

Never Wear a Dead Man's Shoes

Judd Lear Silverman





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NEVER WEAR A DEAD MAN'S SHOES

by Judd Lear Silverman

CAST

BETTY: A widow.

OREN: Her favorite nephew.

SYLVIA: Betty's sister.

Time

A large family gathering, present.

Place

Betty's rather nice home.

At Rise: A bedroom. A young man, OREN, stands next to his AUNT BETTY, who is holding a pair of shoes.

BETTY: Well, here they are. Aren't they just like I told you?

OREN: Yes. Pretty much.

BETTY: Nice, huh?

OREN: Nice.

BETTY: Black wingtips never go out of fashion. What size do you wear?

OREN: 9 1/2.

BETTY: They should fit. Your Uncle Buddy wore a 10, but men's feet were smaller then.

OREN: How old are they?

BETTY: Let's see. He died five years ago, I kept them in the closet, he probably bought them a good . . . now, wait, it was before his first stroke--

OREN: I really . . .

BETTY: Eight years. Ten years, tops.

OREN: And men's feet were smaller then?

BETTY: What?

OREN: You said men's feet were smaller ten years ago.

BETTY: Well, your feet certainly were!

OREN: But we're talking about Uncle Buddy's feet.

BETTY: I was cleaning out the closet and I just thought, "Oren could wear these!" You were his favorite nephew.

OREN: I was his only nephew!

BETTY: Well, Lynda, before her . . . operation.

OREN: I forgot. It was kind of you, but . . .

BETTY: Try them on. If they fit, you'll take them. If not, I'll give them to someone else.

(OREN gingerly steps out of his loafers and looks at the black wing tips. He takes them from her, sits and stares at the shoes, with AUNT BETTY watching in great anticipation.)

BETTY: *(continuing)* Well, go on! They won't bite!

OREN: It's just that . . . well, I mostly wear sneakers and hiking shoes. Where will I--

BETTY: An opportunity will present itself! Buddy only wore 'em once, twice at the most. Go on!

(OREN loosens them up and starts to put one on his foot, when AUNT SYLVIA enters.)

SYLVIA: There you are, we were wondering where you two had OH MY GOD WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?! STOP THAT!

OREN: What?

SYLVIA: Are those what I think those are? Betty, have you gone totally insane?

OREN: What?

SYLVIA: Aren't those Buddy's shoes?

OREN: You know about Uncle Buddy's shoes?

BETTY: Honestly, Syl, I don't know what business it is of yours!

SYLVIA: Oren's my favorite nephew!

OREN: Your only nephew, actually.

SYLVIA: Oh, that's right . . .

BETTY/SYLVIA: *(together)* Lynda.

SYLVIA: I forbid you to try on those shoes!

BETTY: It's not yours to forbid! Buddy was my husband!

OREN: What's the big deal? They're just a pair of shoes?

SYLVIA: Your lack of responsibility, Betty, is shameless, shameless! I can't believe such carelessness on the part of my own sister!

BETTY: It's just an old wives' tale anyway.

OREN: What? What? Will someone please tell me what's going on?

SYLVIA: Tell him, Betty!

BETTY: Sylvia!

OREN: Tell me what?

SYLVIA: If you don't, I will.

BETTY: Your Aunt Sylvia is concerned because--

SYLVIA: In our religion, there's an old saying--

BETTY: A superstition, really.

SYLVIA: You're never supposed to wear a dead man's shoes.

OREN: What?

SYLVIA: Never wear a dead man's shoes.

OREN: Why?

SYLVIA: It's a curse or something. You're supposed to bury 'em. Or burn 'em.

BETTY: That's ridiculous--and a waste of a good pair of shoes!

SYLVIA: I'm just stating what the legend says.

OREN: So I'm not supposed to--

BETTY: Sylvia, you yourself have been wearing that big old cable-knit sweater of Buddy's for years now.

OREN: I like that sweater! That was Uncle Buddy's?

BETTY: Nothing's happened to you, has it?

SYLVIA: Is a sweater a pair of shoes? Huh?

BETTY: Seriously, Syl, I think that rinse you've been using is seeping into your brain. What did you come in here for, anyway?

SYLVIA: Well, everyone else is getting hungry and ready for dinner! When are we going to serve?

BETTY: Damn, I meant to put out the liver and the crackers. God, you'd think no one in this family had ever eaten before! Oren, you try on those shoes. I'll be right back.

(AUNT BETTY flounces past AUNT SYLVIA, obviously annoyed.)

SYLVIA: Don't feel obligated to take a lousy old pair of shoes, Oren. You're a young man; you should have a new pair of shoes.

OREN: Are they really cursed?

SYLVIA: I can't say that they are. I can't say that they aren't. All I know is the saying: never wear a dead man's shoes.

OREN: They are nice-looking. I could wear 'em for a kick.

SYLVIA: Your Uncle Buddy always had a pair of wing tips. He was a sharp dresser, Buddy was, always looked real sharp.

OREN: I remember that.

SYLVIA: But a dead man's a dead man. Betty's always been such a fool, laughing in the face of danger.

OREN: Are we talking about the same Aunt Betty?

SYLVIA: You didn't know her as a girl. Trust me.

OREN: Well--

BETTY: (*calling from offstage*) Sylvia, what did you do with the cocktail napkins?

SYLVIA: Like I would touch your cocktail napkins?! (*to OREN*) That woman! No wonder Buddy died--it was his only way out!

OREN: Aunt Sylvia! She's your sister.

SYLVIA: I know. And I love her like I love all my blood relations. She's just a little . . .

BETTY: (*offstage*) Sylvia!

END OF FREEVIEW—
You'll want to read and perform this show!