

I write this to warn you, as I wish I'd once been, of the perils in dealing with door-to-door solicitors. Now, stop right there! Don't you wag your finger at me and say "I told you so!" I was once a skeptic the same as you. As a matter of fact, before my fateful experience, I had enjoyed many stories of comedic geniuses twisting such encounters into tales rich with laughter. It was my mistake to think I would garner the same mirth.

It was a beautiful morning last Tuesday when I awoke before my alarm. Sunshine streamed through the blinds and gave my room a vibrant glow. To top it off, my dear cat Whiskey had taken to snuggling instead of pawing things off my dresser. Truly a morning to write about.

And then I heard a knock! Fret not, sweet reader, for it was not the solicitor in question. I slipped effortlessly from the sheets so as not to rouse Whiskey and shrugged on my turquoise robes before answering the door.

I found myself faced with a ruggedly handsome fellow adorned in the accoutrements of a construction worker. He informed me that my vehicle was parked in the way of his crew's road improvements. We had a genial exchanged before I relocated my car.

It was then I noticed a fellow moving between houses . He wore the attire I readily recognized as someone selling something. His crisp, white shirt and black slacks said nothing of precisely what he peddled, but I hurried to avoid him once I'd parked. Slamming my door I thought I'd escaped, but the fiend had caught me! He knocked on my door and I scrambled for what to do.

Then I recalled an anecdote I found most pleasing. If I answered the door as though I were some horrible madman, he would be pressured to flee. I made the mistake I will forever regret.

The solicitor took the initiative. "Hello, have you heard the word?"

"Why yes," I replied with a jovial grin and bright eyes, "Cthulhu fhtagn, friend."

"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn," the solicitor gargled back.

I was left perplexed. The gibberish sounded familiar, but I'd never truly been an enthusiast for Lovecraft's fiction. Oh how wrong I had been to think it make-believe.

"Do you know Cthulhu?" he asked.

"Why yes. Quite well," I replied with great trepidation. I was digging myself a grave and I did not yet know how deep.

"Are you . . . a cultist?" His eyes lit up as the words left his mouth. I will die remembering that expression of child-like glee as my smugness fell from my face.

"Yes, but keep it secret." I couldn't squelch this strange man's delight, but I wished to escape the conversation for fear of embarrassment.

As I closed the door the last thing he said was whispered as if through time and space long

forgotten. “All shall sing praise to you and to he who dreams.”

I opened the door swiftly, feeling the urge to rightly assault the trespasser. Surely I had fibbed, but he need not make a mockery of me. Yet as I glimpsed my porch the solicitor had vanished.

I thought nothing of it that day except to ponder over how I could have bested the man. Clearly he had dealt with such pranks in his time. I would have to concoct a much more humorous scheme. That had been my thought later that evening when I heard a knock at the door.

Assuming the gentleman construction worker was informing me I could return to my curb, I was instead greeted with a gaunt figure. The woman was ragged and her face was smeared with ash. She muttered and handed me a fist-sized ruby! It was only after she'd hurried off that I'd realized what she'd tried to tell me: Cthulhu Fhtagn.

I tell you with God and heaven as my witnesses that this is not a joke or a tall tale. By divinity, as little as it can help me now, I swear it was not the end of the nightmare, either. Every day since, morning and night, I've been visited by ceaseless knocking. Sometimes I do not answer and I feel my world blurring at the seams. Other times I rush to open the door and find a hideous reminder of why I'd stayed away. I have been chanted to by masked folk in pinstripe suits, complimented on my 'blue rug coat' by a fanged urchin, and even refused requests by tentacled behemoths to use my bathroom! Regardless of visits from bizarre creatures, you should never allow a solicitor to use your bathroom. In truth it's an excuse to stalk your cat, break your mirrors, and make long-distance calls on your once un-chewed, lime green cordless landline.

It is too late for me, dear reader. Whiskey is empty and its lukewarm glass offers no comfort. I have torn my beloved robe into tortoise ribbons, weaving them into talismans against the knocking. All is lost! All is lost. There is a cat here I do not recognize and it beckons me to the door. Beyond awaits R'lyeh where there can be no knocking for the doors do not make sense.

My time has come, reader, but heed my warning. Only madness and backhanded compliments can be garnered from solicitors. Choose silence – or a raucous, slobbering hound.

911 words