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workshops

A Manual for Cleaning Women

by Melody Bertucci

7:20am. First alarm of the morning wakes me from my sleep. My hand starts moving even before my brain consciously sends it a request to do so and presses the snooze button on my phone for the alarm and for the four that would later follow.

Soft, sleepy, fresh awakening.

One to ten, they all gently tingle, one by one they slowly come alive again in the early morning.

9:10am. I'm late for work again! The rushing around of the morning nursery drop offs, subsequently followed by racing the ticking of the clock to get to work on time, has become very draining and mundane.

Hasty, slick, precise movements.

All ten of them work happily side by side to get things moving along. They've all been here before, they know the drill and get on with the task at hand.

1:40pm. I've not had time to stop since I came in this morning. My column has been booked back to back. Blow-dry, dry cut, tint regrowth, wet cut and finish, gents dry cut and more. By now my empty stomach is making its presence known to me. From time to time it abruptly breaks any gaps of silence there may be. "Feed me, feed me you fool!" It contests. A quick glance at the clock to see if I'll get a chance to eat something before my next client and then, a self-inflicted mistake happens.

Stinging, tender and wounded.

One of the ten is injured. A 'V' incision from two sharp blades allows a small amount of vivid, red blood to slowly trickle and escape from where it would normally reside. Just another typical work day, nothing new here.

5:00pm. I'm free from my work chains and free to roam, but it's not time for me to rest...at least not just yet. Behind the wheel, I embark the route on an already memorised journey back to my toddler. I allow myself to sink into my seat and let the music that's blaring from my speakers take over. It's become a sing along journey to the nursery.

Manoeuvring, clutching and tapping.

Although one of the ten is injured, it remains part of the team and does its best to help steer. The others for now rest on the wheel and by uncontrollable nature, they tap away to the rhythm that moves them.

7:30pm. The house is now quiet. The food has been prepared, enjoyed and is now resting in two full tummies. My little tornado is fast asleep, only the dishes remain to be washed before I too can rest.

Slicing, stirring and soaking.

All ten work hard to either hold in place the food or to chop with precision. They help with the fluid movement of blending flavours and allowing the vegetables to become infused in goodness. They all helped each other out. The last push, as they squeeze the soapy pomegranate and honeysuckle, infused sponge against dishes they loosen, relax and soften in the warm bubbly water.