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Door to Door

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Abstract
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Worse still to admit I’d said, Sure,
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Door-to-Door

BY DEBRA MARQUART

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I know this sounds bad.
Worse still to admit I'd said, Sure,
come on over, when the man called to inform me I was the lucky winner of a ten-piece set of cutlery.

So the stranger with sharp knives arrived in a green-plaid polyester blazer with a silver Kirby vacuum cleaner and a suitcase full of accessories including this clear Petri-dish attachment lined with a cotton wafte, thin as a host,
that connected to the vacuum's hose, to demonstrate in one quick stroke all the dust mites and dried skin cells the salesman could extract from my curtains, couch, and mattress, which is how we ended up

on our hands and knees in the bedroom with him asking, Do you really want to live in this filth? And me answering, Well, yes, because I didn't have eight hundred dollars
or whatever ridiculous amount of money a Kirby cost in 1983. I'll admit

I feigned interest to justify accepting the cutlery, then I hedged to get him out the door, which he read as a willingness to negotiate, saying, Ho, ho, lady, you sure drive a hard bargain, which led to a succession of calls to his manager

waiting in some supervisor underworld, whom he harangued over my tan, wall-mounted princess telephone, negotiating this once-in-a-lifetime low price with such ruthless persuasion it required the manager to hang up and consult

his own fictitious supervisor. The phone shrilled off my kitchen wall with offer and counteroffer, which raised my brutish boyfriend from the basement where he was masturbating or sneaking in calls to his next girlfriend,

or practicing guitar. At first sight of my boyfriend's Black Irish eyes the salesman gulped and exited.
with the Kirby and his suitcase
of accessories, recognizing a brand of mean
it took me years to identify.

So maybe I did fill out a simple form
offering my name, address,
and phone number for the opportunity
to win a membership at a local gym
or a cherry-red Corvette
or whatever worthless thing

I desired enough to slip all my information
into a Plexiglas box at the mall.
These days I don’t answer a door or a call
unless I know exactly who lurks
for me on the other side of the wall.
I think about that Kirby sometimes

wonder how it might have improved
my situation. Mostly, I hope nobody
is forced to sell shit door-to-door
in these inhospitable times.
Even when the salesman returned
three days later to retrieve
the green-plaid polyester blazer
he’d left behind, on purpose
or in haste, I was short with him.
Even when he fished the Polaroid
from his pocket to show me his kids,
a toddler and an infant in high chairs

chubby faces smeared red with Spaghettios,
even then, I was not moved
to buy the machine. The princess phone
is in a landfill, returned
to the elements by now, and the boyfriend,
well, he got what he deserved.

A Kirby is a good investment
I still maintain, if you have that kind
of disposable income. But the knives in the end
proved worthless. The handles
cheaply made, and the blades not sharp enough
when it came time to use them.