

The Woman who turned into a Doormat

by Holly Raber

Mattie and Ned had been married for eleven years when things began to change. The previous year they had raised a glass and congratulated one another on reaching the 'comfortable slipper' stage, a milestone of sorts, somewhere between newly-wed angst and smug retirement. It seemed they had lasted, battled the bitter currents of resentment which had caused the wedding day confetti to swirl and eddy like wet snowflakes on that damp December afternoon. They had endured, despite the gloomy prediction uttered by Mattie's mother, "He'll walk all over you in no time...You'll soon see"

At first it was hardly noticeable, just a sort of 'flattening', a feeling of 'not-quite-rightness'. Mattie took up meditation and found she could spend hours just staring at the ceiling. Most days when Ned was at the office and the children at school she would lay full length in the hallway, her form bathed in the multicoloured beams of sunlight which spilled through the stained glass door panels. Sometimes she would drift off only to be woken by a slew of leaflets tumbling through the letter box.

The weekends were a torture for Mattie, the hallway a thoroughfare of muddy boots and bikes, a seemingly endless stream of dirty washing and a house-bound, horny husband. By Sunday evening she would be run ragged, her slight form just that bit flatter than before. She had become particularly fond of Ned's old brown fishing jumper with its coarse tawny weave, wore it often with faded jeans and an air of resignation.

Christmas was the worst, a houseful of resentful relatives, the hallway crammed with other people's coats and leaking umbrellas.

Creeping downstairs once everyone was asleep Mattie rested her back on the cool gloss surface of the door and slid soundlessly to the floor. Her foetal form fit snugly in the waiting well she sighed with contentment.

Ned often wondered what had become of Mattie. She had left without a word on Christmas night, hadn't even taken her purse just his trusty old fishing jumper. He didn't mind too much, about the jumper, he had always found it itchy. She had been a good wife, never complained always there to brush away his cares and welcome him home after a hard day's work. Where ever she was he hoped she had fitted in.

Three years after that fateful Christmas, after the authorities had declared Mattie 'missing presumed dead', Ned had remarried. On a late September morning when brilliant sunbeams bathed the hallway in a kaleidoscope of colour, Ned carried his new bride across the threshold of 9 Maple Gardens, taking particular care not to step on the mat.