

My Issue (IsSHOE)

I HATE shopping for shoes. For as long as I can remember, I've gotten a pair of shoes and replaced them with the same type of pair when they wore out or when I needed to change sizes – no need to see what went well with my outfits or anything like that for me. It started with some black slip-on Keds that I kept replacing for a few years, then when I played sports I moved on to black Adidas with shoe-strings; followed by some cheapie black velcro shoes from Walmart (when we first got married and were really poor), and finally my black Brahma Bravo boots – each pair of those would last me about 3 winters, and they were great for the summer too. I guess I like black shoes.

So for about a year now, I've had a bit of a shoe issue – they've stopped making the Bravo style of the Brahma boots. The soles on my current pair of Bravos have been worn down so far on one side of each shoe that water seeps in if it's particularly rainy, and my feet ache if I wear my shoes all day – time for new shoes. As I said, I realized this about a year ago now, and that's when I began to search. I thought it was as easy as going to Walmart and picking up a new pair of Bravos, but alas, I can't find them. I scanned the various offerings of work boots, but I just don't want anything with a steel toe, and I certainly don't want to spend more than \$30. And of course black ones would be nice, can't find those either. I put the shoe issue on the back burner all summer last year until winter became inevitable, and I found myself near a Payless Shoe Source in October, so I wandered in and had a look. Sure enough, they had a pair of black boots that fit my fancy **and** my feet – SOLD! I was extremely pleased that my months-long search had culminated in me finding comfortable black boots in my target price range – under \$30, and they were waterproof to *boot*, oh brother...

But not more than a month after purchase, my new boots began

to crack – apparently they were SO waterproof that the waterproof shell was just that – a shell; so hard to keep out the water that it couldn't be flexible enough to handle the movement of my feet without cracking. So now winter was really starting to bear down on us, and I was stuck an hour away from any Payless. I lived with the cracking boots all winter, still loving the way they looked and the way they kept my feet warm and dry, but I was also very disappointed. When an awful set of circumstances culminated to basically grind our household to a halt in December, it looked like I was stuck with my boots – didn't have the time nor even the money to get to the faraway land of Payless to exchange the cracking boots.

But then things got better, and we were finally able to afford the time and gas to get to Payless and return the boots. Even though it had been more than 3 months since purchase and the boots were cracked (though that really wasn't my fault – they shouldn't have cracked within months, err, one month of purchase!), Payless took them back and gave a full refund, no problem. It only took me an hour and half to pick out a replacement pair (I guess I never realized that I might be picky about shoes, but my husband's huffing and puffing at me on that date night made me re-evaluate... a little), but after walking around the strip mall for 5 minutes, I knew these were not going to be my new boots. But I had forgotten to bring a spare pair of shoes with me – uh, oh. My choices were: 1) waste more of date night going shoe shopping until I found the right shoes, then return these awful new boots to Payless, or 2) wear the uncomfortable boots for the rest of the night, then beg my mom (who was coming for a visit that weekend and lived in the vicinity of like, 5 Paylesses) to return the boots for me. I chose option #2 (thanks Mom!), and that's why I've been wearing the years-old Bravo boots with the worn down soles ever since. Every time I get a spare moment; sometimes with the kids, sometimes without, I make it a point to stop in the shoe section of Walmart, Target, Meijer, wherever – to

continue the hunt of finding myself a new pair of boots. I've taken home about 3 pair now, but I've been happy with none of them. Now that winter is officially over, I've attempted forgetting about finding boots that will get me through snow and tried downgrading to a good pair of walking shoes, but I've returned at least two pair of those as well – and there is another pair still in the box in my front hall closet, ready to be returned – they just dig into my ankle bone in a way that makes me *crave* high-tops; I can't help it!

The other day, I tried searching online for the Bravo style of Brahma boots, but they only make them in an ugly Wheat color and not even in the half-size I need. I was thinking I could order something on Walmart.com and return it to the store if (when) I didn't like it, but I couldn't even find anything in my price range that would work for me.

So back to my point – I HATE shoe shopping; I loathe it. Many women love it and have a pair of shoes to match every outfit they own. I've always valued myself as different from the average (extravagant) woman in that respect – I'm pretty basic in my wardrobe needs... my husband and I share many clothes actually, and it's not because he wears trendy woman's clothing – I opt for cheap, comfortable men's wear.

But how I would like a nice, inexpensive pair of good (hopefully black) walking shoes (preferably boots, but I'm willing to drop that criteria at this point in my frustrating shoe battle).

Is this really too much to ask?