

## Wilderness House Literary Review 6/2

*Taryn Moore*

### **What Size Shoe Are You?**

“What size shoe are you?”  
She always asked in the same tone  
(pausing to smoke, to cough)  
as if the answer fluctuated  
with each block of time we spent apart.

With a steady hand,  
she pulled open your mirrored door  
with great excited force;  
eyes already darting expectantly about,  
tracing the outline of the stacks of shoes  
you waited silently among.

Each pair she revealed  
with glamorous showmanship  
was as ugly as the pair before.

You were not different.  
inside my heart, I hated your  
every outline,  
each artificial gem.

I pasted a smile on my face  
and accepted,  
my reluctant hand grasping  
with subdued gratitude.

I remember you,  
most outlandish green,  
flashing with false complacency,  
your hastily gummed array  
of plastic treasures.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 6/2

I remember your swollen pride,  
held high in the slight wrinkle  
of her palms, her gold band  
resting against your cheap foam heel.

Into my hands you slide  
and (till your visage changed  
with my new eyes)  
into my closet you slid from there  
and waited, coiled like a patient snake  
smelling of a foreign home  
and the insistent cling  
of a half-smoked cigarette.

The time again came, rousing the same scene  
as it always did, but this time  
I did not take those offered shoes  
(each as ugly as the pair before).

I kissed her pale cheek  
(she wasn't feeling well today)  
and gathered my things –  
feeling better that I hadn't collected that  
unfailingly, unwearable clutter  
to keep you company  
in the dark of the back row,  
deep within my closet.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 6/2

As it happened,  
you disappeared from my mind; vanished,  
as though you had never emerged  
from the factory,  
as though your horrid foam heel  
had never been dyed,  
as though your plastic clutter  
had remained (well received) in the dreams  
of a little princess in her mother's oversized heels.

I did not think of you  
as my eyes were assaulted  
with a vision I could not process  
as my heart threatened  
to shatter through my ribcage  
and as my unwilling fingers  
(seizing up in fear)  
dialed the numbers  
I had never hoped to dial.

I did not think of you  
as I stumbled into my shoes  
waiting neatly at the front door,  
yelling into the phone  
with a voice so hoarse  
my mother could not understand  
the words behind the terror.

I did not think of you as I was seated  
on the cold hospital tile  
deep in thought;  
the clean sneakered feet of nurses  
reminding me my senses were intact.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 6/2

I did not think of you  
as my eyes dropped  
from the tell-tale face of a doctor  
(whose name I have forgotten)  
to his neatly-shined leather shoes  
because my body wanted to follow.

I did not think of you  
as I shouldered the arm  
of a faceless sympathizer—  
crouched numbly  
in a tiny chapel vaguely listening  
to desperate cries  
that could not have been my own  
(but they were, weren't they?).

It was only in the silence of the night  
and the faint scent of  
stale (vanishing) smoke  
that I realized you had existed –  
that you had been waiting,  
always knowing that I  
would come back to you,  
and hold you tight to my chest  
with a burning fervor  
that sparked a true glimmer –  
your worthless gems  
becoming rivals to king's jewels.

I will not wear you,  
you blinding green atrocities,  
you cheaply ornamented eyesores –  
but I will love you,

## Wilderness House Literary Review 6/2

If you never become beautiful,  
if you are never worthy of a pair of feet;  
I will love you  
if you do not forget  
where you have come from,  
if you never fail to recall

What she does  
(did)  
For you  
(me).