The Miracle of the Shoes, a short story

Her house had been “on the market” forever. The price had been lowered once more. So when Dolores careened out the door to again replant the flattened “For Sale” sign, she shouted “This place has already become my coffin!”

“You tell that kid Peter to stop pulling my sign out!” Cynthia whined. “He does it every damned week!”

“He’s a sweet kid… His dad is a mean drunk. Beats him. It’s pathetic.”

“Tell him, never touch my sign!” Cynthia was her real estate agent.

“The kid, this house, winters….it’s all so demoralizing.”

“Dolores, you’re a broken record. Everything in Santa Fe sells eventually. It’s been on the market how long? *Mmmm* - Good grief! Three thousand days?”

“Eight years, going on fifty.” She was too old to cry.

“Just take a deep breath now. Trust me. I will get this house sold!” Cynthia closed her eyes to consult what purported to be her *higher self*. “By Labor Day… yes, Labor Day.…”

She was still making promises a week-after Labor Day. “I don’t get it… Everything else has been sold.”

“For nine years, all I’ve wanted is to move to the Villages. Florida. They dance in the streets there. Line-dancing. No one needs a partner. Everyone’s welcome. ” Dolores brooded on her sorry state when she shifted her gaze to her neighbor’s front door not surprised to see Peter’s flat face grinning. He waved to her happily so she beckoned him to come to her. He was small for his 13 years. Misshapen.

Cynthia threw her hands up: “There’s your problem! Any fool could see that. You’ve got to make him stop showing up whenever someone looks at your house!” She muttered, “I don’t care if you claim he has a beautiful spirit!”

Dolores motioned him closer. “He can’t help it, Down syndrome. Plus his mother ran off.”

“He is totally creepy.” Cynthia muttered as Peter rocked towards them on his short legs, swaying into Dolores..

“Hi Sweet Petie-Pie,” Dolores said, patting him, “How’s your Dad today?” More than once she prayed his mother would return well before she left for Florida.

“Dad’s real drunk again.” Peter spoke with a high pitched cant. “Don’t leave. Please.”

“Petie, I know…but I’m getting on in years and ….You can help me a lot by giving Cynthia space. She works hard trying to sell the house so I can get money to go to where it’s warm.”

By the end of September, Cynthia took up serious meditation hoping this would help her stimulate a sale while mentally preparing to sit Dolores down for her *“Come to Jesus”* talk: “Too much furniture, bad vibes and creepy neighbors. Repaint this place, just white. Repaint, and make a pledge.” Cynthia had clearly been receiving messages from *the* *Other Side*, “Pledge something meaningful,” she intoned. “Cut so deep it hurts.”

Dolores had suspicions that Cynthia was starting to crack up.

“Yes, a meaningful gift to the less fortunate, and I don’t just mean that kid -- Peter -- next door. I’m telling you: Sacrifice!” Cynthia appeared to slip into a trance but she continued. “Think what you can give.”

“Sacrifice?” Dolores wondered. “Who possibly is less fortunate than me?”

Cynthia’s voice ruined each night when she tried to sleep, “You must pledge something big. The house will sell when you show cosmic and magnanimous gratitude. The Universe will help.”

“Damned Universe!” Dolores muttered, knowing she was not an unkind person. She was certainly loving to drooling Peter with his swollen tongue and walnut-size ears, but she had to admit she fell short of being magnanimous. Then it hit her! If the house would sell, she could pledge her remaining savings--$10,000--for the migrant children. They were needy. She’d send them shoes.

So she drove to the mall.

“Call your manager. I’m buying all your children’s shoes. All sizes, every style.” The balding salesman squinted at Dolores, unmoving. “I want slippers, sandals, soccer shoes, little boots -- everything. Everything you have here in stock, for $10,000.” She waved her veined hand. “You heard me: Get your manager.”

Pulling his right earlobe, he tried to describe the woman to his boss. “She’s sort of old but pushy. Yes, pushy.”

And to the Manager, a tired sixty-year old man in grey slacks and a white shirt, she explained that she was prepared to buy his entire inventory if he could deliver it down at the Border where the children were being held. “Ten grand,” she repeated. “All your children’s shoes there by Christmas.”

Both men worked their thumbs nervously, staring at her. She had to practically yell at them, “The children are being held in El Paso and McAllen, Texas.”

That Christmas, all the little children waiting to be reunited with their families got to choose shiny new shoes, and the local volunteer ladies filled them with candy for Three Kings Day.

And yes, a buyer materialized and bought Dolores’s house.

It was the Realtors who broadcast the tale of The Miracle of the Shoes.

Cynthia crowed. “It just came to me! I told her it would work! Dolores came up the shoe part. I’m telling you, the house sold even before the shoes got down there!”

The first three days the story was posted on Facebook, it got five million likes!

As Dolores gave away her winter coats and mittens, Peter packed what small treasures he possessed in a knapsack hoping maybe his Dad could go to treatment in Florida so he could visit and do line dancing.

And as a bonus, Cynthia the Realtor was named “Realtor of the Year”.

So when you see piles of shoes on certain Santa Fe doorsteps, you’ll know they are votives with small notes and cards tucked inside. They are also prayers and petitions for healing, or love, or even money.

All kinds of shoes. We call them ‘Shoes for the Baby Jesus.’

It is known to work.