

LIGHTNING RODS

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Introduced by David Flusfeder



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**FAILURE IS ALWAYS THE
BEST WAY TO LEARN**

HURRICANE EDNA

One way of looking at it is that it was just an unfortunate by-product of Hurricane Edna.

If you're in sales you know that life has its ups and its downs. He was living in Eureka, Mo., a district he'd been given only because nobody else wanted it, and with reason. He was supposed to be selling the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to people who simply couldn't see how their lives would be transformed by instant access to the *Micropaedia* and the *Macropaedia*. He had been there six months and hadn't made a single sale.

One day it occurred to him that the problem was he was selling something people could do without. How much better to sell something people knew they needed anyway! Something that didn't make people give you weird looks! Something like vacuum cleaners. Because he just knew the problem wasn't with him. The problem wasn't even with the product. The problem was with the people.

He wasn't the kind to let grass grow under his feet, so he walked straight into the nearest Electrolux office.

Geographically speaking, it might not have been an office most people would have identified as even in the vicinity. Asked to name a state that's close to Missouri, very few people

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come up with Florida; those few tend to change their minds when they look at a map. Which just goes to show how easy it is to be misled by our assumptions, overlook the obvious, and jump to conclusions.

What most people assume is that you can answer a question like that just by *looking* at a map. And what they overlook is the fact that when you start a new job it's important to give it everything you've got.

It's important to give that new job 101%, 25 hours a day, 366 days a year. You simply can't afford to have any distractions. If the reason you gave up your old job was that it was not sufficiently remunerative to enable you to meet your commitments, you may well find yourself with some debts which it would be distracting to deal with at this time. It's absolutely vital to start the new job in an area where any difficulties you may have experienced in the past are unlikely to lead to unwelcome distractions. He needed to be based in a locality presenting no foreseeable distractions, and he selected the nearest Electrolux office which would enable him to meet that need, and he walked straight in.

When you're in sales you've always got one thing to sell, and that's yourself. He walked in and started talking about what he could do for Electrolux sales and they said You're that good. All I ask is the chance to show what I can do, he said, and they said All right, hot shot, let's see what you can do, and they gave him a district.

He familiarized himself with the product and moved to Eureka, Fla., and rented a trailer. The next day he got cracking.

By the end of the week he realized this was not going to be as easy as it looked. Because every single house he went to had the same story to tell. They already *had* an Electrolux,

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they'd bought it just after Hurricane Edna, and it was one of the best things they'd ever done. The customer would then insist on dragging out the faithful Electrolux and singing its praises. Yessir, the customer would say, reckon I'll break down before this thing does.

In fact, the place was every salesman's nightmare: a festering swamp of market saturation. A rep had come through and cleaned up in the wake of Hurricane Edna and every single item he had sold was still there in good working order.

He tried, obviously, to point out that time doesn't stand still, enhancements had been introduced, but once again Hurricane Edna blew him out of the water. The customer would explain loyally that she wouldn't dream of replacing her old model, you should have *seen* what we had to deal with, she would explain, the Electrolux had handled things you wouldn't normally ask of a vacuum cleaner.

He managed to make one sale to someone who had just moved into the area.

The result was that he spent a lot of time in the trailer trying to get up the energy to go out. He would lie in bed with a magazine, or sometimes he would watch a video, or sometimes he used fantasies of his own.

His first fantasy was about walls. The woman would have the upper part of her body on one side of the wall. The lower part of her body would be on the other side of the wall.

Sometimes, in fact most of the time, the upper part of the body would be fully clothed. There would be nothing to show what was going on on the other side of the wall.

Sometimes the woman would be naked from the waist down. Most of the time she would be wearing a short tight skirt that could be pushed up and underpants that could be

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pulled down. Sometimes he would have trouble deciding whether it was better with or without the pants. The high point was pushing the skirt slowly up to reveal a firm, tight, unsuspecting ass. Later a cock would go in and the vantage point of the fantasy would shift to the other side of the wall, where you would not know from the fully clothed upper body of the woman that a cock was hard at work on the other side of the wall. For some reason or other she would need to pretend that nothing was happening.

The problem with the fantasy was that it was hard to get the wall right. Could she be leaning across the counter of a kitchen that opened into the dining room? But then you would see what was behind her. Could there be a roll-down blind? But why would it be rolled down? And anyway you would still be able to see. Could she be leaning out an upstairs window? A partially opened window with the blind down. She stuck her head out, say, to talk to a neighbor. The window was too stiff to open any higher. Meanwhile her lodger, say, comes up behind her, slides his hands up her thighs, slides up the tight skirt, gives her an unexpected bonus on top of the rent. From the vantage point of outside the window you would see her talking brightly to a neighbor – brightly but with a strained expression.

This was a solution that seemed to work at the time, and yet later he would feel dissatisfied, as if some essential ingredient of the fantasy had dropped out. Was the problem with the neighbor? Would it help if it was her boss? An important client? Or was the problem on the other side of the wall?

He would get up and go out and tackle another street. To be fair, he never once had anyone who didn't look pleased to see him. He would go up to a door and ring the bell. Someone

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would come to the door, and there would be the usual initial hostility when they saw it was a salesman. One mention of the word Electrolux and it was a different story.

“Electrolux!” the target would exclaim. “Why didn’t you say? You just come right in. Now what can I get you? Coffee? Tea? A soda? Now can I interest you in something to eat? What would you say to a piece of pumpkin pie with ice cream? Or I’ve got a chocolate cake. Or how *about* some chocolate chip cookies?”

Half an hour later he would escape clutching as likely as not a little Ziploc bag of chocolate chip cookies in a sweating hand.

When he was a boy he used to wish every day was Halloween. There is an old Chinese saying: May your enemy’s wishes come true.

He would force himself to visit every single house on the street. Hours later, awash with coffee, stuffed with pumpkin, apple, cherry, pecan, chocolate meringue, lemon meringue, banoffee and blueberry pie, ears ringing with the praises of the Electrolux and stirring stories of its battles after Hurricane Edna, he would make his way back to the trailer, stopping only to pick up a magazine or two.

Back on the bed he would leaf rapidly through the magazines.

The problem was that the magazines never really had what he was looking for. Once in a while a magazine might show the naked bottom half of a woman cut off by a window. The problem was that the magazines never showed pictures of the clothed top half of a woman cut off by a window.

This was an area where you might expect videos to provide a better product, but in fact the videos also tended not to include the scenes where you saw the clothed half of

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the woman, or if they did the woman overacted so much it spoiled it.

He would lie on his side, hand jiggling quietly, trying to envisage the window, the skirt, the ass, the fully clothed upper body of a woman with a strained expression.

The funny thing about it was that at the time he felt really guilty about it. He kept thinking he should get up and go out and sell vacuum cleaners. He should get up and go out and make something of his life. It felt like he was just lying there wasting time. He kept doing it but he didn't feel good about it. He was thirty-three years old and he had zip to show for it. And here he was lying in bed in the middle of the day not even masturbating effectively but just twiddling until he got the fantasy set up to his satisfaction. He didn't feel good about it at all.

His feeling at the time was that the guy who had cleaned up after Hurricane Edna had probably been a completely different kind of guy. The kind of guy who goes out, buys a magazine, takes the magazine home, opens the magazine, looks at the tits of the month, jerks off, closes the magazine, and goes out and sells vacuum cleaners.

Sometimes he would lie there for fifteen minutes worrying about the roll-down blind and twiddling and he would think of the guy and he would think *This has got to stop*, I'm going to turn over a new leaf. How could he lie there for *fifteen minutes* worrying about the Goddamn roll-down fucking blind? It was disgusting. So he'd get out the magazine and turn to a pair of tits backed by Miss April and get on with the show. And go out and try to move some product.

Which just goes to show how blinkered we can be by our preconceptions. Because little though he knew it, it was the hours he spent trying to sell vacuum cleaners that were the waste of time, something he would remember with shame

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and self-loathing for the rest of his life. His well-meant efforts to develop an efficient masturbatory program, likewise, were completely misconceived.

What he didn't realize is that a genius is different from other people. A genius doesn't waste time like other people. Even when he looks like he is wasting time he may in fact be making the most productive possible use of the time. In fact the only time a genius wastes time is when he tries to follow the rules and act like ordinary people.

What he didn't realize was that all that time he spent twiddling and worrying about the roll-down blind would one day lead directly to a multi-million dollar industry that would improve the lives of millions of Americans.

Another fantasy was about a game show with three contestants with their upper bodies sticking through a hole in a wall. In the first part of the game, one contestant was penally challenged from behind. Panelists had to guess which. The contestants got points if the panelists guessed wrong. An inset in the screen showed the thrusting buttocks of a man giving the contestant the old Atchison Topeka. In the second stage of the game, any number could be involved, from zero (though this had never happened in the whole time he'd been watching the show), right on up to a full house (this was actually surprisingly common). The panelists had to guess how many, and which ones.

Each panelist got to ask questions, or set tests. The panelist then made a decision on the basis of the behavior of the contestants during the questions, and made his or her guess.

After a while one of the contestants started to get a personality. She was a consecutive winner for twenty shows. She wore a pink jacket and immaculate pink lipstick and

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make-up, and she had dark hair in a hairsprayed permanent. People looked at the heaving buttocks in the inset and they couldn't *believe* that someone that cool could possibly be getting the full-service 24-hour Revco from the rear. Then after she won the round the MC would say Let's just see that amazing performance again.

In her final play-off one of the panelists, a real bitch, said she'd like to see her put on nail polish. She took a bottle of pink nail polish and started on her nails, and everybody watched, and her nails were absolutely perfect. It turned out later that this was one of the times when all three contestants were getting the old Triple Jeopardy. One kept smearing her nail polish, and one dropped the bottle, but Suzie just kept quietly finishing her nails.

Afterwards the MC said: I've never seen anything like it. I take my hat off to you. Let's just see that again.

The screen divided in half, on one half the heaving buttocks on the other Suzie quietly painting her nails.

MC: Well, I see it and I still don't believe it. What's your secret?

Suzie: That's my secret.

He really liked her. And he always played fair. It was all right to replay highlights of her game career. But she'd won her million fair and square; she didn't have to play the game again, and he never brought her into any new episodes. Sometimes he'd think of her, out in the world, in her pink suit, with a million to blow. She did what she had to do, and then she did what she wanted to do.

He often wondered whether other men did this. Did they have participants that developed personalities? Did they have a sense of humor? Was there a story that developed over several episodes?