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Joe's Shoe Repair 330 N 100 W Provo, Ut 84601 (801) 857-8027 (Ask for Joe)

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JOE'S SHOE REPAIR
330 N 100 W
PROVO, UT 84601
(801) 857-8027
(ASK FOR JOE)

by
Zach T. Power

Seeing Joe sitting in a cracked, green plastic porch chair in the back of his shoe shop sweating while he watched, on his ten inch TV-VCR, a man teach yoga, was like swimming under a swollen bridge. His spotted hands, much like his workbench, and glue covered fingers intertwined over his gut, and I observed his glasses were bifocaled with white greases on some of the glass. Next to him a rickety swamp cooler was running low on water, but he hadn't heard it start to wheeze . . . *exhale let the shoulders drop hmhhh pull the navel up and in as you exhale one more deep breath in hnhhh exhale draw the navel in and up hmhhh now keep those shoulders down the back draw your elbows into the ribcage and open your arms . . .* This TV was tucked under a tight shelf of polishes—white, brown, black, red, navy, green— some of it dripping dark down onto the black plastic of the TV and bench, and I wanted to wipe it up, but the brown and black polish had stained Joe's cuffs, rings around his wrists, and leather apron, wrought around the gut. Once I asked him about ventilation for the dyeing fumes and

especially the glue. He said he wasn't worried about dying fumes; he was much too old for that. Over time I also noticed the dead skin dandruff in his hair that whisped about on his balding speckled head, and when he smiled it was a little one with teeth. I hoped his brow was furrowing and toes were pidgeoning at the yoga guy wearing a tank top and bare bald thighs. The cobbler's, or should I say the wrestler's, eyes were barely open, but they had weather in them, even if it was a distant weather, like a wounded animal. He was pretty much reclined, while I was wholly standing in his hollowed heel-ful hovel . . . *out to the side feel a little opening across the front of the chest let's extend our arms keep pulling the shoulders down the back join that thumb and index fingers not pressing just touching and feel the energy cycle through the arms and across the . . .* Last time he told me about his industrial grinder that he had nearly built himself. He learned how to in Vietnam and used it in the morning to grind high heels and soles, not to mention the heat lamp that smokes the sweat out of the shoes when Joe is trying to loosen the glue to tear the soles off. Yeah, I'll call him wrestler, vulture of the leather, mother of the muddy boot, gasket of the sole. He asked me if I had any kids, and I told him the truth . . . *chest feel the chest lifting heart center rising maybe take the hands back a little bit if you can if not just keep reaching bringing the hands back to center now in line with the shoulders open your palms towards the ceiling you're going to bring your . . .* The hand crank sciver, for cutting soles from thick leather, was next to the high-heel-pins shelf, just paces from the front door donned with a mail slot. I felt how atrophied the adjacent room was, where he put done jobs. I let my body lean on the old orange formica counter top, while I

picked at the glue and listened to him wheeze and then talk, we in a chat, wheeze and wheeze talk. Once I listened to him use the cash register that still had a real bell, after which he would retire behind the counter mid-morning, and watch people walk by with shoes on . . . *left palm to the outside of your left hip inhale as you reach up with the right arm exhale reach up and across that right ear and try not to let your right sit-bone come up use your left arm to help you stay balanced stretch out that right side body breath . . .* Some mud-covered work boots, broken high heels, a pair of mary janes, some penny loafers with a penny in each loaf, were all waiting to be repaired. Shoes don't really wait. Perhaps this is a metaphor for our conversation—the not being able to wait and the mud and broken loafs of leather. Yesterday he showed me how to fix an in-sole for those leather loafers with some cheap green foam bought from a craft store in March. Joe saved them unrepaired shoes for me after I came in last week, wanting to learn me something. I told him I wanted to own a shoe shop one day, even after I used the self-installed toilet in the closet—mold on the waterline. I felt it was that or selling all my wife and I had for an organic farm in Maine. I talked about technology over the yoga instructor. We talked about something else interesting, something to do with love and golf or perhaps heresy . . . *deeply inhale hnhhh hmhhh find the weight of your right hip hnhhhh hmhhh hnhhhh hmhhh inhale draw yourself up use the right arm exhale bring the right arm to the outside of the hip inhale left arm up hnhhhh exhale reach up and across the left ear . . .* I wasn't sure if I wanted to go back. Joe told me if I helped out enough I might be able to own his shop—maybe in a year, when he actually wanted to retire. If he could retire. I said something about school

in the fall, something about vacuuming hallways at three a.m. Joe took out his handkerchief and blew his nose—shoes didn't need to be done till next week, he said. They can wait. Joe turned the TV off, took his apron off, and let me out before he turned the lights off and walked across the street to, he told me, pick up his wife's medication before walking the four blocks home to her all bedridden. I don't know if she could even talk, and I imagined him inhaling before he walked into her bedroom . . . hnhhhh . . . *breath into your left ribcage soften the shoulders hnhhhh hmhhh hnhhhh hmhhh hnhhhh hmhhh hnhhhh hmhhh inhale up hnhhh exhale release hmhhh drop the shoulders down the back try to feel your neck very very soft and long we're going to come to our . . .* Maybe it was because he fixed a man's wallet for free last month, or because he looked younger in that video online. Maybe it was because he was dying, but so was everyone. And even though the shoe shop wasn't exactly like Italy, but was a piece of nostalgia about to pass out and never revive, well, at any rate, he might still be fixing shoes like he has been for the past forty years, or he may, like he said to me one day, give up and just let the shop die, while he stays at home taking care of his wife who doesn't even wear shoes anymore. I don't know. I never went back. Yeah, he did turn the TV off, and yes the yogi's voice turned off as well, and yes it's all meditation . . . *hands and knees in whichever fashion you feel most comfortable with your palms beneath your shoulders your knees beneath your hips take your back into a tabletop position start to draw your chest through your upper arms and feel like you . . .*