

The Zen of Carwash

That's it, squeegee, do your thing. No streaks. That's right, no streaks. I don't care how old and worn out you are, *NO STREAKS!*

I clean the windows last, after carefully sudsing, gently washing and caressing the body with my ShamWow. My neighbor, Dan, walks out of his garage and nods.

"Ed, there's a strange look in your eyes when you wash your car, I mean,...cars."

That's right, I always wash them both at the same time. I tend to spend a little more quality time with the little white one, sitting in her, listening to the music, spreading Armorall on all her sun sensitive places, but the newer silver sedan gets the soft towel all over after *her* ShamWow.

"Yeah, Dan. Maybe it's therapeutic. I'm outside, breathing that clean ocean breeze, I can relax, talk to myself and my cars, and nobody says a thing, do they? Do they? Dan... do they?"

Forget it, he's already back in his garage. The door comes down, hermetically sealing him off from the outside. I turn my attention to the little white one.

"I'm sorry," I say. "I'll get to that rust spot as soon as I can."

The guy from 598 drives slowly past in his new blue Beemer, iPhone at his ear. I hurriedly pull the Shamwow over her eyes.

"Don't look," I say. I pull the loofah from from the bucket of warm water and spray a few drops of tangerine scented detergent on her, then wash in slow circles, from the grill to the back bumper. The silver sedan's alarm goes off.

"Calm down," I say. Then, "Look, you're just not ready for the loofah...maybe in another 5,000 miles."

The alarm stops. I notice that Dan and Michelle are watching me from their upstairs window. Dan shakes his head, then pulls the shades. I continue my wash.

Ummm...that tangerine smells so good.

"Hey, can I be next?" I'm yanked from my dream state. It's Flo, from 534.

"Sure," I answer, "but let me warn you, I do a mean loofah."

At that moment, two things happen simultaneously. The left rear tire pops on the little white one and the silver sedan starts itself up, backs out of the drive, tires screeching, and pulls into the guest parking area. The engine revs and the horn blasts. Flo stares. I continue my slow wash. I point the dripping loofah at her.

"C'mere,, I'll show you how it's done."

She steps back slowly into the drive, then turns around and begins to run.

"Wait!," I yell after her.

"Listen," I tell the little white one. "We've got to do something here. I can't keep on buying tires like this. You're a 2000, remember. Ten years old! In human years you're a senior citizen!"

I think it's time for a trade-in.

The little white one starts up and backs out of the drive, headed for the gate, flat tire flopping. Floomp, floomp, floomp, floomp. I run after her. I try logic and reasoning.

"Wait, you've got resale value!"

She rolls through the gate, turns down the street and disappears. I hear her for another block or two, then silence.

Walking back to the condo, Flo, Dan and Michelle confront me.

"Ed, the Homeowner's Association rules state that..." I cut Dan off.

"I know."

Tears cloud my eyes. Flo steps up and hugs me.

"It's better this way," she says.