That summer was a hot one. People ran their air conditioning units long and hard. Others ran their swamp coolers and lay under them during the day. Those without either suffered during the day and waited until the night to cast its shadow. The shadow was an apology to those who had to suffer during the day. The rich didn’t suffer. The needy were the ones who had to deal with the harsh conditions and extreme heat.

Frank was one of the unlucky ones out of the bunch. He didn’t have AC or a Swamp Cooler. He had to go without. During the day Frank would open his windows as far as they would go trying to get some breeze going in his house. He found if he opened the front door and the back door it created a crosswind that went through his house. Frank sat in the middle as the cool air hit him. It wasn’t much, but it was indeed what he could afford.

There was a knock at the door. Frank stood from his chair and approached the door. On the other side of the screen door was a salesman. He wore a hat and a suit. Frank shuddered at the thought of wearing a suit in such heat.

“Yeah?” Frank asked. “What do you want?”

The man smiled. “I bet you’re warm inside that house without any air conditioning.” He reached into a briefcase and pulled out a pamphlet and held it up to the screen.

The pamphlet shows a family relaxing and playing indoors. To the side was an air conditioning unit built into the window. The man pointed to the cool people.

“We sell portable air conditioning units.” The man continued. “All you do is put it in your window and plug it in. No serious setup necessary.”

Frank opened the screen door and accepted the pamphlet. He read it over and looked at the pictures. It sure looked convincing. Wiping sweat from his brow he ushered the man inside his home.

The salesman gladly walked in and sat down on a sofa in the living room.

“How much?” Frank asked. His credit was poor and he wasn’t sure he wanted to hear how much it would cost to cool down his home. But he had invited the man inside.

The salesman smiled. “It’s free for the first summer. We’ll discuss payment at a … later date.”

There was something in his smile that alarmed Frank. It was too nice of a smile. Something that said run away. Frank ignored that feeling in his gut. The man didn’t want any money up front. There were always those kinds of promotions going around. Don’t pay within the first thirty days of use etc. It’s just how business was handled.

“Where do I sign up?” Frank asked excited.

The salesman’s smile increased. “Right here my good man. Right here.” He pulled out a contract and handed Frank a pen.

Frank excitedly signed his name next to a big X on the paper.

The salesman stood from the couch and tipped his hat. “Thank you for your purchase. It will be here tomorrow.”

Frank showed the salesman out the door. “Thank you again mister.” He said. He waved as the man walked away.

Frank turned from the door and jumped in the air. He was going to have cool air in no time. Tonight was a cause for celebration. He ran to the bathroom and splashed cold water on his face. He was going to go out and have an ice cold beer.