

University of Massachusetts Boston

From the Selected Works of Rebecca Saunders

2011

Sore Feet

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The Big Boss

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The Big Boss

Woman, about fifty-- Character note: She's sweet and somewhat vulnerable.

Woman's Right Foot

Woman's Left Foot

Man, about fifty

Man's Left Foot

Man's Right Foot

Cashier

The Big Boss (Mr. Handsomely Perfect)

Big Boss's Left Foot

Big Boss's Right Foot

Time: The present

Place: A supermarket, any town

At rise, a WOMAN and two actors dressed as large FEET [legs from the hip down, emphasizing the feet] enter a supermarket. The FEET wear black socks and follow the WOMAN as she moves through the store, completely out of sync with her walking. The RIGHT FOOT [RF] is delighted not to be wearing a shoe and shows it in her/his movements. The LEFT FOOT [LF] is distinctly embarrassed. The WOMAN frequently has to stop and tug at her feet to keep them with her, as a mother struggles with young children. Their conversations frequently overlap, because they are part of the same person.

RF: We're all in this together and it's a long walk back to the car and we're not wearing shoes. But we're with you on this one. Yep. We sure are.

LF [*sarcastic*]: Right. Best idea you've had in . . . I don't know how long . . .

WOMAN: . . . and who made the suggestion in the first place? You did! You should be glad I'm the type of person who is open to new ideas. Those shoes hurt me as much as they hurt you. We donated them for a good cause.

LF: There was nice pair of boots in that donation box. You *could* have traded your shoes for *those* boots and not just given them away. . . [*Wild, frustrated gestures.*]

WOMAN: . . . a donation box is for donations. That would not have been fair. Somebody will need those boots. You don't know.

LF: *And* there are shoes at home. We could have stopped off before coming to the supermarket.

WOMAN: I just didn't feel like stopping by the house. I knew that once we got home and comfy, I wouldn't want to go back out. Then I'd have nothing to eat but boiled yams for the third time this week. Come on, let's go. My blood sugar is plummeting.

LF [*muttering, lagging behind*]: If it's not the blood sugar, it's the ADD; if it's not the ADD it's the migraine, if it's not the migraine, it's the . . .

WOMAN: [*glancing back at them, tugging at LF.*] . . . I'm absolutely starving and there's no food at home. I told you! That's why we had to go to the bank so I could at least get to the supermarket. And there were no sarcastic remarks while we were at the bank I noticed! In fact you feet seemed pretty happy to me. Without shoes!

LF: Maybe because no one saw us? Maybe because we were nice and warm in the car?

RF [*stage whisper to RF*]: . . . shut up! Count your blessings and quit while you're ahead.

LF : I'll never be a head.

WOMAN: We'll be quick.

LF: *[explodes]* Why did we end up leaving the house with those stupid shoes on in the first place, may I ask?!

WOMAN: Because the shoes are black.

LF: Of course! Silly me . . . That explains everything!

RF: So, the shoes were black, and . . . ?

WOMAN: I'm wearing black pants today.

RF: *and* . . . ?

WOMAN: If you must know, I'm trying very hard to be more fashion conscious and aware of my wardrobe . . . and. . . .

LF: Huh?

RF: Why? . . . all of a sudden . . . now . . .

WOMAN: You perfectly well know why.

RF: But you haven't cared for ten . . .

LF: more like twenty . . .

RF: . . . years whether your shoes matched your pants or your socks . . .

WOMAN: Not true!

LF: Oh, please.

WOMAN: It was just that in the past I couldn't bring myself . . . always in a hurry . . . slept too late to get anywhere on time . . .

RF/LF: All right, all right . . .

Woman: Those days are over. Attire is important.

LF: But does it have to hurt?

WOMAN: This hurts me more than it hurts you.

RF/LF: WE ARE YOU.

WOMAN: Look. I'm trying to be more professional, OK? OK? I've been getting hints at work that I should . . . Hey, give me a chance, OK? *[Pause.]* We'll be in and out in a jiffy. Just get

something at the salad bar. Who is going to notice? It's Friday night. They'll all be on their cell phones making sure they're picking up the right wine to take to whatever dinner they're going to.

RF: Well, I'm Ok with it. It's old left brain here who's upset.

WOMAN: Who is going to look at my feet? I'm a respectable middle-aged woman and I'm wearing a very respectable middle-aged woman's coat. Am I right or wrong?

LF: You got lucky at Good Will. It's only got one hole in it!

RF: Shut up! [*Kicks LF*]

WOMAN: Nobody's going to notice. In fact, it might be fun to see if anyone notices.

LF: Oh, lovely. Her quirky humor is coming back! [*Moan*] She's not taking this . . . this . . . expedition seriously! I know her.

RF: Yes, you do. So could you please . . .

WOMAN: All *I* have to do is to remember that I'm not wearing shoes and although most likely no one will notice, I can't get distracted. You know what happens when I get distracted. You have to help me by not griping so much and getting distracted yourselves, OK? OK. Let's get moving.

RF: Stay focused. Remember.

LF [*slips*]: Yikes! Little slippery there!

WOMAN: Oops! Careful. Yes, the floor's slippery with just socks on. Let's head straight to the salad bar, keep it under ten bucks, and get out of here. [*At the salad bar*] Oh, my! Roasted apples! Perfect. Focus. Stay focused and we'll leave. [*Gets her salad, focused so far, Feet dutifully following.*]

Enter The Big Boss with his Two Feet, clad in professional men's office shoes, following him in perfect step.]

Oh, my god, it's The Big Boss! What bad luck.

RF to LF: Who's that?

LF: Mr. Handsomely Perfect. Head of the division. Extremely organized. Doesn't much like us.

WOMAN: Crouch!

[WOMAN and FEET go down in a heap, pretending to examine something on the bottom shelf as The BIG BOSS goes by.]

LF: Did he see us?

WOMAN: He didn't see us. I know he didn't. Is he gone?

RF [*sidles out and looks around corner*]: Looks like he's heading to the express counter, but I'm not sure.

LF: Oh, hurry, Mr. Handsomely Perfect, I've got such a cramp.

WOMAN: Sorry Feets, but he's scary. We can get up now. This sure has been one useful coat.

RF: I knew this whole venture was a bad idea.

LF: But would you *say* anything? Oh, *no*! Just to make me look bad.

Narrator: They get up in an agony of stiffness. They hobble to the checkout line.]

WOMAN: [*to herself*] Uh, oh. Oh, no. I just made that deposit. It won't be in the bank yet. I didn't think of that.

LF: No, that's just the sort of thing you wouldn't think of. Boiled yams are starting to sound mighty good right about now.

WOMAN: [*Turns to a man standing in line behind her in line. He has only two items.*] Uh, excuse me, but you might want to go ahead of me. I have to think how I'm going to pay . . . I just made a deposit and this card might not work . . .

MAN: Hey, it's Friday! It's all over for the week. Take your time, madam. I'm in no hurry.

CASHIER: Yes, just take your time.

GROCERY BAGGER: I used to work in a bank. Did you deposit the money before 4:00?

WOMAN: Uh, I don't know exactly. Just a few minutes ago. What time is it now?

LF: You can't really think she knows what *time* it is . . .

RF: Will you stop!

CASHIER [*The CASHIER keeps up a manic barrage of talk, some can be improvised. The WOMAN tries to listen and respond while fumbling for and handing over her debit card. The MAN watches with amusement.*] Was it a check or cash? Was it a payroll check or a personal check? A payroll check from a corporation? That will go through but not if you deposited it after 4:00. I'm really a banker, not a grocery bagger. A personal check will probably go through, too, but these days you're responsible if it bounces. I know; I've worked in banks all my life. This job is only temporary. The responsibility has shifted onto the customer, which is both a good and a bad thing. You are in control of when you can access your funds. That's a good thing if you

can absolutely trust your sources. Of course, it's not so good if you don't know the writers of your checks all that well, which is often the case in small business.

LF: Meanwhile, she's completely forgotten about having no shoes.

RF: Oh, give it a rest. Enjoy this incredible rubber thing we're standing on. *[Luxuriates.]*

CASHIER: I'm afraid your debit card didn't work.

[The WOMAN gets more and more flustered. THE BIG BOSS and his FEET join the line behind the man. WOMAN tries a credit card. It also fails. Announcement: "Registers 4 and 5 are now open." She mutters apologies to the MAN, to everyone in general.]

MAN: *[flirtatiously]* I'm perfectly happy not to be in a rush for once. It's great. Take your time and don't give me a second thought.

WOMAN: Uh, ok. Sorry. Oh, I know! I'll write a check. Funny how nobody thinks to write a check these days.

CASHIER: We'll need to see your license.

THE BIG BOSS: Excuse me, but what's holding up the line? *[His RF taps impatiently.]*

WOMAN: License. Now where is it . . . Ah, yes! *[Fumbles, then in triumph whips out her license which she carries on a lanyard, writes check, grows calm.]*

CASHIER: Oh, how handy. What a good idea! Keep your license on a lanyard. Then you never lose it.

WOMAN: *[relieved, thoroughly distracted, and now into the two-way conversation which the MAN and the CASHIER punctuate with murmurs of agreement, comments about airports, the TSA, etc.]* I always carried my license this way. You never have to fumble through your cards. Ever since I lost my license in an airport going through security, I wear my license like a necklace from the minute I leave the house until I get home. And you know what else? If I lose one more thing in an airport because of homeland security searches, I'll go absolutely bats . . . do you know I once lost a . . .

[Both FEET are luxuriating in the rubber mat in the check-out line, not paying the least bit of attention, for once.]

MAN: Is that where you left your shoes? *[Everyone looks down.]*

WOMAN: My shoes. Oh. You see . . . there was this donation box. . .

MAN: Donation box.

WOMAN: Yes. A donation box. And . . .

THE BIG BOSS *[explodes]*: Well, I certainly hope you had your shoes on when you met your clients today!! We'll discuss this matter Monday in my office. At noon, if you please!

WOMAN: Oh, no!

MAN: Donation box??

WOMAN: Yes, and . . .

RF/LF: *[Interrupt, hold the WOMAN'S mouth, and pretend to be her talking]* I mean, "No." I mean, "Oh, my goodness! I have left my shoes at the airport! Such a busy life of travel. . . Back to the airport! Such expensive shoes, too! Nice talking to you."

[The following actions happen simultaneously.]

[MAN'S FEET come out from behind him]

MAN's RF: Oh come on! You don't have to make excuses for her **craziness**. He likes her, can't you tell?

MAN's LF: But we're not sure we like you. *[The MAN's FEET start to kick the RF and RF.]*

LF: *[let go of the woman, start kicking back.]* Can we help it that your man's horny?

RF: And she **isn't crazy!**

The MAN pays and leads the WOMAN off to the side, away from the cashiers. She fearfully watches THE BIG BOSS glare, pay, and glare some more, but gradually the MAN consoles her, she explains what happened, and the engage each other's attention to the point that they don't notice the FOUR FEET arguing and chasing each other.

MAN'S RF: We were going home for a beer and a nice, hot foot bath . . .

MAN's LF: . . .and you had to come along and distract him!

[Kick. Feet chase each other, leapfrog, and step on each other. The four feet get muddled during the free for all. The leg of the WOMAN ends up paired with one leg of the MAN. Horror! They mix and remix. THE BIG BOSS'S FEET try to skirt the fray but get tripped up in it and THE BIG BOSS falls as he storms towards the exit. He and his FEET crawl out of the pile to make an undignified exit. Finally WOMAN and MAN's FEET fall into a heap. The WOMAN, shoeless, walks off with the MAN. The FOUR FEET rise up in time to hear . . .

WOMAN: You have swept me off my feet.

. . . The FEET scramble to follow. The cashier grins at the audience and shrugs.

