

Heart

by Jake Barnes

Normally I get the old woman. The old and chubby one. But last week she was busy with another customer, so one of the youngsters clipped my claws. She was Vietnamese, I assumed, like all of them. They seem to have cornered the manicure market in our neck of the woods.

I started going with my wife after my hip replacement. I can trim my own fingernails, but toes are a problem. I look forward to it. Usually I'm the only guy in a roomful of women. Some of them are foxy, too.

The one I have today is a cutie. She is a tall and awkward kid with a pretty face. She is friendly, too, and talkative, although I have a hard time understanding what she says. She knows a little English, but not much.

She looks at my feet, and her eyes widen. She says something in her native language, and the other girls laugh. I suppose it is the size of my feet that amuses them.

While the girl does my toes my eyes are glued on the girl's neckline. The top buttons of her blouse are undone.

I watch TV while the young lady snips and sands and polishes. I squirm when she rubs lotion on my toes. It tickles. Auto racing is on the TV. That puzzles me. I can't believe that any of the girls are fans of the sport, nor their customers either. Around and around in a circle the fast cars go.

All of the girls seem to be married. I ask where the boss is that day, a girl named Kim. Hospital, somebody says. The girl who is

doing my wife's toes chimes in. "Her husband have bad heart," she says. For a moment it is silent in the room. Nobody says a word.

