

The White Shoes

(Synopsis)

Eva Cruz is called "Mrs. Shoes" by everyone. It's because she loves giving away shoes—as gifts, prizes, rewards, and awards.

Why would she do that?

It all started when she had to wear white shoes on her grade school graduation years ago. Her father was very sick and her mother was not earning enough money as a laundry woman. There was no way they could afford to buy her white shoes.

But that embarrassing day turned her life around.

With the wisdom of her father and the love of her whole family, "Mrs. Shoes" grew up to be the generous and grateful business woman that she is today.

The White Shoes

"Shoes!" Anton tried to guess his birthday gift from his *Ninang*. He was right.

"Shoes!" Jillian tried to guess her Christmas gift from her *Lola*. She was right.

"Shoes!" Jay tried to guess his prize from the donor. He was right.

"Shoes!" "Shoes!" Shoes!" They all guessed right.

How could everyone possibly guess what was inside a wrapped package?

Well, easy. If the package came from Mrs. Cruz, you'll find inside a pair of shoes! Gifts, prizes, awards, and any reward from Mrs. Cruz—no doubt about it at all—they would be shoes after shoes after shoes.

"I wish *Tita* would give me a toy robot next time," said Myrna.

"I wish *Lola* would give me a doll next time," said Gladys.

"I wish Mrs. Cruz would give me a book next time," said Sammy.

"I wish." "I wish." "I wish," said everybody.

But no. Mrs. Cruz wouldn't hear of it.

She would give shoes—nice, good shoes. No wonder her friends, *inaanak*, nieces and nephews, grandchildren, neighbors, staff, church mates, and officers in the *barangay* called her Mrs. Shoes—instead of Mrs. Cruz. Not that they were unhappy receiving nice, good shoes. It was because . . . sometimes, people would want to be surprised and not to guess right all the time.

Mrs. Cruz had a reason why all her gifts for children and adults were shoes. Nobody knew what that reason was; they couldn't guess it either. They had been trying hard, real hard, but nobody ever got the answer correctly.

It's because that reason was a big secret—something that was so private and so special Mrs. Cruz had kept it in her heart. Only she (except her parents who are now both in heaven, and her brother who was too young to remember) knew about it.

Read on and you'll know about it, too . . .

Mrs. Cruz (Eva) belonged to a poor family, but a happy one. Although very hard-working, her parents had not finished grade school so they couldn't get good jobs. When she was in 6th grade, Eva's father fell ill with a terrible disease. This left him coughing most of the time and bedridden. He needed a lot of care and a lot of money for medication.

"*Anak*, take care of your father while I go and wash clothes at the big house," her mother would leave when Eva arrived from school.

"Yes, *Inang*."

"Also, try to help your brother with his assignments."

"Yes, *Inang*."

One day, Eva informed her mother, "We, uh, were told to wear a white dress and a pair of white shoes for our graduation." Eva was worried this would be a big problem for the family.

"Oh," her mother paused, thinking very deeply.

"I don't have to attend, you know," Eva suggested, knowing her mother could never afford to buy her graduation outfit. "By the way, *Inang*, I'm in the honor roll," she said as an afterthought.

"Honor roll!" her mother exclaimed, with joy overflowing. "You have to be at your graduation, Eva. It's a very important event. I'll find a way to get you a white dress and white shoes!" Then her mother moved around quickly.

She asked her vendor friends in the market.

She asked her relatives across town.

She asked their neighbors who didn't think graduation was all that important.

Finally, Eva's mother was able to borrow a dress! But not shoes.

"This is too tight and too short!" Eva complained when she tried on the dress. Well, that was years before mini skirts were in fashion.

"It's not that bad . . ." said her father from his bed.

"Not bad at all. . ." said her mother.

"Well . . . yeah, maybe not," Eva replied. "But I still don't have white shoes!"

"Hmmm, you have your old black shoes, don't you? You can just paint it white," her father suggested.

"That's a good idea!" Eva's mother added.

And so Eva, her brother, and her mother scrounged around for white paint everywhere—under the bushes, through the manholes, between the fences, inside the broken pails, and atop dented drums.

Finally, they found a can of left-over paint beside an overflowing garbage can.

Eva carefully painted over her black shoes.

"It looks good!" Eva's brother remarked.

Eva didn't think her white shoes looked good—they looked great!

Then came graduation day. The school basketball court was decked with white paper flowers. And the girls were all dolled up in their ruffled white dresses. Eva felt so ashamed and out of place. She wanted to run home.

But in the audience were her mother and her brother waving and smiling at her. She also thought of her father in bed who said, "Eva, even if we have so little, you have achieved so much." Those kept her calm—maybe a little.

Then it drizzled.

The students stayed in place. No drizzle would make them run away from this very important occasion.

But the brief rain was enough to wet everyone's shoes!

Ooops. Eva's great white shoes suddenly had tiny polka dots. Eva wailed silently, *No!*

Then the white paint oozed, turning into black stripes. *No, no!*

When her name was called on stage, her shoes looked like ink blots. *No, No, No!*

Then they turned back to solid black! *Awwwwww.*

Eva turned red.

Eva turned cold.

Eva turned into a zombie.

She was so embarrassed she wished she'd turn as black as her shoes and disappear in the shadows. But the audience, her teachers and principal were clapping so energetically. Some of her classmates even chanted her name: E-va! E-va! Trying hard to be brave, she went up the stage and received her diploma and the recognition given her.

At home, she presented her honors certificate and diploma to her father. Eva had never seen her father smile that big since he got sick, "I am so proud of you, Eva. I'm so sorry I couldn't be there to watch you."

"I was there!" her little brother replied.

Eva sat on one side of her father's bed. Her mother sat on the other side and said softly, "*Anak*, there is nothing to be ashamed of; there is everything to be proud of! You are smart and despite all the work at home, you made it to the honor roll. Success is not about a white dress and a pair of white shoes."

Her father coughed and coughed, but when he stopped he said, "Success is all about making the most of what you have been blessed with, and being thankful for them."

Eva went on to high school and then to college, earning scholarships and taking on odd jobs to support her studies. Graduating with honors, again, she was hired and trained by a big international company.

A few years later, Eva went on her own and became the successful businesswoman that she is today. She now has a large company with different departments. One of them includes what she calls her "Thanksgiving Section." A section with skilled shoemakers who make nice, good shoes that she gives away—so that nobody would ever be without shoes.

Today, not a week passes by that Eva doesn't hear her father's voice in her heart, *Success is all about making the most of what you have been blessed with, and being thankful for them.*

So, can you guess why Eva—or Mrs. Cruz or Mrs. Shoes—loves giving shoes to everyone?