

A Feat of Fabrication

by Helen Miele

“Morning, Mr Wilson,” said the cleaner as she shuffled past, fluffing her feather duster along the edge of his desk. Mr Wilson, a smartly dressed man in his late fifties, glanced up crossly at this interruption and grunted a half-hearted response.

“Stupid woman,” he thought as her swishing dislodged the documents sitting in the corner. He was the self-made millionaire owner of the eponymous IT solutions company Wilson Enterprises – “Innovate. Create. Dominate” – and had very little respect for the dowdy middle-aged cleaner, in her shabby pinny and Miss Marple brogues.

Work governed Mr Wilson’s life and his early morning schedule unfortunately meant the cleaner was still there when he arrived, bustling around, frantically chasing invisible fragments of dust. He should really have admired her work ethic, coming as he did from nothing, but his mother had been a cleaner and this woman (he had never bothered to learn her name) reminded him of everything he loathed growing up. Hand-me-downs, worn shoes, schoolyard taunts. The embarrassment of being poor. Plus, although she was likely a similar age to his wife, they were worlds apart appearance-wise which also slightly disgusted him. Mrs Wilson’s toned, lithe body, glossy hair and taut glowing skin were in stark contrast to the cleaner’s grubby appearance, lined features and dumpy shape. The mere sight of her irked him and he made a point of ignoring her existence as much as possible, never engaging in conversation.

Mr Wilson of course did not see much of Mrs Wilson, working round the clock as he did. But having the trophy wife was an essential verification of his success, visually enhancing his perfect life and validating his achievements. She did not work, he was insistent that she didn’t have to. No need for her to lower herself serving someone else like his mother had to throughout his childhood – he could provide whatever she wanted. Keeping up appearances was all part of the reality of his existence.

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Mrs Wilson was, as nearly always, asleep when he got home, likely following a hard day of shopping and cocktail drinking. He didn’t really care these days, that side of his marriage had dwindled long ago, and he had instead found solace online. Luckily anything you could ever dream of – and more – was readily available online.

Mr Wilson splashed a 50 year old Macallan over a single ice cube, and logged onto *temptingtootsies.com*. Images of available girls filled the screen. Or more accurately, images of available girls' feet filled the screen. High heels, bare feet, shiny toenails, glittering toenails, feet in a fluffy rug, feet in bubbles.

He spotted the flexing pillarbox red pedicure of his favourite girl, Estelle, straight away and clicked on her profile. Ten delicate toes filled the screen, wagging suggestively.

"I've got something you're going to love tonight," drawled Estelle. Mr Wilson loosened his tie and leaned in with anticipation. The something she had was... slime – oozing, gelatinous, slippery neon pink gloop. Mr Wilson shuddered involuntarily in expectation.

"Payment first," quipped Estelle, then teased, "it's slightly extra for, erm, props, but I can tell by that longing look that you know it's going to be worth it."

Mr Wilson hastily authorised his credit card details, adding a generous tip to the apparent going rate for 'props'. Then he loosened his belt in preparation for an evening of pleasure. Or 30 minutes at least.

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In the cold light of day Mr Wilson did not like to reflect on his predilection for feet. He had never openly admitted as much to Mrs Wilson, although he always offered plenty of compliments when she was wearing her open toed Louboutins for one of the many sycophantic dinner parties they hosted, hoping that she might reciprocate without him having to say it out loud. In his perfect life it was a failure, a weakness which did not ally with his desirable accomplishments.

He would never acknowledge it, especially to himself, but his foot fascination arose from his mother soaping her weary soles after yet another day of dusting, spraying and polishing for numerous, better off, families. Every night he would have to fill a basin for her and watched as she tenderly bathed the day's aches from her feet, followed by the rhythmic massaging of some heady scented moisturiser. It was the only hint of luxury in their impoverished life. But like all his childhood memories this disgusted him, more than most, the confusion of it translating into adulthood shameful and perverse.

Following Estelle's 'performance' the previous night his slumber had been blissful and serene. His dreams had held him captive so he was slightly later than usual heading to the office, ashamed at the reason why. Mrs Wilson was of course still languishing in bed, silk eye mask covering her flawless features, as he silently dressed for the day ahead.

Arriving at the office he parked his gleaming Range Rover as always in the 'Reserved for CEO' space at the front of the building and stepped round the rear of the car to retrieve his laptop. Suddenly a red Lamborghini swept round the side of the building. Startled at the unexpected appearance of such a magnificent machine, Mr Wilson almost dropped his laptop in envy. The car slowed as it approached and a window peeled down with a dehydrated hand extending a wave.

"Morning, Mr Wilson," called the dowdy driver attached to the hand, "your office is all done."

Mr Wilson gawped at the sight of his early morning nemesis settled comfortably in the luxury supercar. "I... I... what a vehicle!" he enthused, annoyed at himself for doing so. "I didn't expect someone like you to drive such a beautiful car. I mean..." Stumbling over his blatant rudeness, he turned it into a joke. "Am I paying you too much? Haha".

"Haha, sort of" replied the cleaner. "Well I suppose very few of us are what we seem, are we Mr Wilson? Anyway, best get my foot down!"

With that she pressed the accelerator, pillarbox red pedicure encased in her sensible shoes. Mr Wilson watched her zoom off, an inexplicable feeling of unease settling over him like a shadow.