

Salon du Monde

by Jake Barnes

My wife got us an appointment for Wednesday morning. Wednesday is her day off. She has her nails done every so often, and lately I have been going with her. I can trim my own fingernails, but since my hip operation, toes are a problem.

I was nervous the first time. I was in a woman's world. Out of my element. I learned to relax and think of England, so to speak. Having a woman play with your toes is, well, distracting. Especially when she's wearing a shirt with an open collar under her smock.

The girls at the salon are Vietnamese. They are all about the same size. The girl who does my wife's nails is Kim. Kim is a beauty. She has a little smile on her face as if she had a secret. I tell my wife that I bet she is full of hell.

The girl who does my nails has a round and rosy face. She is cheery and talkative, but I can't understand a word she says. There is a third girl, too. She is slender but formless in her black pants and smock. She wears round wire-rimmed glasses.

I sit there reading a magazine while the woman clips my claws. From time to time I watch Kim's face. I am amused by her look of concentration. To her this is serious business! That's all right, too, I think. That's good. It doesn't matter what you do in life; it's how you do it. I admire a crackerjack mechanic more than a so-so surgeon.

