

Shoe Story

By Jeffery Greb

“So. She threatened to break up with you? Over shoes?”

“Yeah.”

“Shoes?”

“She asked me what I thought about some shoes.”

“And what did you say?”

“I’m guessing I said the wrong thing.”

“Which was?”

“I said I didn’t understand women’s shoes. These were just a sole, really, with some kind of strap that went around the ankle.”

“What’s to understand?”

“Why they look like that. My shoes, our shoes, cover the feet. They protect the top and sides of the feet as well as the sole. These shoes, not so much.”

“She asked what you thought of some shoes, and you responded from a utilitarian perspective? Is that why you thought she asked the question?”

“No, but I really don’t get it. I don’t even get the names. Pumps. Mules. Flats, I get. They’re flat. High heels speak for themselves. And the sizes. Why do there have to be two different size scales? I understand men’s feet are bigger, but why not just start at size one and go up? So a men’s size 12 becomes size 14 or something. It makes more sense than two different scales. Then you’d know if a woman’s shoes would fit your feet, although why someone would wear shoes that are nothing but a sole and a little strap . . .”

“You said all this?”

“Some of it, yeah.”

“And you’re surprised she got angry? Why do you think she asked the question?”

“I thought it was because she wanted to know what I thought.”

“She found out about what you thought, all right, and it wasn’t about her. She wanted to know what you thought about *her*. The shoes were just a vehicle for . . .”

“You know something else I don’t get? Clothes sizes. For men, it’s a measurement. Waist and inseam. Collar and sleeve length. For women, it’s just numbers. What the hell do the numbers mean? It would make more sense if they were measurements, too. Oh sure, you’d need different measurements given their shapes and all, but then again, maybe not. If a shirt doesn’t fit your torso, you just increase the neck size, right? Numbers alone don’t tell you anything. What’s the difference between a size seven and an eight? Eight’s bigger is all you know. And what’s the deal with size zero, for Christ sake? Zero? Zero is a placeholder for nothing. How can you be a size nothing? Zero’s not a size.”

“Well, zero can be expressed as one minus one. Some mathematicians and physicists consider negative numbers as simply positive numbers moving backward in time. After time passes, you’re left with positive one and negative one as two separate, equidistant numbers and no longer in and of themselves an expression of zero.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“I was just trying to explain how you can get something out of nothing, two somethings, actually. But you’re right: expressed as one minus one, zero isn’t true nothingness. It’s kind of like Zeno’s paradox, which sounds like it makes sense, but in practical terms it can be easily proven wrong, hence the paradox.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“Now you know how she felt.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” *Buzz!* “Hang on, it’s a text. From her. I can’t believe it. She did it. She broke up with me. Over shoes.”

“It was never about the shoes.”

“You can’t text a break up. You can’t break up with a person by text!”

“I’d say she just did, and I can understand why: I wish *I* hadn’t been here for this conversation.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”