

Get Those Shoes Off The Welcome Mat

Aron Hernandez

LORRAINE is sitting at the kitchen table with a cup of tea and a children's book. She reads the book out loud, as if to someone, until ALAN enters. She hides the book before he sees.

LORRAINE

You're home late. Long day?

ALAN

Mhm.

LORRAINE

Let me guess, Tom sprung some silly task on you last minute?

ALAN

Mhm.

LORRAINE

I should have a word with him. That's the third day this week.

ALAN

No, don't make a fuss.

LORRAINE

I wouldn't if he payed you overtime. You should really mention it to him, you know? It's not an unreasonable thing to ask for given how often he keeps you past five.

ALAN

Not a big deal. I don't mind it.

LORRAINE

You sure? You've seemed a bit stressed lately. I think all the extra work is speeding up the aging process.

ALAN

What?

LORRAINE

Yeah, you're becoming an old man with all those wrinkle lines. And your hair's gotten so thin, look at this.

(LORRAINE messes with ALAN's hair, who shoos her away.)

ALAN

Come on, cut it out.

(a beat.)

LORRAINE

Leftovers are in the fridge. I'd heat it up for about a minute if I were you.

ALAN

Mmm, thanks. Hey, Lorraine?

LORRAINE

Yes?

ALAN

What are those shoes still doing there?

LORRAINE

What are you talking about?

ALAN

The yellow shoes on the welcome mat. I thought I told you to put them away.

LORRAINE

You did?

ALAN

I did. This morning before I left I said "please put those shoes away" but I come home and there they are.

LORRAINE

Oh, sorry dear. I must've forgot.

ALAN

So can you put them away?

LORRAINE

Of course. Oh, and speaking of shoes, I was cleaning out the closet and I found your old golf shoes. How long has it been since you took out your clubs?

ALAN

Maybe eight months. We get any mail today?

LORRAINE

Right over there. You really should get back to playing though. Every morning when I pass the Peterson's Jerry's always out on the lawn and every day he asks me when you're gonna join him for a

round.

ALAN

I would, I've just-

LORRAINE

Got a lot on your
plate right now.

ALAN

Got a lot on my plate
right now.

LORRAINE

I know, and that's what I tell him every single time.

(ALAN begins to sift through the mail.)
He asks how you're doing.

ALAN

Huh?

LORRAINE

Jerry. He always asks me how you're doing.

ALAN

And what do you tell him?

LORRAINE

That you're well. Busy. Well and busy. Anything good?

ALAN

What? Oh, nah. Just bills, magazines, and a letter
from Aunt Claire.

(ALAN opens the letter, reads it, and sighs.)
I guess we're making this a monthly occurrence now.

LORRAINE

What's it say?

ALAN

The same thing it said the last time. And the time
before that. And the time before that.

LORRAINE

She's old. Her antenna isn't really picking up all of
the channels anymore.

ALAN

But what about the people taking care of her? Don't
they know that she's been sending us the same letter
for the past four months?

LORRAINE

They have plenty of other people to keep track of,
Alan, they can't monitor her every move.

ALAN

I'm just sick of reading the same stupid...

*(ALAN rips the letter and places both halves in
a pile of other discarded mail.)*

Can you move those shoes now please?

LORRAINE

I will. Tea?

*(LORRAINE extends the cup of tea to ALAN, who
takes it.)*

ALAN

Thanks.

LORRAINE

You've had a long day. We should do something that'll
help you relax.

ALAN

Like what?

(ALAN takes a sip of the tea then coughs.)

Oh! Oh, I don't know, Lorraine. I'm kinda tired I was
just gonna go to bed.

LORRAINE

It's alright if you fall asleep halfway through. You
know I don't mind.

ALAN

Uh, you don't?

LORRAINE

Of course not. Don't you remember our first date?

ALAN

Our first date? But we didn't- wait, what are you
talking about?

LORRAINE

At the movies. You were snoring for the entire second
half of *Free Willy*.

ALAN

Right the movies! That's what I was thinking too.

LORRAINE

And there's a comedy special on tonight with that guy from-

ALAN

No. Not a comedy.

LORRAINE

Oh, okay. Well, Linda recommended this one movie about a girl with no sense of smell who falls in love with a candle maker.

ALAN

That sounds awful.

LORRAINE

Yeah, I wasn't super sold on it anyway. What about *The Phantom of the Opera*?

ALAN

I don't think that's on HBO.

LORRAINE

I could try to find a bootleg on YouTube.

ALAN

Live theatre? Yeah, no thanks. What about that new documentary about the polar bears?

LORRAINE

Isn't that supposed to be kinda depressing? I'd rather not watch something sad.

ALAN

It's not sad, it's... realistic.

LORRAINE

But why watch something realistic? Isn't real life realistic enough?

ALAN

Better than pretending life is nothing but sunshine and rainbows like in those whimsical chick flicks you watch.

LORRAINE

First of all, 'chick flicks'? Really? And second, what do you have against sunshine and rainbows?

ALAN

Would you please stop doing that? It's like you can't take anything I say seriously.

LORRAINE

That's not true.

ALAN

Oh really? Then why is it that every time I ask you to put away those shoes you blow it off like it's a joke?

LORRAINE

That has nothing to do with it.

ALAN

But then why haven't you done it? Is it really too much to ask?

LORRAINE

It's not that, it's...

(LORRAINE glances at where the book is hidden.)

ALAN

What? What are you looking at?

(ALAN sees the book and picks it up.)

What's this doing here?

LORRAINE

I was reading it.

ALAN

Why?

LORRAINE

It's a really good book.

ALAN

So you were reading "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" simply for your own enjoyment?

LORRAINE

That's right.

ALAN

Oh, Lorraine, this has to stop. I don't know how much more I can handle. First the shoes, and now this.

LORRAINE

What is it with you and the shoes? Can't you just let it be?

ALAN

No, I can't because every day I go out to get the paper I trip over those damn shoes. Then the whole way down to the end of the driveway I'm too busy cursing them under my breath to pay any attention that once I get back in the house I trip over them again! I'm sick of seeing them so for god's sake please just get rid of them.

LORRAINE

You know I can't do that. They're Mary's shoes.

ALAN

I know. That's why I need them gone.

LORRAINE

But, Alan-

ALAN

She's gone, Lorraine. Mary is gone. She's not coming back. Keeping those dirty old shoes on the welcome mat won't make her magically burst through the front door.

LORRAINE

I know that, it's just-

ALAN

Do you? Do you know that? Because it's been four months and not once have you seemed to even acknowledge it. You act like she's still here and she's not. When are you going to accept that?

(LORRAINE doesn't respond.)

ALAN

Lorraine, did you hear what I-

LORRAINE

Shh.

ALAN

Lorraine, wha-

LORRAINE

It's raining. Remember when it would rain? And those big, dark clouds would roll over the sky and you'd

look out the window and know a storm was coming?

ALAN

What are you talking about?

LORRAINE

And when it finally did, heavy raindrops would fall along the ground and on the roof, forming fast little streams on the sides of the road. We'd be in the living room, talking about our days or watching tv, when we'd hear her bound down the stairs. Before we knew it she was out in the yard, kicking up puddles in those beat up yellow shoes. We'd watch her for a while from the window before telling her to come inside. She'd stare at us and smile, the rain sparkling on her face. Not a care in the world in those bright eyes. And then eventually we'd manage to get her back in. We'd wrap a towel around her even though she never shivered. We'd bring her dry clothes and chide playfully when she tried to step onto the hardwood floor in her soaking wet shoes. 'Those shoes stay on the welcome mat,' we'd tell her over and over again. 'Keep those shoes on the welcome mat'. That was the rule. No matter what she did or where she went, when she came home that's where her shoes would be. She may be gone, Alan, but she hasn't left this house. So until that day comes, which I can't imagine being any time soon, those shoes stay where they are.

ALAN

You really believe she's here?

LORRAINE

Of course. I can't seem to be away from her. She's everywhere. My morning walk, my drive to work, my dreams. I see her when I walk through the door, I hear her when I make tea, I feel her when I read.

ALAN

But doesn't that just make you miss her more?

LORRAINE

It used to, but I like to think it helps me be closer to her. Besides, I'd rather remember and miss her than hold it all in. Wouldn't you?

(ALAN picks up the shoes and stares at them for a moment before giving them to LORRAINE.)

ALAN

Put them away. Please.

LORRAINE

Alan, I-

ALAN

I said put them away. Not get rid of them. Just keep them off the welcome mat. We don't need them out in the open where everyone can see.

LORRAINE

Alright, I'll put them in my closet...

ALAN

Thank you.

(LORRAINE places the shoes on a chair.)

LORRAINE

... tomorrow.

(LORRAINE exits swiftly.)

ALAN

Wait, Lorraine!

(ALAN sighs in defeat and, after a while, picks up the book. He sits down at the table in the chair opposite the shoes and begins to read out loud, as if to someone.)

END OF SHOW.

