

The Sittee

John Lake

If couches were people, this one would be collecting Social Security. Its throw pillows, once firm, were now sagging and soft. The seat cushions suffered the same fate; they were wrinkled, worn, and somehow shrunk, like pudding left too long in the refrigerator. The fabric of the couch itself gave away its age, and early-to-mid-'70's conglomeration of orange, beige and brown, arranged in vertical stripes and zigzags of varying width. Its arms suffered as well. Each was made of a dark wood that was holding up surprisingly well. However, running down the length of each was a band of yellow metal, once shiny but now mottled with rust from the condensation of the dozens (Hundreds?) of beer cans left there. The band on the left arm had come loose somehow, and was gradually peeling away from the arm like sunburned skin. The fabric of its back had been used as an ashtray at some point, and what had been a small burn-hole was now a widening maw, unraveled by curious fingers. The stuffing revealed by this sofa skin cancer was the color of oatmeal and the texture of lint. This was a sad, sorry piece of furniture. But I loved it.

I'd had the thing ever since I'd started college. It belonged to my parents, who gave it to me when they bought a new couch. They didn't like it anyway. I, however, loved it. Over the course of the next four years, it had almost become a friend. I had slept on it, got drunk on it, studied on it, spilled all manner of food and drink on it, even lost my virginity on it. It was my buddy.

And now this disgusting slob was sitting on it, belching, farting, and asking me how much I wanted for it, in that order.

I had put a small want-ad in the newspaper. COUCH FOR SALE. Good condition. Call Bill at 927-%%@&. (Number garbled to protect the innocent.) This was three weeks prior to the coming of Leviathan here. No one else had answered the ad. I was getting antsy. I had just gotten out of school, and needed cash desperately. I had already sold all my books, my comic collection (Even the old X-MEN ones, which I got ripped off on), and my TV. I was seriously considering asking my parents for a loan when Junior Samples called

me up. I gave him my address, and he said he'd be right over.

One thing I can say for the guy; immediately upon laying eyes on him I feel much better about myself. Ever see Dustin Hoffman in *Midnight Cowboy*? This guy could've been his younger, fatter brother. He was about 5'10", maybe 400 pounds. His hair was black, greasy, and long untouched by any comb or brush. He was wearing a Chicago Bears T-shirt (Another strike against him), khaki army pants, and red Chucks.

And the odor. The smell coming off this guy was incredible. I thought of asking him if he'd considered a career as a biological weapon. But he was my only taker, so I asked him to come in with as polite a countenance as I could manage.

Bluto waddled in. He stopped in the middle of my living room.

"Nice place," he said. He obviously didn't mean it. I say "obviously" because I saw no cane or seeing-eye dog on the guy. Anybody with the gift of sight could see that it wasn't a nice place. It had three rooms. The main room was a combination living room/kitchen. It was small. There was just enough room for myself and Orson. The only furnishings were the aforementioned couch, a bookshelf-type thing that once held my TV, a table that I had saved from being thrown away by my fraternity's house manager, and a rickety kitchen chair, circa 1958. The kitchen, so to speak, was little more than a dent in the far wall with a small stove, a refrigerator with no door handle, and a sink. The bedroom was even smaller, with just enough room for my bed and a nightstand. If I rolled out of bed in my sleep, I ended up in the closet. I had been awakened by the stench of my mildewing laundry more than once. As for the bathroom, well, if I said that I couldn't get a boner in there without poking a hole in the wall, it would be only a slight exaggeration.

"Nice place," he repeated. "This it?", he asked, wagging a chubby digit at the couch. As I said, it was one of four pieces of furniture in the room, and the only couch-like one in the bunch. Sarcasm bubbled up in my throat and made ready to spew out of my mouth.

I was polite, though. "Yes, that's the couch," I said. I gestured for him to sit down., He planted his broad butt smack in the middle of the couch. I could almost hear the poor thing groan under his weight.

"Not bad," he commented, bouncing up and down on it. I could hear it creaking. "Though it is kinda beat up, ain't it?"

"Yeah, well, it's been through quite a bit, I guess."

He had hold of the right arm of the couch, and was pushing it from side to side, wiggling it like a loose tooth. At the same time, he maintained a steady rhythm as he administered his bounce test.

I felt like saying something, telling him to cut it out, but like I said, he was my only taker. I didn't want to piss him off.

He emitted a potentially room-clearing blast of intestinal vapor and asked me what I was asking for it.

"I was thinking 100 dollars," I said. I really had no idea. One-hundred sounded good to me.

This guy, however, made a face like I'd just told him I'd been Hitler's manicurist in a previous life. "How about 25?"

"I don't know. It's got . . . sentimental value. I've had this for a long time. It's gonna be tough to part with it. I'd have to say 75 or no go."

"40."

"65."

"50."

"Deal." Fifty wasn't great, but . . .

Well, the point was soon to become moot.. My corpulent friend, pleased with his bargain, decided to give the couch a final celebratory bounce.

He broke it in two. I mean literally broke it into two pieces. He had placed enough stress on it during his inspection to weaken it so much that this last pounding from his well-fed ass sent it to couch heaven. It was split down the middle, caved in, its back broken.

And there he was, sitting in the middle of it, screaming at me for trying to pass this defective piece of junk off on him and letting him get splinters in his ass and , oh, his lawyer was gonna make sure I got what was coming to me, I couldn't get away with this, and then he rolled out the door.

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I didn't even try to stop him. He was at least twice as heavy as I was and could've squashed me like a grape. I just stared at my poor couch and wondered how much I could get for my table.