



## Foo Dog Hiss

By Ingrid Anders

*Get it together, May. Even the most patient husband has his limits.* As if reading her mind, one of the little foo dog statues on the sidewalk looked up at May and blinked. The pair of stone guardians flanked the entrance to the Chinese massage parlor, with its colorful foot chart in the window. May had never really noticed it before—the foo dog nor the storefront. She steered the stroller inside.

While May's feet soaked in warm brine, she imbibed the scents of sandalwood and jasmine. The reflexologist asked, "Where are you uncomfortable?"

"My back."

He lifted her bewhiskered calf from the tub and bandaged it in cloth. Then the other leg. He clasped each foot with both hands. White fireworks exploded on the backs of May's eyelids. She woke up to the reflexologist scraping the balls of her feet with a small, wooden paddle. The baby slept soundly beside her, unlike at night.

That evening, as May paced the bedroom with the noisy bundle, her husband looked up from the dog-eared sleep-training manual and remarked that May wasn't stooping.

A week later, when May rolled up to the reflexology salon, the same foo dog chirped and flicked its tail at her. The stroller felt lighter as she maneuvered it around the folding room divider just inside the door. As May nestled into the red, upholstered lounge, the notes of erhu and dizi stroked her ears.

"Where are you uncomfortable?"

"My head."

The reflexologist raised May's smooth legs, one by one, from the bath and swaddled them in towels. He kneaded her calves through the consoling fabric. She closed her eyes and floated away on orange waves. May woke up to the reflexologist rapping her toes with little wooden hammers.

That evening, as May nursed her daughter, her husband beheld her over his steaming coffee mug and remarked that she was smiling.

The next week, May's legs steered the stroller directly to the little stone lion, which jumped up and nuzzled her ankle with its cheek. Inside, the bamboo stalks bowed to her from their bronze pots. May's polished toenails dove into the tub.

"Where are you uncomfortable?"

May pressed her lips together. "My libido." She woke up to the reflexologist suctioning flaming glass balls to her heels.

On Saturday morning, May's husband burrowed his face into the back of her neck. "I've missed you." They could hardly wait for the baby's naptime. At ten o'clock, May pushed husband and stroller out the door. Together, they danced along May's weekly walk to town.

Sadly, the little foo dog statues were not outside the massage parlor to greet them; the colorful foot chart was gone too. The door was boarded up and a small crowd stood before it.

"This place?" said May's husband. "I always thought it was a brothel."

"I'd say spies," said someone else.

"Definitely illegals," ventured another. "Sent back where they belong."

And though she could not see it, May heard the little foo dog hiss.