

THE MARK

by

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The young man ran his hands over the surface of the recliner as if caressing a lover. Leather. Or at least *leather match*; leather where the body touches, “man-made material everywhere else. That would be fine.

The salesman, wearing a widely-knotted tie, the pale-lemon color that so many golfers prefer in their pant selection, approached him like a polyester-garbed shark. His scant hair was dyed a burnt orange color and slicked toward the back of his head where it gathered up in greasy little curls in an attempt to make him look young. The young man dressed simply in jeans and a Guy Harvey fishing T-shirt saw him move in out of the corner of his eye.

“Ya lookin’ for a reclinuh, son?” His breath was emphysemic and smelled of smoke. His fingertips were stained the color of his hair.

“Yeah,” said the young shopper. “Is this leather?”

“Leathuh is all I sell here,” replied the salesman with a sweeping gesture of his arm that took in the rest of the store; one of those expansive furniture “galleries” that proliferated the suburban Dade County malls. The comment implied that the store was his. It was not.

“How much ya lookin’ to spend?”

“As little as possible and still get something I like. Something nice.”

“I undastand,” said the salesman, taking one of his business cards out of his shirt pocket. He flipped it over and wrote a number on the back of the card. “This is what this chair retails for. You look anyplace and they’ll be askin’ that much or more.”

“Yeah?” said the shopper.

“But,” said the salesman smiling and revealing huge yellow teeth, “This is what I can let you have it for today.” He wrote another number on the back of the card and showed it to the young man.

“Hmnn. I’m afraid it’s still more than I wanted to spend.”

“Have you sat in it? It rocks and swivels and reclines. And it’s leathuh like you’ve been wantin’. Leathuh’s not cheap. Ya want somethin’ cheap, somethin’ that won’t last, ya look into a vinyl.”

“Oh, no. Vinyl won’t do. But please, give it to me straight. Sharpen your pencil uh, Bob,” he said looking at the card, “And give me your best price. I’m buying a chair today one way or the other. If I can’t make a deal here, I’ll go some place else.”

“Okay, fair enough. We’ll sale ya a chayuh. Have ya sat in it yet?”

“Yes, Bob. I’ve sat in the chair. I like the chair but it’s too much money. Give me your best price.”

Bob flashed the teeth again. “Fair enough. I can see yer a smart shoppuh. Listen, I shouldn’t be doin’ this but we got a clearance sale startin’ three days from now. Thirty puhcent off everythin’ in the store.” He took the card back and marked through the second figure and wrote another underneath that. “That’s the best I can do for ya.”

“That’s the best you can do?”

“I swear, that’s the best I can do.”

The young man took the card and wrote a price below the third price “This is what I was hoping I could get the chair for.”

The salesman chuckled. “Ya crazy. Ya couldn’t touch that chayuh anywhere for that.”

“Are you sure?”

“Sure I’m sure. That’s a fifteen hunerd dolluh chayuh. You couldn’t sit in it for what you’re offerin’.”

“What if it was damaged?”

“What damaged? The chayuh don’t have a mark on it.”

The young man withdrew a marker from his back pocket and slashed across the headrest of the chair, leaving a wide, black mark. It looked like a rip in the fabric.

“What the hell! Are you nuts?”

“No, Bob. But I want the chair and I want it for a fair price. I’m tired of hearing all the BS and I know I can get this chair for less, especially now that it’s damaged.”

“You crazy bastard. I’m gonna call the police!”

“Go ahead and call Bob. I don’t believe the metro police are going to put a vandalized Lazy-Boy at the top of their priority list. I’ll be long gone by the time they get here and you’ll still have a damaged chair that you’ll have to sell and for the price I offered you. There is a solvent that will get the mark off the chair but if you screw around and use the wrong solvent, you’ll undoubtedly ruin the chair. So, what do you say. I’m only offering what’s fair. You guys put way too much mark up on this furniture.”

The salesman turned and walked away in a huff. Then, he stopped and turned and came back. He grinned. “You’re a crazy bastard but I’ll sell ya the chayuh. There is some mark up on this stuff. I won’t make any money on it but I’ll be movin’ merchandise and the dealer will give me a break on the next shipment. I’ll write up the bill o’sale.”

After the transaction was complete and the young man had loaded the chair into his pickup truck, the salesman stopped him.

“That was a pretty lousy trick ya played but like I said, I admire your spunk. Reminds me o’when I was a young man. By the way, in case some other crazy kid does the same thing, what solvent do you use to get the marker off?”

“Water,” said the young man with a grin. Then he hopped into the truck and sped away.

Bob laughed at how clever the young shopper had been. “Water,” he mumbled to himself. He should have figured that out. After all, you can clean vinyl with just about anything.