

## THE SALESMAN

There was a time when things were bad financially. Many people were out of work and only the persistent could find a job. It was also a time when door-to-door sales people would lug their wares from house to house. It was during these years when a good-looking, tall young man found such a job. He had a pleasant personality with a ready smile. He had been a bright student in his high school years and studied well the booklets that came with the sales job.

Unfortunately, those behind the doors he knocked upon were lacking funds too and most doors slammed in his face. Except for a few lonely people that let him ramble on without making a purchase he was batting zero. The same sum he was getting close to having in his pocket.

He owned an old car, which needed gasoline by the time he reached the next town. He knew he could continue to sleep in the car but he was becoming hungry. He immediately knocked on several doors to no avail.

He noticed something strange as he passed a large home with a beautifully kept yard. There were four men about his age standing in a line outside of the front door. Each man was holding a bouquet of flowers and a large box of chocolates. His mouth watered for the chocolates. It had been a very long time since he had indulged in anything so frivolous.

He continued his walk into town and as he passed the local pharmacy, he saw a rough looking disheveled man staring at him. It was then he realized why the doors slammed in his face. It was his own reflection and he looked like an outright begging vagrant!

He went inside the pharmacy and bought one razor and a comb. He went into the men's room and shaved. He wet the comb and smoothed out his thick hair. He was pleased with how he looked even though he now had no money for any food. Perhaps, he thought, now he might make a better impression and make a sale soon.

Just then a short stocky man came into the room with a box of chocolates and filled a vase with some water for the bouquet he held. "Who are the chocolate and flowers for?" he asked the short man.

The man explained that the wealthiest man in town had a daughter he wanted to marry to an enterprising person. That person would become the son-in-law and get a fine position in the company owned by the wealthy man. The candy and flowers were to influence the daughter who would make the final choice. It seems that many of the town's young men had been saving to buy the gifts in hopes of acquiring both a wife and good job.

“Ah, she must not be much of a bargain if the father is so desperate to marry her off,” the tall young man countered.

“Quite the contrary, she is the most beautiful and desirable woman around,” explained the short man as he left the men’s room.

Perhaps I can gain entrance into the home when one of these other men walks through the door and I’ll just follow in his footsteps the young man thinks. Once in, I’ll speak to the father about my wares. Perhaps his company will make a purchase and I’ll earn enough to buy gasoline and get something to eat.

He again sees the short stocky man in line and proceeds to stand closely behind him making cheerful conversation so he won’t be sent out on his ear when he walks in behind him as he plans.

His scheme works and the other man is led into the room where the daughter waits. The father is about to follow the short man when the young man invites him to spend a moment with him. He explains that he could be of service to him and his company with the wares he can supply. The father listens to the entire sales pitch that the confident young man gives.

At that time, before a sale can be made, the short stocky man leaves and a servant invites him into the next room to meet the daughter. Not sure how to say no without spoiling his opportunity to make a sale, he follows. The father follows behind him.

As he sees the daughter all his confident words melt and his heart feels the loneliness he will feel when he leaves her sight. It’s a loneliness he didn’t know existed until he saw her angelic face.

She smiles and shyly asks if he brought her a gift. The young man looks around the room at the vases of flowers and many large boxes of chocolates. At a loss to compete, he feels in his pocket and pulls out the comb. As he holds it out toward her, he notices, horror of horrors, one of his own hairs tangled in the teeth of the comb. He quickly removes the hair and puts it into his pocket. Still holding the comb, he said, “Yes, this comb has been used. It’s so that as you prepare for bed and slide this comb through your beautiful hair you will dream of the one who first used it.”

The daughter gasps and the father, still standing behind him, gives a nearly silent cough. There is some quiet exchange between parent and child.

The embarrassed young man is about to depart quickly without any sales when the father asks him if he would like to join them for dinner so they can get to know each other better.

“And, we will have many chocolates for dessert,” the daughter adds with a smile as she takes his arm.