

## The Salesman

I awaken to the morning sun peaking through my window and shining onto my face. Wearily, I open my eyes and pull my blankets off of me as I sit up and get out of bed. The date is Friday, April 23, 1956, and I work for a vacuum cleaner company as a salesman. As I blink the weariness out of my eyes, I look over at my nightstand and read the time on my clock. It reads “6:24”. I know this means that I need to start getting ready for a long day of going door to door with my Kirby Omega vacuum cleaner, with the hopes of convincing a few people to buy it. Slowly, I slump out of bed and walk down the hall of my small house towards my bathroom. Quickly, I shower, brush my teeth, and slick my short black hair black nicely. I then walk back to my bedroom and to my wardrobe to get dressed in my formal salesman outfit: A tan overcoat, khaki trousers, dress shoes, and brown tophat. Once in my attire, I go out to my kitchen and quickly eat a bagel before I leave. As I go to leave through the front door I grab the shiny vacuum cleaner that is leaning against the wall.

The morning air enters my lungs and I let out a deep sigh as I begin walking down the street to a part of the neighborhood I have not yet visited yet. Time passes slowly as I go from house to house trying to convince people to buy the all new Kirby Omega, which can pick up anything you need off any dirty surface, and is as light as a feather. I have soon lost count of how many customers I have visited today, and I check my watch. The hands point to 11 and 3, “11:15”. My cheeks hurt from wearing a charming smile for so long, and I am slowly walking along the sidewalk as I eye my next house. It looks very similar to all the other houses in this suburban neighborhood. It is a single story with a slightly sloped roof and a few large windows on the sides. However, this house has a few differences from the others: It has a lawn that very badly needs to be mowed, a cracked walkway, and the front door seems to be slightly ajar. I start

walking confidently up the walkway towards the house and notice that the car that is parked in the driveway has a badly cracked windshield, and I wonder to myself how that could've happened. I arrive on the doorstep and proceed to shuffle my vacuum into my left hand so I can ring the doorbell with my right, even though I see that the door is slightly open. I see some light coming from the house and the car is parked in the driveway, so I assume the family is home. I push the doorbell in and don't hear anything. A few seconds later, I tried again and still heard nothing. The doorbell seems to be broken. I set the vacuum down and lean it against the steps, then I knock on the front door and call to see if anybody is home. As I knock lightly, the door swings open and slams on the wall inside the house.

The light I thought I saw coming from inside earlier was gone, and it was pitch black inside the house. Realizing that nobody was there, I turn to gather my things and continue on my way, but am shocked to see that the Kirby Omega vacuum cleaner has vanished. Appalled, I turn back to look in the house a final time, and see the outline of my vacuum inside, laying down at the end of the dark hallway. A shadow of movement appears to dash away from it and to another part of the house. "Hello?" I call into the darkness. "Is anybody there?" No response. Terrified, I slowly step inside and begin to inch my way down the hall towards the vacuum. I notice that the house is very decrepit on the inside. The walls and ceiling appear to be rotting away, the floor is uneven, and it reeks of a pungent odor inside that I cannot describe. I continue inching my way down the hall, and as I do the front door slams behind me. I jump with fright and look around for any sign of what shut it. With the door shut, I am left in total darkness and can barely see my hand in front of my face. "Hello?" I yell. "Who's there? This isn't funny!" Once again, no response. Only the creaks of the house settling and the distant sounds of birds chirping and cars driving outside can be heard.

Carefully, I turn back around and make my way to my vacuum and pick it up. It is freezing cold, which doesn't make sense because it is a warm day outside and I've been carrying it out in the sun all day. I turn around towards what I believe is the direction of the door, and am paralysed from what I see. In the shadows, I can make out a dark figure standing at the end of the hall, blocking the door. I am frozen where I stand, a cold sweat running down my forehead. I try to speak to the figure, and ask what is happening or who it is, but my voice is gone and words don't come out.

The deafening silence is broken by the creaking of the old floor down the hall, and I see the figure slowly moving towards me. It's heavy footsteps crash on the floor, getting louder and louder as it comes toward me, but I cannot move. I am paralysed with fear. Suddenly, the figure begins to sprint down the hall at me, and my reflexes finally kick in. I throw the vacuum as hard as I can at it and take off running down another hallway. The figure lets out a grunt as the vacuum collides with it, and I sprint through the darkness, trying to see if there is anywhere I can escape to. I spot a doorway and get inside as quickly as I can, slamming the door shut behind me.

Sweating, I sit my back against the door and listen for my pursuer. I hear nothing, silence. I am shaking with fear at the moment, but I shakily gather my bearings. Looking around the room, I vaguely see furniture and a bed. I suppose that I'm in a bedroom of the house, and in the corner I see a window. Frantically, I dash to it and examine it. It is covered with insulation and foil, which I quickly begin ripping off. That's when the door to the bedroom begins to rattle as the creature in my pursuit shakes and bangs on it. I gasp and keep working at the foil. A peek of light shines through the top of it as I rip away the insulation, and I quickly tear off the rest of it.

The door then suddenly bursts open, and I whip around to see a 7 foot tall silhouette of a humanoid creature with large claws standing in the doorway, breathing heavily. I turn back to the

## Grades 9-12

window and pull it open. I dash through it as I hear the creature bounding towards me, but it's too late. I feel it grasp my right leg with its talons, and I cry out as it tears through the flesh of my leg. Hanging out the window of the single story house, I see the street only 20 yards away, and I cry out for help. However, nobody is near to hear me, and I am pulled back through the window, scraping against the decaying wall. Before I know it, I am back inside the infinite darkness. There is no light to be seen, and the last thing I hear is the breathing of the creature as it tears me to shreds.