

The Six-Year Itch

by Natalie McNabb

Judd hands me file after file, a white label with eleven-point Times New Roman, all caps, on each.

I smile and point my toe upward, stretch my heel. Straightening the folders, I say, "I'll get on these," and walk away toward my desk near the forever-leaf-dropping Ficus. He's ogling, and I know it. But, it no longer bothers me.

"We're set for tomorrow?" he asks. It's not a question.

"You fly out at 6:36 p.m. First class was fifty dollars more with points. I confirmed late arrival with The Bellagio and lunch with your niece." *Niece, my ass.* She didn't sound eighteen. More like my age, thirty. "This week's correspondence is in your briefcase." I smile at the next bit. "And no colored paper clips, just like you like." I feel, though, as if I have read him my grocery list:

detergent

tampons

vino

bread

It's 5:45, Judd's just standing there, and I need to stop at the store before my son's football practice at 6:30.

Finally, Judd walks across the room, lifts his black overcoat and scarf from the rack, takes his hat from another hook and says, "You made the reservations?" Again, not a question.

“For two at 6:30 p.m.” Another niece, but this one’s the ginger-haired thing slinking around the first floor.

“Tell Jan I’ve got a meeting.”

I nod. “I sent her some anniversary flowers. Roses.”

“Oh. Thank you. Yes.”

Jan will have the house, cars, sailboat and twins eventually.

Judd leaves, pulling the door shut behind him.

There has to be something better than copying, stapling and paperclipping my way through divorce, custody and legal separation files while Judd gets his rocks off. I swore I’d find another job, but that became *one day* and *one day* became *someday*. Six years later, here I sit. I lift the handset and dial Jan.

“Asher residence,” she says.

If not now, when?

“Hello?”

“Hi, Jan. Happy anniversary.”

“Thanks. How’re you, Nancy?”

“Fine. Thank you. Judd asked me to call and see if you could meet him at 6:30 at Daniel’s for an anniversary dinner.”

“How nice,” Jan says.

But, 7:00 would give Judd and the ginger-hair time to get settled though. “My mistake. Reservations are at 7:00. He knows it’s last minute, but—”

“No. That’s great. I’ll be there.”

“Sounds good.”

“Thank you, Nancy. Good-bye.”

The guilt. But, it’s going to happen anyway, and Jan’s beautiful, has family money. She won’t have to paperclip, staple and copy her way through her twins’ upbringing. I remove my office key from my key ring, place it on my desk and email Judd: “I QUIT” in eleven-point Times New Roman, all caps.

Judd exits the elevator and pulls the keys from his coat pocket. He whispers, “Too bad that one’s the help.”

Jan retrieves the long-stemmed roses, still in their box, from the yard waste bin while dialing the neighbor girl, Madeleine, who sat for them last year.

~ *The Short Humour Site, April 2011*