

Walking In My Big Black Boots

by Jennifer Donnell

On account of three hundred dollars, I bought the boots. They're made of black suede and have two gold buckles on the sides. It's been four years since I spotted them in a store window and the heels are beginning to fray. When they don't look acceptable to wear in public, I'll take them to a shoe repair store and reinvent them.

It's on account of my grandmother dying that I had the three hundred dollars to buy the boots in the first place. If my grandmother had lived longer than one hundred years, and how I wish she had, then I wouldn't have bought those particular boots. I would, gladly, have danced barefoot with her, pushing her around in her wheelchair, faster than you'd expect. She was a wild thing, my grandmother. A real pistol. A beauty queen with jet black hair, blue eyes, and nerves of steel. She had laugh that would make an atheist believe in angels, so the angels could laugh along too.

I suppose I'm a wild thing too, though it depends who you ask.

It's on account of my job, that I wore those particular boots today, wanting to appear professional. Professionalism, along with the fact that my feet are often cold, come autumn. It's October and, tonight, the traffic toward Blane road formed like a medieval army. I gave up on driving home to change into sneakers.

I walked up the hill, past the lake, careful to avoid the grassy pathway or the muddy shortcut. I stuck to the concrete. *Click, clack* went my boots, as happy as ravens and birdseed. I saw an old boyfriend drive by in a large grey van and wished him well- from the back of my mind, where my grandmother's unconditional acceptance

reminds me to have that for others. So what if he wretchedly broke my heart, it was a clean break and I'm all the better for it.

Click, clack went my happy, evolved boots.

At the stoplight, I caught sight of an anomaly. Apparently, it wasn't my old boyfriend driving the van merely five minutes before. Rather, he was front and center in a squat beige car. I selected the button for the crosswalk and pretended not to see him. My grandmother's boots held my head high. It was a clean broken heart, I reminded myself, and I don't need muddy footprints stomping on my horizon.

The seconds stuck out their tongue, as if ticking slowly on purpose. I sucked in my belly and my black boots burped. I thought about jaywalking. People do that. They cross the road when they aren't supposed to and get away with it. They do it all the time. Only, then, he might think I was a rebel and I'd rather he imagine me a square. A square who never was a wild thing. A rebel who chose to be tame.

His car sputtered past and his girlfriend regarded me through the passenger's side window. Maybe she liked my boots, as her face paled and she pressed her nose closer toward the glass. I thought about what it must feel like to see my boots from a distance. They're the type of boots that would have pinned her boyfriend down in playful lust. They would have made his ears perk up. He would have panted at the sound of them approaching, reached timidly for their zippers and removed one at a time, the armor around his heart becoming unbound in equal degree. He would have lapped at my ankles and begged for more.

That's when I all but winced, humbled. The realization made my eyes sting.

God, damn-it, I forgot to walk my dog.

