

Hesitation

John was satiated. It was Sunday afternoon; a time to relax. At home he could always relax, and at home he could feel safe. He was aging, certainly, but when he surveyed his lovely home and all that he had gained he saw that it was good. After all, his house and the things within it were all that he had to show for decades of participation in the labour force. It wasn't so bad; he is doing better than most others. *I am comfortable.*

The doorbell rang, and John's train of thought was derailed. His anxiety stirred, he thought *who could be calling on Sunday?* He lumbered to the door, and gasped as he saw the sight beyond. A large muscular man was standing in his doorway, cradling another man. This other man was limp, with blood all over his clothes. It appears he was attacked as there were wounds all over him. John's lips quivered. He spoke.

"Hello? Can I help you?"

The large muscular man was quick to accept John's offer of help, and maneuvered past the doorway into John's hallway. "Hey! This man needs help! I found him like this lying on the street not far from here. I need some place to put him down while the ambulance drives here." He spoke forcefully, as if he would do what he wanted whether John gave his permission or not. *People these days; so rude* John thought. He moved his mouth to speak, but noticed what was occurring before any words came out. *Oh my God.* His world was stripped to bare, and he could see naught but what was occurring. *This cannot be.* Rage aroused within him as he contemplated what kind of world would allow this to happen to such a poor man. *His blood is dripping onto my floor.*

You will have to forgive John, his floor is quite nice. Before long he looked back at the large muscular man, and saw the fire of desperation in his eyes. His house guest was expecting him to speak. *Oh, right, he wants to lay this gentleman down before the ambulance arrives.* John spoke.

"I guess we can put him.."

Who can get blood stains out of carpet?

"... somewhere..."

What colour should the replacement be?

"umm.."

If he wasn't so damn muscular I would kill him.

"hmm.."

Oh, where do I place him?

"let's see.."

If the carpet is already ruined, we could put him there.

"just lay him on the carpet, sir."

Yes, that will minimise my losses. A sensible economic decision is only proper.

The large muscular man looked outraged - "What?! We can't lay him on some bloody floor; he needs to keep his head elevated." John was really starting to have had enough, could not understand why his Sunday was being ruined, and why the large muscular man was raising his voice. *What did I do? I didn't attack this person.* As much as he wanted to hide in his room until these men left, John once again spoke.

"Ok, please don't yell, I'm a sensitive man. I have three lounges in my living area, and if I have no other choice I suppose we could lay him on one of them."

His eyes surveyed the room. Three lounges, one bleeding man. John was a rational person, and well versed in numbers. He knew that he should put the bleeder on the least valuable lounge that lay in his living area. His humble abode. *My fortress of solitude, as superman would say.* John stood silent as he weighed his options.

The first lounge. The beauty, the beauty. French craftsmanship, late 18th century design. Half-reclining posture to represent luxury and indulgence. Cusped and scrolling seatrails, cabriole legs; a vision of aristocracy. Beech wood, all genuine, with material so soft you will never need a pillow. Truly this lounge was modelled during the 'golden age of the chair'. There is no way whatsoever that I will allow this bleeding fool to ruin such a work of art. Not there; no.

The second lounge. Called a fainting couch. Despite the relatively more modern feel, it is still an antique. This couch accompanied me to an antiques road show, it got me on tv. The velvet padding, pristine old-world buttons, four stump legs that are made with Huon pine. It is a lounge made for self-reflection and discovery, a lounge worthy of Freud's patients. I will not part with this masterpiece. Not there; no.

The third couch. I ordered this from a European dealer fifteen years ago. It is modern, produced the day before I bought it. Rich Italian leather. Warm in winter; cool in summer. The richest metal alloy ever used for a lounge frame. It was made by a world class lounge designer, and I was lucky enough to order in the first production run. It is a limited edition, a collector's dream. I imagine in twenty more years it would be worth more than everything else in this house combined. I would be insane to let that one get ruined. Not there; no.

John, for the last time, spoke.

"I'm sorry, there is nowhere for him to go."

The large muscular man left with yelling. John was glad to see him go. Later that night, on the news, John discovered that the bleeding man bled to death from lack of an ambulance. It was summoned, but it never arrived. The Government ordered an inquiry into the speed of emergency services.

They never even went to pick up the poor bugger; what kind of day and age do I live in?

By Timothy Neal

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