

# Cold Feet

*by* Kristin Fouquet

Brett opens the door. "Isn't it bad luck?"

I enter, kick off my shoes. This ritual is mine, not his. "That's only if you see me in my wedding dress. I think."

I'm not usually superstitious, but suddenly I worry that something's going to go wrong. Anything wrong on this day —of all days— seems irresponsible or maybe immature.

He asks, "What are you doing here? Don't you have a million things to do or have done to you?"

Regarding his flannel pajamas, it seems a shame to make him put on a tuxedo.

"My mom and sisters are in the room, swarming around like termites. I snuck out."

Taking my hand, he leads me to the sofa, the site of countless nights of spilled wine, Chinese take-out, and sex. As a wife, will I invest in upholstery cleaner, demand a new sofa, or just live with it?

Brett yawns. "They must be excited."

This vintage black dress I'm wearing has been mended many times. I find a sewn patch and rub it. Good luck? Something old?

"While they continue to remind me that it's 'my day', it seems more like theirs. My mom keeps bringing up my grandmother. 'If only Nana could be here. You getting married after declaring that you'd never.' It's depressing."

Brett's hair is greasy. I doubt he washed it last night. As a husband, will he shampoo more regularly? And his smell. That Brett smell. It might become my smell.

As if reading my mind, he pulls his pajama top to his nose, sniffs. His face gives no verdict. "You miss her?"

"She said funny stuff like 'He's tight as an old shoe'." I laugh. "Isn't an old shoe worn-in and comfortable? Isn't a *new* shoe tight?"

"I guess someone could outgrow a shoe and it would be tight." Sigh. "Gala, why are you here?"

This is the first time I've felt unwanted in his apartment. He probably longs to get back in bed. He must be hung-over. I imagine him getting a lap dance from a stripper last night. She would've been fair, tall, and blonde, the opposite of me. Did she smell like flowers or cheap perfume? Did he get aroused? Are there stains in his briefs? Is any of this my business? Maybe tomorrow it will be, but not today. Wives ask questions.

"I was nervous. Wanted to talk."

Getting up, he reaches for me to join him. He hugs me. "Everything's gonna be fine. Don't worry."

Beer. Cigarettes. Brett smell. No perfume. "Thanks."

At the door, he bends down and grabs one of my shoes. He turns it over.

I ask, "What is it? Gum?"

"You need new shoes. These are beyond repair. Look how far the nail's exposed and cutting into the leather. I'm surprised you hadn't noticed."

I snatch the shoe. Clutching it to my chest with both hands, I feel my shoulders shake as I begin to sob.

