

# The Zen of Carwash

I carefully suds, gently wash, and caress her body with the 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 together. I spend a little more quality time with the little white one, sitting in her, spreading ArmorAll on her sun-sensitive places, but the newer silver sedan gets the soft towel all over after *her* ShamWow.

"Yeah, Dan. It's therapeutic. I'm outside, breathing fresh air, 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 to the little white one.

"I'm sorry," I say. "I'll fix 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 the bucket of warm water and spray a few drops of tangerine scented detergent on her, then wash in lazy, slow circles, from the grill to the back bumper. The silver sedan's alarm goes off.

"Calm down," I tell her. "You're not ready for the loofah...maybe in another 5,000 miles."

The alarm stops. I see Dan and Michelle watching me from their upstairs window. Dan shakes his head, then pulls the shades.

*Ummm...that tangerine smells so good.*

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

"Sure, 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 up, backs out of the drive, tires screeching, and pulls into the guest parking area. The engine revs, the horn blasts. Flo stares. 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.

"Listen," I tell the little white one. "I can't keep 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 street, flat tire flopping. Floomp, floomp, floomp, floomp. I run after her.

"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, Flo, Dan and Michelle confront me.

"Ed, Paragraph 2, Section 7 of the Homeowner's Association rules states that..." I cut Dan off.

"I know, and it's over."

The tears cloud my eyes. Flo hugs me.

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