

Magic Shoes

Fred Gielow.

“Come into my shop, won’t you, sir? I have shoes to show you. Very special shoes. You won’t be disappointed.”

Jonathan looked at the shopkeeper. “No thanks,” he said with a smile. “Not today. I’m not interested.”

“Ah, but I think you’ll like them, sir,” the shopkeeper responded. “They are very special. It will only take a minute or two. Please come in. I have a surprise for you. I think you’ll like it.”

Jonathan wasn’t in a particular hurry, so he decided to go in and take a look.

“Right this way, sir,” the shopkeeper said as he opened the door and led Jonathan into his shop.

Jonathan was surprised to see the shop was tiny, about the width of a hallway and maybe ten feet long. There was dark wood paneling on all four walls, carpeting on the floor, and a small but elaborate chandelier hanging from the ceiling. The shop was brightly lit, but surprisingly, there were no racks of shoes on display, only a single pair on a pedestal in the center of the room.

“You only have *one* pair of shoes to sell?” Jonathan inquired. “This is it?” he said, pointing to the shoes on the pedestal.

“Just this single pair, sir,” the shopkeeper replied, “but it’s not for sale.”



Jonathan was puzzled. “I don’t understand,” he said, shaking his head. “You have a shoe store with only a single pair of shoes, and the pair is not for sale? You’ve got to be kidding. This must be some kind of joke?”

“I’m not kidding, sir. You see, this is a very special pair of shoes, and a very beautiful pair, I might add. But it’s not how these shoes *look*, it’s how they *feel*. If you want, you can try them on. There’s no charge for the first time you try them on.”

“Well, I don’t know,” said Jonathan. “I’ve tried on a lot of shoes over the years, and they all feel pretty much the same.”

“Yes, of course they do. Other shoes feel pretty much the same because they *are* pretty much the same, but these shoes are unlike anything you’ve ever tried on before. Believe me, if you put on these shoes, your life will be changed. Forever. I mean it.”

Jonathan laughed. “I don’t think putting on a pair of shoes could possibly change my life. That’s silly.”

The smile on the shopkeepers face quickly faded and a serious expression took its place. “Do not doubt me, sir. Your life *will* be transformed. Do *not* put on these shoes unless you’re willing to undergo a fundamental change.”

“How could putting on a pair of shoes change me? That’s ridiculous. They’re just shoes, for goodness sake. Shoes are shoes.”

The shopkeeper looked intently at Jonathan for a brief moment, then said in a whisper, “These shoes are *magical!* They feel different on your feet because they change the way you think and the way you experience the world. They change you. You become a different person. It’s magic, sir. Really!”

“I don’t see how that’s possible,” Jonathan said with a snicker. “Putting them on couldn’t do any of that. They’re just shoes after all!”

“They’re *magic* shoes,” said the shopkeeper, repeating himself.

“I just don’t believe it,” Jonathan scoffed. “I don’t believe in magic. It’s some kind of trick.”

“Well then, why not put them on?” replied the shopkeeper. “Give them a try. You’ll see. The first time you put them on, there’s no charge. Each time after that, there’s a charge.”

“A charge to put on a pair of shoes? I’ve never heard of such nonsense. That’s crazy.”

“Then, why not put them on just once?” said the shopkeeper in a calm tone of voice. “They slip on and off quite easily.”

“And you’re saying there’s absolutely *no* charge of any kind if I just put them on once?”

“That is correct, sir. No charge whatsoever. I promise.”

“They’re certainly rather flashy,” said Jonathan. “They look like they might be comfortable, too. Maybe I should just try them on. I can’t see any harm in putting on shoes and then taking them off. I’d like to see what they look like on my feet. Maybe I could take a selfie.”

“Yes, of course, sir. That would be permissible.”

“Do you have my size?” Jonathan asked. “I’m a nine and a half.”

“The pair of shoes you see here fits everyone, sir. As I said before, they’re magic. And they will change your life,” said the shopkeeper as he reached for a stool for Jonathan to sit down. “You can try them on for two minutes. That’s the limit. Then, they must be taken off and placed back on the pedestal.”

“Two minutes? I certainly don’t need more time than that,” Jonathan mumbled to himself. He sat down on the stool and untied the laces of the shoes he was wearing. He slipped off first his left shoe, then his right shoe.

He looked up at the shopkeeper, who carefully lifted the magic shoes from the pedestal and placed them gingerly on the floor in front of Jonathan.

Jonathan paused for a moment, just staring at the magic shoes. He cautiously picked up the left shoe and examined it closely, top to bottom. There was nothing he could see that appeared out of the ordinary. Then slowly, he slipped his left foot into the shoe, pulled the lace snug, and tied the ends in a bow. He then did the same with the right magic shoe. Then, slowly, he stood up.

He looked at the shopkeeper and for a moment there was an expression of utter astonishment on his face. Then, gradually it was replaced with a big, broad, beaming smile. “This is amazing!” he said. “This is truly amazing! I feel so good. These shoes are wonderful. I can see things and hear things I’ve never seen or heard before. I feel so free, so liberated, so strong, so much in control of my life. I feel invincible! This is the most wonderful feeling I’ve ever had! In my whole life! In my mind right now, I’m seeing fascinating patterns that are beautiful beyond words, and colors I didn’t even know existed. And I’m hearing sounds that make me want to cry they’re so magnificent. These shoes – yes, I’ll admit it – these shoes are truly magical! It’s hard to believe. I’ve never felt like this before. Ever. This is like living in utopia. I want to experience this feeling forever.”

The shopkeeper, who was staring at his watch, spoke: “118, 119, 120. That’s two minutes, sir, time to remove the shoes. Please take them off carefully.”

“No!” Jonathan said angrily, “I want to wear them all day, all week long, forever! With these shoes, I’m in ecstasy! It’s like heaven on Earth. Please! You’ve got to let me wear them a little longer. Just a few minutes. I can’t stop now! This feeling is too wonderful. I’ll pay you! What do you charge? I’ll pay you anything.”

The shopkeeper’s voice was stern. “The magic shoes come off now!”

“Please!” Jonathan implored. “Just a little longer. This is so satisfying. So gratifying. So rewarding. So wonderful!”

“You can put them on again tomorrow, sir, but of course there will be a charge,” the shopkeeper stated. “Only once a day, and only for two minutes.”

“I’ll do anything to keep them on,” implored Jonathan. His face was getting red. His eyes were wide. “Anything! Do you hear me?”

“No,” the shopkeeper replied, calmly but firmly. “The shoes come off – and they come off right this minute!”

At that point, Jonathan abruptly woke up. He sat up in his bed and rubbed his eyes. His mind was spinning. He was trembling all over. He was breathing hard and perspiring profusely. The sheets were drenched. He looked down at his feet. There were no shoes. His feet were bare. His heart was pounding. With a shaking hand, he reached for his stash of cocaine.