

School is In

Today is the first day of the new school year. The elementary school bus just went by our house, followed by the middle school bus, the special needs school bus, the high school bus, and the local private school bus. Each bus returning back by our house now semi-filled with clean shaven grade schoolers, hippish pre-teens, and ambitious prep students. The future of America sitting on green straight-backed bench seats. Just like when each of us were yoots.

Today I had a conversation with a pair of my running shoes. Seems when I mistakenly grabbed the shoes I intended to use for this morning's workout, I inadvertently offended the pair I should have taken.

"Hey, bud! Just what do you think you're doing?" Glancing over to the shoe rack, the loud orangish-red pair were peering up at me, each eyelet squint-eyed in absolute, surprised disgust. Now I found myself with a dilemma. "Um, well, it looks like rain during the workout. I didn't think that --"

"That's right, bub! You didn't think!" The left shoe jiggled its forefoot in my direction. "In fact, just what were you thinking? Couldn't be about rain in the forecast. Hell! Last week you dragged us through rain, mud, muck, and lakes masquerading as puddles for almost two hours! And now you worry about our poor fees-fees being hurt? You're a moron." The right shoe looped and folded the end of its laces over each other, joined in the disgust of its companion.

This was not going well.

"Let's make a deal: I'll take you next time," I suggested, pleadingly. This morning, just after dawn, was toasty. Taking more time defending myself wasn't going to cool this first August day. "We can faster then because I'll be faster. I promise." That last statement was another mistake.

"Faster? Faster!" The shoes had turned more red. A deep red that could only mean more trouble for me. "You ALWAYS run faster when you wear us! Are you saying that those shoes in your hands will make you faster than we will?" A pair of running shoes scorned is not pretty.

"Well, they might if I put them on my feet instead of running on my hands," I joked.

"Not funny, at all," the right shoe now chimed in. It was usually the quieter of the two, but had a long memory and a nasty temper. "we're the go to pair for your workouts. You chose us cuz we are the go fast shoe. We're your magic shoes."

The right shoe was correct. They were the shoes I reached for to race fast, train fast, feel fast, and float just above the road. They had a style unlike any of the other pair I trained in. They knew how to relax my legs while coaxing a fast sustained pace. But gawd, could they be touchy. I sighed loudly.

"Look, I don't have time for this," I said to them. "It's early. I'm tired. Coffee hasn't kicked in and I lack the patience to deal with your fragile ego right now."

"That's egos," the left shoe responded with disgust. "We're a team and you can't do anything fast out there without us. We're designed for fast. We've given you fast. All we ask is that you give us the respect we deserve and run with us on your feet. Truth is, we aren't even asking. After all we've done for you, we demand to be this morning's running shoes." The left shoe then looped and folded its laces over each other.

What they truly are a pair of prima donnas: I live in their world and I should be happy they let me in. In a prior lifetime, they were both in ballet, and were probably awful at it. But in this lifetime, they were too sexy for my feet and too fast for me.

I gave up. Putting down the other pair of running shoes, I picked up the right shoe, untangled the laces, put my right foot into it, gently smoothing out the laces, tightening them as I went up to the top of the shoe, carefully making a bow and finally fitting the bows under the laces for run security. Finished and reaching for the left shoe, I thought I heard a purring growl come out of the right shoe.

"Your feet are clean, right?" they asked in unison.

"Yes," I replied, rolling my eyes.

"Well, they weren't clean on that last run," the right shoe recalled. "If memory serves, your feet were disgustingly awful."

"That was after 12 miles in heat, mud, and puddles," I responded. "Of course, the feet would have mud, sweat, and smell. You two are such babies."

"We are not!" they each screamed in unison. "You run surrounding a wrinkled, smelly, foul-smelling foot and see how you like the experience." This was going nowhere. I changed the focus to their favorite topic.

"Want to know what we're running this morning?"

"Yeah!"

"Repeat miles with a quarter-mile jog out at the greenway where the greenway loops."

"Ooh! That's where the shade is with that short dip before the nice incline back into the trees. That's going to be great! How fast are we going?" They were both now salivating. They were so predictable. I knew the proper answer.

"As fast as you can take me around the loop," I answered with anticipation growing in my voice.

"Damn straight! Wait! You aren't that fast." They had to bring up that fact.

"We're not going down that road, again," I commanded. "Keep talking and I'll run in another pair. Are we clear?" There was a pause. No words were spoken. They were now being careful not to further upset me. We drove in collective silence to the trailhead.

After parking the car, checking that the doors were locked, the gear stowed in the trunk, and the valuables placed where valuables should be placed, I headed to the trailhead start, the shoes whispering something to one another.

"Um, do you promise to go as fast as you did last time?" The left shoe asked, clearly speaking for the right shoe as well.

"Absolutely," I gently replied.

"Would you be upset if we pushed you to be just a bit faster?" It was a carefully made request. I pondered my response.

"You mean, you want to run angry?"

"Yes!" They exclaimed together.

"You shouldn't run angry," I said with a laugh.

"You do!"

"Don't make me get back in the car and take you both home," I threatened as we headed out to the workout. I just can't take them anywhere without friction.

Prima donnas.