

Silent Minority

by Yvette Wielhouwer Managan

She smoothed her hair with a hand that should have been the turning pages of a cheap dime-store novel. I watched her from under my eyebrows but kept my head fixed downward, pretending to pay attention to the 6 ½ narrow stiletto heeled black alligator pumps. Not easy to do, with the light catching the gleam of her long yellow hair, and the garish red that colored her chipped and hang-nailed fingertips.

“Hurry up, I gotta plane ta catch.” She spit her words out quick, between chews and pops of the pink wad of gum that played around the scarlet slit of a mouth. “Gotta get ta Chicaago toot sweet. Com'an, yer takin' too long. How long's it supposed ta take ta shine a pair a shoes? What'er ya stupid er just plain slow?”

I'd heard enough and began the spit-shine, working the rag over the top of her shoe, nice and easy, as if I had only the best of intentions. My hands started working fast, then faster, building up a friction and wearing away the wax. Sooner than she knew, I closed my mouth and sucked, drawing spittle into the small well between my teeth and tongue. When I was ready, I spat. I spat a big one. It missed the firm curve of the top of the shoes and slipped down her arch, to her stockinged instep.

A few more swipes with the blackened flannel rag and I was through. “You're done, Ma'am. Have a nice flight.”

