

Wings

by stephen hastings-king

The lunch counter is located at the end of the long straight road that leads to a nuclear power plant, close to a swamp in a place where the air seems always hot and humid so the ceiling fans turn year round clack clack and spiral the fly paper that hangs from the ceiling. The once-white linoleum is punctuated with spatter and curling photographs of customers who hold the same bumper sticker in front of various distant landmarks. Every lunch time the numerous small jukeboxes that are distributed about the dining area fill the air with webs of King Curtis and Benny Goodman.

The lunch counter located at the end of the long straight road that leads to the entrance of the nuclear power plant is famous for its buffalo wings. This is not because the wings are described in the language of nuclear warfare. What makes this place different is there is only one variety available at any given time, the flavors of which have been modulated to reflect the featured power plant accident of the day. The spiciness varies with the magnitude, the sweetness with the location. Everyone gets at least a side order, even those not inclined to like them. It's like eating the weather, they say. It's a way to find out what's going on.

