

Vanity is Only Skin Deep

My eyes popped open by two simultaneous actions. The first, bright sunshine filtered through the slits on the blinds and an annoying radio announcer, much too happy greeting me with a "Good Morning, British Columbian's. Are we awake, yet? If you need to be planted somewhere other than bed at 9:00 AM, you have exactly one half hour to do so."

I stretched like a lazy cat and burrowed deeper into my duvet. Ah, a Saturday. No work, just play, play...

I jolted— my exams in one hour.

I jumped out of bed, scattering my clothes—which I had haphazardly flung across the end of my bed last night—in different directions as I headed to the shower. I could sleep in tomorrow, for now I needed to be on time for my final four hour exam, which would license me as a Chartered Accountant.

Late or not, there is no excuse for anything less than perfection when it came to one's appearance. I chose my clothing with care since you never know who you are going to run into. I picked up and discarded a pink cashmere sweater. It wasn't a pink day. Next, I tried my white silk blouse, soft and elegant against my skin, and with the top two buttons undone, it accented the right

amount of cleavage without being vulgar. I put on my black skirt, but no, there was not enough leg showing. Instead I chose a navy blue skirt with a slit from my thigh to my ankle, showing my shapely legs, from a pile on the sofa. A dress jacket finished my ensemble, and, as I looked at the finished product I marveled at how enticing my blue eyes – reflected with flecks of gold, shone against my blonde hair. Thank God I'm a true blonde – not a dark root anywhere. My flawless complexion required little makeup, so with mascara, some red lipstick and a spray of Crystal Noir, I was ready to go. At the age of 35, standing 5'5" with my weight proportioned in all the right places, I knew I was irresistible.

As I brushed my teeth, I watched the pounding of the rain, remembering last night's gale front that moved across the peninsula. Even though it was thunderous and the rain was coming down in sheets, it looked like it had been downgraded to a storm.

Without a minute to spare, I ran for my umbrella and car keys. They were not on their pegs. I had my handy man build nooks for them, just to avoid this eventuality. His good looks came back to me in a second and I allowed myself to reminisce about the day he installed them. Shaking my head to rid the image, I focused on where they could be. I searched the living room under reams of computer printouts until I remembered I dumped them last night, along with everything else, on the kitchen table.

A minute later, I was out the door and staring at my newest acquisition, a 2007 Jeep YJ. A new image, a new career, had to come with a new set of wheels, which had every option from theft control to heated seats. And I looked great in it. Yes, it was a good

move and if I didn't get a move on it soon, I would be late and my toys would be repossessed.

I was in my Jeep calculating the time it would take me to get to the college if I drove a little over the speed limit. Pressing harder on the gas, I sped up and flew through the first intersection and would have taken the second had the car in front not slammed on his brakes. Just my luck, I thought, as I pulled up behind him. My eyes wandered over to the field where a football game was in progress. The light turned green and my foot began to depress the gas pedal. Suddenly, some ghostly force pressed the gas pedal to the floor. It certainly did not feel like my foot. I smashed into the car in front of me. I bounced off and with the impact forcing me backwards; I smashed into the car behind me. This went on one, two, three, four times! Finally, the shock wore off; I released the gas and hit the brakes.

The inside of the car became soundless, still, hushed. I was in my own little world until the pounding of a fist on my window brought me back to reality. It was a man and what looked like an angry man. I felt myself being pulled from my car and frog marched to the sidewalk.

He yelled, "Why the heck didn't you put your foot on the brakes?"

"I-I don't know. I was just starting to go and..."

"You idiot! It could have been a minor fender bender, but no, you turned it into severe damage. Just look at what your rear end did to my front fender!" he screamed.

"Is there a problem here, miss?" a voice said, as I flopped down on a small piece of grass. My legs felt like rubber.

"I'll tell you the problem, this woman driver kept her foot on the gas—"

"Listen, mister. Get out of the way. I saw what happened and right now this young lady needs medical attention before she sues you for damages to her vehicle and body," he said as he smiled and winked at me.

Laughing, my would-be assailant said, "Right, you and what army?"

"How about that army, sir?"

Recovering, I followed his glance as he viewed the football team who had stopped playing when they saw the accident. Football players make an impressive group when they were all shoulder to shoulder. Wow! What a formidable sight! All that male testosterone kicking in. God, I loved it. But what I loved even more was the effect it was having on my attacker.

"Why you have no right to threaten me, *sir*," he retorted.

"I'm in no way threatening you, sir. I am just wondering what kind of man would go intentionally out of his way to scream at a lady, such as this, when clearly, you are at fault with this accident," my rescuer said, bending down to my side and helping me up.

My aggressor's face had gone from red to purple and his mouth gapped opened and closed like a fish. He brought up his hand in an attempt to punch, but before anyone could move, a handcuff clasped his wrist and a uniformed policewoman spoke, "I would think twice before doing that, sir."

"First a woman driver, now a woman cop; what the hell is the world coming to," he murmured, but standing next to him I heard every word, as did the police.

The unmistakable resonance of an ambulance arrived in sequence with the fire department. Teams of ambulance attendants and fire fighters went about their jobs with cool efficiency. An attendant approached me and led me to the back of the ambulance.

"I'm fine, really," I said, "Just shocked. That's all."

"You should let them check you out, M'am, you were pretty shaken up when I arrived," my football hero said.

I smiled and gave into their administrations.

Moments later, I was face to face with my attacker again. The police came with a humiliated man still in handcuffs.

"Since he didn't physically hit anyone but, the intent was there. Do you wish to press charges," she asked of us.

With a wink from my hero, I knew he wanted this one.

"Um, well. He was aggressive. And made derogatory comments about women," I said, watching his face turn puce. I knew in that moment if I ever were to come face to face with this man in a dark alley, I would be dead.

"That's true, m'am. I heard every word and had to stop him from the possibility of physically assaulting her."

"I- I would never—"

"You are here out of a courtesy. I suggest you shut up," the policewoman said.

"And he did raise his hand. He was going to start a fight. I don't know how he figured he could win, with a football team. But some men, I guess they think

they are almighty and can intimidate people, smaller and weaker than themselves," I said.

Smoke was coming out of his ears as I continued on my tirade.

"I don't know what would have happened to me if these fine young men weren't here to protect me. He did drag me from my Jeep. You saw that didn't you?" I asked of my superstar.

"Oh, yes M'am that is why we approached *tous de suite*."

"Okay, then," and turning to the offender, the police stated, "You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against—,"

I tried but I couldn't hold it in. A look at my megastar stated the obvious. We broke up laughing.

Hysterically, I turned and through tears running down my face, I said to the police, "It's okay. I think he has learnt his lesson. I don't want to press charges. Let him go."

After passing around my phone number to a few of the players, and getting my admirer's number and address for our date next Friday, I turned and saw a look of revulsion on the man who was now free to come and go.

Shivering from the look, I made my way quickly to my Jeep, jumped in and headed to the campus.

Upon arrival, I spent a good lot of time fixing my hair and makeup resisting any signs of the past hours' trouble. Knowing I was late, I was quickly on my way to Room 222.

Reaching the door, I grasped it, flung it open and exclaimed in shock, "Oh my God, it can't be."

But it was.

"I hope you have a good time on your date, *miss*, while I am at home grading exam papers. This is one situation where your looks aren't going to help you," the examiner sneered.

I saw the menacing look on the face of the man –who less than an hour ago I had threatened with a jail sentence and a football team.

I knew I should have stayed in bed.

