

# The Shopkeeper

*by* Tina Barry

I return to the furniture shop to purchase the chair I had admired earlier that day. A butterfly chair, the owner had said, pointing to the wing-like curves of its metal frame, the long slope of leather. No light is on outside the shop. When I peer closely through the window, I see the hazy glow of a small lamp. The owner may be inside. The door is unlocked. I step into the cool mustiness of the room, then move cautiously around small tables, a heavy cardboard box in the dark space until the light and what it illuminates becomes visible: the shopkeeper, in an olive-colored tunic, sleeps on an orange and brown plaid couch. His eyes are closed yet restless, as if too many thoughts loop beneath the lids. Behind him, a small phonograph plays a lazy jazz saxophone. It's too intimate: the sensual music; watching the man sleep; his bare legs. When I turn to leave, he opens his eyes. "Stay," he says. Hand over hand, he reels me in.

