

We were all wowed by this nostalgic story by Marion Shepherd, whose wonderful sense of humour shines through all her stories and never fails to entertain us. It made us laugh out loud but also empathise with the pain her young heroine experienced. We feel sure other members will love it too.

### THE NEW SHOES

At last, she had enough money to get them. She had looked at them every day for months. She had cut down on canteen lunches and fancy shampoos to save up for them, and now, at last the day had come. She could make these beautiful shoes her own. She took another look at them as she pushed open the door of the shop. They were pink, with a peep toe and a little heel and decorated with a black patent bow on the front. She had loved them at first sight. She sat down on one of the velvet covered chairs.

"I'd like to try on the pink court shoe in the window please Size 5 and a half" she told the assistant, who went off to the inner sanctum to find the pink shoes. She seemed to have been gone for quite a long time and Sally was beginning to get anxious. Eventually the assistant emerged carrying two beige cardboard boxes.

"I'm sorry Madam, (Sally had never been called "Madam" before) "I haven't got that particular shoe in 5 and half but I have it in blue, or I do have the pink version in size 5 if you would like to try it on". Sally rejected the blue shoe immediately. She took off her shoes and took the Pink Peep toe shoe Size 5 from the assistant. Yes, this was the shoe that was meant for her. She put it on the floor and gently pushed her foot into its beautifulness. 'Oh! It was a bit tight!' she tried the other one. That was a bit better. She stood up and walked over to the mirror. She stood looking at them front ways, sideways Left, Right, she walked up and down the shop. Mm! the right one was pinching a bit but surely it would stretch.

"Are they leather?" she asked the assistant.

"No Madam they are the finest plastic, made in the Philippines I believe, and they know a thing or two about shoe making" she said tapping her nose, "Experts they are, those Phillipinos, you know." Sally didn't know but she was willing to take the superior knowledge of the assistant.

"Will you be getting size 5 and a half in soon?" she asked.

"No dear, trouble in the Gulf" answered the assistant.

"Oh yes" said Sally nodding sagely as if she knew where the Gulf was.

"I'll take these then" she said, handing the Pink Peep toe shoes size 5 to the assistant, and I'll get my Gran to wear them in for me". She left the shop with the beautiful pink shoes tucked into their cardboard box safely nestled into her string shopping bag.

Gran didn't seem too keen on shoe stretching, she said tight shoes made her head ache but she would give it a go just for Sally as she was her favourite.

"Thanks Gran" smiled Sally and left the shoes by the fireplace. The trouble with this arrangement was that Gran wasn't moving around as much as she used to and spent most of her days with her feet up in front of the telly. But Sally wasn't really aware of that. She still thought Gran was buzzing around like she used to. And when she went to pick them up a few days later she was pleased to see that they still looked as good as new.

Sally was going on a date with Jimmy. They had been for walks in the forest and to Wimbledon to see the tennis. She had been to the pictures with him, it wasn't to her taste, a foreign language film, all very grey and a lot of shouting and quite a bit of nudity, she was a bit embarrassed by it but Jimmy liked it and talked about the "ambience" and the "genre". Sally just nodded and said she liked the frock that the leading lady wore. Jimmy was clever and was a cut above the other boys she had been out with. Well, he wasn't a boy he was a man. He had been in the Air Force and had served in Cyprus or somewhere like that, He had been to Egypt and sometimes called her "Habibi" which apparently was Arabic for "Darling". She thought that was a bit pretentious, but she smiled when he said it. He worked in the accounts department at the local government offices which she had joined a few months earlier. She knew he liked her because he always leaned over her when he was checking her typing, or he brushed imaginary leaves out of her hair and his hand stayed a bit too long around her shoulders. He was considered a catch by the other girls who always wanted to know the progress of this burgeoning romance. They were considered an item.

Sally really liked the boys in the workshop, they were fun and easy to talk to, but Jimmy was a man of the world.

He had asked her to go to the Ideal Homes exhibition which was a must for young couples. She did feel she was being judged to see if she was a suitable person to be considered for wedding bells. but it hadn't been mentioned so perhaps he just liked looking at furniture.

She thought she should be smart for such a trip and took great care when the allotted day arrived. She wore a pretty pink and white skirt which billowed out over multiple stiff petticoats, a pink blouse and of course the beautiful pink peep toe shoes size 5. Jimmy told her she looked lovely and off they went to Olympia. Sally wiggled her feet in the shoes. Her Gran hadn't made a very good job of stretching them. She wiggled a bit more perhaps they would be better when she started walking in them. Jimmy wanted to visit the show houses, and they did the grand tour looking at impossibly tidy homes. "Surely nobody lives like this" thought Sally, visualising her family cottage that had an annexe for Gran and not a lot of room for the rest of the family and the sometimes flatulent dogs.

Jimmy seemed to be as one with the designs and the colour combinations in the houses giving the seal of approval to the outlandish furniture and the coffee machines and the wall hangings.

Sally nodded and agreed with his opinions, but her feet were now at boiling point. Her big toes were fighting with whatever was left of the rest of her feet. She wanted to cry, they hurt so much.

Jimmy said that they should go to the “small appliances” area which was upstairs.

Sally asked if they could please get a cup of tea as her feet were hurting.

Jimmy said he didn't know why she wore such ridiculous shoes.

Sally said she had worn them so that she looked nice for him.

Jimmy said she was stupid, she must have known that she would have to walk round an exhibition so why did she wear new shoes.

Sally said they weren't new, her Gran had worn them in for her.

Jimmy said Ugh!!

Sally took the shoes off and her feet almost gave a groan of relief as they fought for freedom. She looked down. Her feet looked like two plates of raw lambs' liver and mashed potatoes. Blisters were hanging off her heels and her toes were bent and battered. The left-hand little toe looked as if it had been filleted.

Sally said she wanted to go home, and Jimmy could go with her, but she wasn't bothered if he wanted to stay but she was going home.

Jimmy said of course he would take her home, but he looked very disappointed.

He held her hand as they walked through Olympia, Sally holding the pink peep toe shoes Size 5. Jimmy called a cab and at enormous expense they finally arrived at her home.

Sally got out her keys, “Thank you Jimmy for a lovely day I really enjoyed it,” she lied.

Jimmy gave her a withering look and kissed her briefly on her cheek.

Sally never went out with Jimmy again. He gave his typing requirements to Daphne who was sensible but actually quite dull. She did Macrame!

Sally spent her lunch breaks with the boys in the workshop and eventually dated Danny who liked fast cars and holidays in Benidorm. They were invited to Jimmy and Daphne's wedding.

Sally wore a pink and white dress and pink peep toe shoes with a black bow size 6.