

Washed Away

By Pat Moore

He was hurrying out of the shop when it happened; only the perfume counters to go and the door was in sight.

"Can I interest you in Divine shower gel Sir?"

The man popped up out of nowhere!

"No thank you," he grumbled, aiming for the streets.

"No really - it's Divine!"

Hadn't he just walked past him? Here he was again!

"I don't need it!"

A disgruntled check of the watch showed he was in growing danger of a parking ticket - and other dangers unknown...

"I've seen it clean up some right messes Sir - maybe like the one you're in now."

"How did you...?" The man looked round, alarmed.

"It's a free gift. (Terms and conditions apply)" the voice continued, as if growing anxiety, waves of guilt and embarrassment were a daily occurrence.

"I haven't told anyone about my er.... mess!" hissed the man secretively, checking the space for eager ears.

"White as snow - as if you've never sinned"

"Who said anything about sin?" snapped the man defensively. Still, he was edgy. Meetings had a habit of happening when you least expected them. He stepped to the right to move past; yet again his way was blocked.

"You should take the offer Sir. It's a gift!"

"Until it runs out."

"New every morning!" He replied. "This brand never runs out."

Annoying salesman. Would he never stop? "I don't believe..."

"Oh Sir, I wish you did. Those are our terms and conditions."

He was about to reply but found himself staring at the shower gel thrust in his face with the list of ingredients: grace, mercy, righteousness, blood ... It didn't make sense! He took the bottle, shook it, opened the lid, smelled it, and turned it upside down.

"There's nothing here. It's empty!" he declared.

"May I refer you to our terms and conditions?"

"What?"

The salesman sighed as if taking in a huge draught of patience to calmly explain one more time...

"All you have to do is believe, and you see! There it is!"

The bottle was full.

"Faith Sir - by faith you can be clean."

Time was up! The parking ticket loomed.

"I don't have time for this." With renewed determination, he headed once more for the door. The insidious voice rang out.

"Would you rather I called the Law?"

A warning. He stopped. He turned. That mess sure could get messier! Perhaps he had been too hasty. He gazed again at the gel.

"Free eh?"

"Paid for."

Slowly, hesitantly, the man reached out, took it - and finally walked away. If his ears had been tuned in, he would have heard the final words of the mystery man, spoken under his breath, solemnly...

"You don't want to know the cost!"

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Thank you.

Pat

