it!

My wife, Lisa, came up late that afternoon with Suber (the old Suburban) to enjoy 'shrooming. Suber, our faithful family hauler for 200,000+ miles was happy to rest. She had not been told about the Porc-spiritors for fear she would have a nervous breakdown. I parked Suber and Ol' Dog behind Dale and Redhead, then assembled Ele, to enclose them all. We were just one big, happy family — with the exception of poor Chev.

I was more than curious about the ability of Ol' Dog's battery to sufficiently deter another Port-spiritator, so I tested Ele while my wife sat next to the cozy campfire. Now, I've been electrified before, working on various electrical gadgetry throughout my 50+ years, so I wasn't too concerned about the testing method. Why not just lay my hand on it? After all, it only sends a charge once every second and certainly would not fry me...right?

I laid my hand gently on the cute yellow and black twisted wire that hung four inches off the ground, which was just the right height to ensure a porc-spiritator would have to climb over it. A quick jolt told me Ele worked. However, it was not enough to convince me that a porc-spiritator would be deterred, so I switched Ele to her "varmint" setting. This time, the jolt locked my jaws, sent my shoes flying in different directions, caught my hair on fire, and burned my nose hairs! After I put my hair out, blew the smoke out of my nose and found my shoes, I was satisfied we would be safe through the night. My wife was not impressed with my antics, and when

I prompted her to test Ele out herself, she declared she would "most certainly NOT!" About bed time I developed a slight tick and every so often, my arms, legs, and what was left of my hair would jerk straight out. Lisa made no comment, yet decided to sleep on another bed.

I seemed to sleep well that night, but the next morning I had a strange memory of dreaming of lightning. In any event, we were soon back in the mysterious forest searching tasty morel delicacies. High into a steep dead end ravine, Ol' Dog was having his day until...! I carefully maneuvered Ol' Dog into reverse between several large trees, over high bumps and up a steep slope in an attempt to turn around before we wiped out the Fun-Guys in that valley. Then he developed REVERSE-a-Phobia!! NOT AGAIN! What the... just how deep and devious and far reaching was this Fun Guy VOODOO?

We were sideways in the gully with trees on every corner of Ol' Dog and he wouldn't go! He tried! I braked and tried forward. It worked. Reverse DIDN'T! Tried 4x4 low — his floor shifter broke, just flopped back and forth! Still had forward, but don't ya know — Ol' Dog just don't turn on a dime no more? Yet he has clearance and was telling me to blaze a new trail. It might work if we could only miss two trees. I doubted we could, but we had to try. Ol' Dog insisted.

Over the deep forest bumps Ol' Dog crawled, but he could not make the turn. With his front bumper kissing a tree, and no reverse, nothing short of a miracle was going to get us out of there. I began to get that gnawing feeling again, as if nothing would be left of Ol' Dog by morning except a radio knob! We just had to get him out of there! Though dying in the woods would be his preferred way out, it just wasn't his time! I grabbed my trusty folding hunting saw and walked to the eight-inch diameter tree... leaned on it...and it just fell over! My view from Ol' Dog's windshield must have obscured the tree's condition! There was another tree ready to cave in Ol' Dog's right side. I walked to it, opened the saw, looked at it, and thought, "Why not try pushing on it, too?" I did and it fell over!! If they weren't rotted five minutes ago, they were now, and we had our miracle!

Ol' Dog did his best to crawl back to camp. I gave the old guy a lot of credit. I guess he was just trying to make a stand in the place of Chev. It proved too much for the old boy, and it was sad when I crawled under him to remove his drive shafts the next morning. I rode home with him while Suber led the way with Lisa at her helm. Suber was nice about it; just happy to be able to help her old pal. Ol' Dog knew it, but his embarrassment was obvious. He was being pulled by a she-truck! No looks of disdain from other trucks or foreign models, just sad respect.

The seventh day of my reprieve marked the third time northern Fun-Guy VooDoo was sending me home. There's more than Porc-spiritors in them there hills! Something else protects those fungi morsels, something sinister, something devious. Together, they are the 'Shroomsters! I don't know how many there are. I can't tell you what may happen to you if you are trapped by them in the darkening Mesick abyss. I can only tell you that to enjoy the Fun-Guys more than they enjoy their mischief, requires nerves of steel, tarps, and an electric fence! And at \$50 a fresh pound for these fun little guys, you just may consider having a go at it yourself.

Oh, yeah. You may be wondering about Dale, Ol' Dog and Chev. Well, I'm happy to report Chev's \$1,400 worth of vicious Porc-spirited damage was approved by his insurance adjuster. I had him patched up and we are in the woods today (day number 15 and counting — there are benefits to being sick and tired). He gets the full treatment as soon as we get back. Ol' Dog? Well, Dr. Tim Trusty will give him a rebuilt transmission. He's worth it, and should be able to plow for a few more years, though I doubt he will climb many more hills. I made sure Dr. Tim will only use male parts! I couldn't bear to ride with him otherwise and would likely have to put him out of his misery! What a horrible way to go!

Dale hit it off with Redhead. I think he understands I probably won't be able to buy her for him, but just between you and I, Genny will be fixed and sold straight away. Don't tell Dale! I want it to be a surprise. I'll find him a new redhead if I have to. Anything is better than a temperamental Genny! I also fixed the Porc-spirited wires that caused some of his interior lights to go out!

As far as the 'shrooming has gone, I guess I fared better than most. Though it has been a poor year weather-wise, I have picked about a full bushel of the little VooDoo makers with the help of my 'shrooming visitors. That is, about 30 pounds worth of VINDICATION on the Fun-Guys!! Let's see, \$1,400 for Chev; about \$1,600 for Ol' Dog; \$200 for Genny; \$200 for Ele; and \$200 of unexpected fuel equals \$3,600! That's \$120 per pound! It's cheaper to buy them, for sure, but the experience and satisfaction of the 'Shroomsters knowing I am HE WHO DEFENDS CHEV, DALE, GENNY, and OL' DOG... PRICELESS!

I almost forgot about the other porc-spiritors. Yes, I said "other." To my count, today there have been five "others." I know they are different because of their size and I can always tell if one has visited Ele. They walk funny! About every five steps or so, their legs and quills jerk straight out! Once in awhile, in the clear morning air, way past the crack of dawn, I can smell a faint hint of burnt hair! Though all is going well now, I still keep hearing the eery voice of the old man..."There's more than one Porky out there!" And sometimes on the morning breeze, "shroom killer...shroom Killer...SHROOM KILLER!!!"

Remember, life has a funny way of going the wrong way. Don't give up! It is Priceless!•