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WOMEN ARE BAS-RELIEFS

"Women are bas-reliefs, not sculptures," Isaac said.

"Bummer," Marty said.

They were sitting on barstools at a small, chest-high table watching the fillies stampede in for happy hour.

"Marry the girl, marry the family," Isaac said.

"Suddenly you have an Uncle Murray you never wanted to know."

"Look at the knockers on that one."

A particularly well-endowed young woman slid past them on her way to a table nearer the bar.

"Bas-relief," Marty said.

"What do you see in her bas-relief?" Isaac asked.

"Cop for a brother."

"Cop for a brother?"

"Arms like elephant legs. And an Aunt Flo."

"Aunt Flo?"

"Uncle Murray's wife. Has to be taken to the chiropractor twice a week.

Guess who gets to take her?"

"Forget the knockers," Isaac said.

The well-endowed young woman, now seated alone at a table nearer the bar, looked over and smiled. She was wearing a green knit sweater with a

plunging neckline calculated to display her generous endowment to whoever wished to examine her books.

Isaac smiled back with a half-hearted wave. "Well, maybe not," he said. "Are her parents in the bas-relief?"

"Of course," Marty said. "You don't get the knockers without the whole package."

"What are they like?"

"Well, they're not easy to see. Sort of in the background. What stands out in the bas-relief are the twin peaks. You hardly notice the parents next to those Himalayas."

"What are they like?" Isaac repeated.

"Father's an opinionated SOB. Watches Fox Five and listens to talk shows."

"And the mother?"

"Religious. Wants you to take the kids to church every Sunday."

"Church? I thought she was Jewish."

"Catholic. Half-Irish, half-Italian. Look at those green eyes on that voluptuous body!"

"What about Uncle Murray?"

"Aunt Flo intermarried."

The well-endowed woman was quickly joined by a much-less-well-endowed friend, a blond with a tough, gym-hardened body slipped into jeans and a tight sweater that fit her like a wet nightgown.

"You get the friend," Isaac said. "I'll take the opinionated father, the cop brother, the Sundays in church, Aunt Flo, Uncle Murray. I'm not interested in munching on little dresser-drawer knobs for the rest of my life."

"Don't you want to take a look at her bas-relief?" Marty asked.

"What's in her bas-relief?"

"She's Jewish," Marty said. "Her father sells Corvettes. Looking for a son-

in-law to take over the business."

"OK. Maybe you get the knockers."

"But wait a minute!" Marty said. "I see a ghost in the bas-relief!"

"A ghost?"

"Yeah. Etched in lines just to the right of and above her head."

"What kind of ghost?"

"It's her twin sister."

"I'm not sharing the Corvette dealership!"

"She's dead, stupid! Hung herself in the bathroom of her college dorm."

"Bummer."

"She's an identical twin."

"Suicide watch."

"And her kids. They'll have the genes, too."

The woman with the dresser-drawer knobs pressing hard against her tight sweater gave a little wave to Marty, then giggled to her well-endowed friend.

"Want to take a stroll over?" Isaac suggested.

"Wait a minute!" Marty said. "Who gets who?"

"I'm not sure. What did big knockers' father do again?"

"I didn't say. But he works construction. Maybe he can get you into the union."

"I'll go for the Corvette dealership."

"And the suicide watch? And the dresser-drawer knobs?"

"Damn! Why can't they just be sculptures?"

"So which one do you choose?"

"Screw it! Anyway, take a look."

The two young women had been joined by two young men, and were engaged in animated conversation.

"What are you making up all those things for?" Isaac said angrily.

"You were the one who said they were bas-reliefs."

"But look at those sexy sculptures! Look at them talking to those other two guys!"

"One of them is going to get the suicide watch. And the other one is going to get to take Aunt Flo to the chiropractor. Twice a week."

"The hell he is! You just made all that stuff up!"

"Sorry," Marty said. "I was just playing along."

"Next time we forget the bas-reliefs. We just go for the sculptures."

They sat silently for a bit, nursing their drinks, when an hourglass Hispanic girl, with long, curly, obviously dyed blond hair falling like a waterfall over her bare shoulders, squeezed by on her way to the bar.

"Bas-relief," Isaac said.

"What's in her bas-relief?" Marty asked.

"Father's a taxi driver," Isaac said.

"We're making up stereotypes here. Italian construction worker. Jewish Corvette dealer. Hispanic cabbie. He's probably a college professor."

"Seven siblings in a three-room apartment. Looking to you as their savior."

"I thought we were going for sculptures."

"There are no sculptures. That's the trouble. They're all bas-reliefs."

"Bummer," Marty said.

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