

The Mystery of Shoes

I avert my eyes passing
shoeshops
but the devil
peers out, ruby eyes
illuminating
a window in Venice
filled with expensive colours
of chocolate, donkey, desert.
Mary Magdalene unbuckling
Jesus's dusty sandals
all those people in the bible
showing off their toes,
the gleaming shoes
my daughter begged for,
smart as paint,
strapped to her feet,
they made her shy,
so chic she was afraid
that they'd speak to her.

Martina Evans

'The Mystery of Shoes' is taken from "All Alcoholics are Charmers" by
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The Price of Shoes

For Jane and Tim

Shoes speak to Liadain,
her bedroom floor carpeted
with pink high heels, rusty soft
moccasins, red strappy peep
toes, papery worn Robin Hood
boots fixed with PVA glue.
There are ghosts too,
the yellow stilettos I refused
to buy when she was twelve.
How could I explain
the fear tightening my ribs?
Her tiny frame
and big smile balanced
on top of those
long lemon tongues?
*You can't have them because
because the air so scarce
and hot in the changing room
of Tammy making me blurt
they're like something
a prostitute would wear!*
Now only the black Doc Martens
seem heroic to me
they keep her warm and dry
I imagine she could run fast in them
if she had to.
The last day of school
Hampstead Heath swells with 500
drunken teenagers,
and one shiny tobacco-coloured
brogue is lost in the hawthorn.
But I don't share her grief.
I feel only relief
as if the shoe is a coin
paid to the wild
bringing her home safe
one more time.

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Martina Evans