

Cruel Shoes –by Steve Martin

Anna knew she had to have some new shoes today, and Carlo had helped her try on every pair in the store. Carlo spoke wearily, "Well, that's every pair of shoes in the place."

"Oh, you must have one more pair..."

"No, not one more pair... Well, we have the cruel shoes, but no one would want..."

Anna interrupted, "Oh yes, let me see the cruel shoes!"

Carlo looked incredulous. "No Anna, you don't understand, you see the cruel shoes are..."

"Get them!"

Carlo disappeared into the back room for a moment, then returned with an ordinary shoe box. He opened the lid and removed a hideous pair of black and white pumps. But these were not an ordinary pair of black and white pumps; both were left feet, one had a right angle turn with separate compartments that pointed the toes in impossible directions. The other shoe was six inches long and was curved inward like a rocking chair with a vice and razor blades to hold the foot in place.

Carlo spoke hesitantly, "... Now you see why... they're not fit for humans..."

"Put them on me."

"But..."

"Put them on me!"

Carlo knew all arguments were useless. He knelt down before her and forced the feet into the shoes.

The screams were incredible.

Anna crawled over to the mirror and held her bloody feet up where she could see.

"I like them."

She paid Carlo and crawled out of the store into the street.

Later that day, Carlo was overheard saying to a new customer, "Well, that's every shoe in the place. Unless, of course, you'd like to try the *cruel shoes*."