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Dress to Die For

by Garf Collins

With a sigh of relief, Maurice Spencer emerged from the Ministry of Defence. He disliked his role, and particularly his title. “Assistant Secretary,” he muttered to himself. “Sounds like a filing clerk.”

Increasingly he felt there was a huge gap in his life that he couldn’t put a name to. Nonetheless, he strode down Whitehall, swinging his tightly rolled umbrella, imagining himself a traditional servant of the nation in a black jacket and pinstriped trousers topped off with a bowler hat.

Biddy, his wife, picked him up as usual at East Grinstead Station.

“Don’t forget it’s my bridge evening,” she reminded him. “I’ve eaten, but your dinner’s warming in the oven.”

Sitting at his lonely meal, Maurice felt a sense of unreality. It was as if his inner being wasn’t fully connected to his body. After he’d eaten, he wandered about aimlessly. Eventually, he entered their bedroom and saw an angora cardigan lying on the bed. On a whim, he put the garment on. He liked the feel of the woolly fabric on his neck, and thought it rather suited him as he looked in the mirror. He found his excitement at this strange act incomprehensible, but that evening he was more at peace with himself than he could remember.

The following week he tried on one of his wife's blouses under the cardigan, and then, on an impulse, changed his trousers for a skirt. As he looked in the mirror, he once more had that feeling of ease.

After this, Maurice could hardly wait for Bidy's Tuesday night bridge evenings. He started his own collection of clothes – giving every shop the same excuse. "Present for my wife, you know." Each week he became his woman of choice. His favourite was 'Assistant Secretary'. High heels, short skirt, see-through blouse and a blonde wig. He began to video himself so he could relive the Tuesday excitement all week.

Six months later, an envelope was delivered to his desk, marked, *Strictly Confidential*. It contained many explicit photographs. A brief note said, *We hacked your iPad camera. Pay £1,000 into the account below and you will hear no more about it.*

In a panic, he paid the money, but the demands kept coming until he could pay no more. The next letter threatened to send the photos to his wife.

On the following Tuesday, Bidy was dropped off after bridge as usual.

Strange, she thought; Maurice has left the car running.

Opening the garage door, she shrieked when she saw her husband lying dead in the passenger seat. On his chest was a note, which she read as she drew back from the exhaust fumes.

In despair, she shouted. "You stupid, dear man. I knew all about it. When I looked on your iPad for Lottie's wedding photos I found your little videos. I didn't mind at all. I could see it made you happy, and we could have had such fun together."