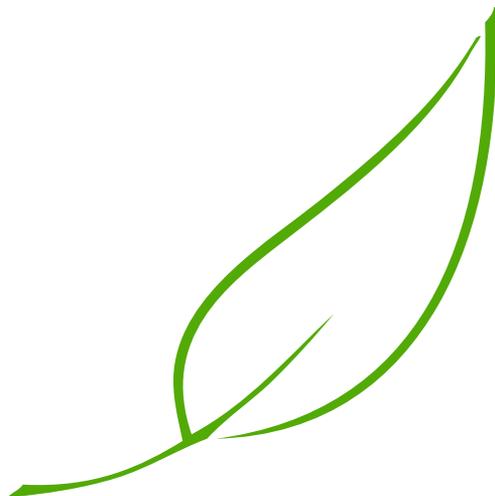


THE FINISHING TOUCH

by Ken Bradbury



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(Melinda is at work at her receptionist desk. Natalie comes rushing in.)

NATALIE: Am I late?

MELINDA: That depends. Who are you?

NATALIE: Natalie. Natalie Nicolson.

MELINDA: You're here for hair?

NATALIE: Nails. Natalie Nicolson for nails. I have an appointment.

MELINDA: Sweetheart, it's prom night. Everybody in the whole world has an appointment. Excuse me. *(answers phone)* Looks Are Us. Sorry. We're booked all day. No dear, don't jump off a cliff. You'll break a nail. Okay, listen ... I can squeeze you in at 2:15. But be on time. Yeah. You're welcome. *(hangs up)* Do teenage girls ever plan ahead?

PAYTON: *(rushing in)* I hope I'm not late.

MELINDA: Hair, nails, massage, makeup or emotional counseling?

PAYTON: All of the above. It's prom night.

MELINDA: I know. Name?

PAYTON: Payton. Payton LaHarpe.

MELINDA: Have a seat.

PAYTON: I can't. I'm too nervous.

MELINDA: Then pace. Pace and worry and wear out the carpet. It's good therapy.

RAMSEY: *(entering via another entrance)* Miss Nicholson?

NATALIE: Yes! Yes, that's me! That's me!

MELINDA: Sweetheart, this is prom ... not the Kentucky derby. Hold on to your saddle, girl.

RAMSEY: Right this way.

NATALIE: Can you do this fast? I still have to pick up my dress.

RAMSEY: I'll dip your head in a bucket of nail polish and you'll be out in two seconds if you want.

PAYTON: Am I next?

MELINDA: To have a heart attack? Probably. Look honey, just have a seat and relax.

PAYTON: How should I have my hair done?

MELINDA: Quickly. And maybe a local anesthetic would help.

STACEY: (*rushing in*) Is this "Looks Are Us"?

MELINDA: Yes, I'm Miss Us. Can I help you?

STACEY: I don't have an appointment.

MELINDA: Welcome to the world.

STACEY: All I want is a facial and my hair done and my nails and maybe one of those foot massages. Will it take more than ten minutes?

MELINDA: I could just throw you in the clothes drier and do the whole thing at once.

STACEY: Wouldn't that hurt?

MELINDA: Have a seat, kid. I'll work you in. (*answering the phone*) Looks Are Us! No, oil changes are next door. You have the wrong number. (*hangs up*) And maybe you don't. I don't even know what I'm saying today.

STACEY: (*to Payton*) You going to prom?

PAYTON: Yes, and I was here first.

STACEY: I know that. You were here when I came in. Did you know your car's still running?

MELINDA: Please ... just settle down, girls. We'll get everybody done and off to the big party.

NATALIE: (*enters, blowing on her nails*) Oh, I love it! I just love it! (*showing the other girls*) Did you ever see such a ...

STACEY: Natalie?

NATALIE: Huh?

STACEY: Your dress is red. That's orange nail polish.

NATALIE: My dress is red? My dress is red! Oh my gosh! My dress is red! What was I thinking? (*sticking her nails in Melinda's face*) Quick. Blow it off! Quick!

MELINDA: It's already dried, honey.

NATALIE: Chisel? Have you got a chisel?

MELINDA: I've got a blow torch in the back room. Are you allergic to fire?

NATALIE: Oh, this is terrible! I can't go to prom! My life is over!

MELINDA: Cover it.

NATALIE: Huh?

MELINDA: We can cover it with another coat.

NATALIE: Will that make my fingers heavy?

MELINDA: Yeah. You'll probably need rehab and a cast but we can do one in red. Just have a seat.

RAMSEY: (*entering*) Next?

PAYTON: Me! That's me!

NATALIE: But I've got to have my nails done over!

STACEY: I'm next!

PAYTON: No you're not!

MELINDA: Hey! Hey! Easy!

STACEY: Okay, we'll work on all three of you at once. We'll get your hair started, we'll work on your facial, and then we'll slap some red over your orange fingers. (*to Melinda*) Can you pitch in? We've got a crisis, here.

MELINDA: I guess. I like war movies. Just a minute. (*answers phone*) National Homeland Security Administration. No, we're closed for ... (*looks at the girls*) ... repairs. (*hangs up*) Well, let's got at it, ladies.

(*Much adlib chatting as the girls arrange the chairs, crowd around each other, start giving their directions for hair, nails, etc., as Melinda and Stacey try to calm them, get them in order, etc.*)

(*Then suddenly, crisis. The lights go out.*)

STACEY: The lights! The lights went out!

PAYTON: And what's that sound?

MELINDA: Tornado warning. Sorry girls, but we've got to close things down.

NATALIE: But it's prom!

MELINDA: Yeah. Tornadoes have no sense of timing. Look, everybody down on the floor and it'll blow over ... Hey, if nothing else, it's a great way to dry your nails. Just dangle your fingers in the air when the roof comes off the building.



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