

## “THE BLUEBERRY COBBLER”

By Alexander G Tozzi

The blueberry cobbler stood at an outcropping, gazing at a small town. Smoke poured out of chimneys, and doors slammed open as people left their homes to rough brick roads. Itching his rubbery, blue skin, the blueberry cobbler knew that this town needed shoes.

*All those rough roads, the walking blueberry thought, alighting the rocky hill. All those rough roads must tear up people's shoes something serious!* And he entered the town with a smile. *All these people will mark their calendars on this day they were visited by me, the blueberry cobbler!*

It was still morning, and people were just getting into work. This made the blueberry cobbler itch his rubbery chin. Would people be too busy selling cheese, fixing wagons, and signing letters to accept his service?

He scoffed, and rounded a corner to a barber shop. *They're doing their job, he decided, so they won't begrudge me doing mine.* And he leaped across the threshold of the barber shop-nearly falling back from the strong odor of leather and old hair-and proclaimed,

“I am the blueberry cobbler! Be there anyone in this fine barber shop who needs new shoes?” Then he dug bottles and brushes from his sack, and added, “Or maybe a simple repair job? Anything, anything at all involving shoes-I'm here at your service!”

The entire barber shop was quiet save for a tinny melody from a pocket radio. Foam dripped from the barber's brush, and his waiting customers were rubbing their eyes. With a smile the blueberry cobbler commended himself for another fine advertisement.

Suddenly, the barber spoke. “I missed breakfast. . . .”

“So did I,” added the customer in the chair, and the ones in waiting.

The cobbler wrinkled his nose, and said, “I’m in the cobbling business! If you want food, go get a farmer, or butcher.”

“I could really go for a pancake,” the barber said, leaving his customer. “But i’d settle for a big, plump blueberry!” And he advanced toward the blueberry cobbler, still dripping foam from his brush. The other customers followed him toward the quivering blueberry cobbler.

“Now see here!” the cobbler protested, inching to the door. “I might be a blueberry, but I’m also a cobbler-and you can’t eat a blueberry cobbler!”

His protests fell on people with deaf ears and empty stomachs. The cobbler was about to run when the whole barber shop jumped at him! Eyes closed, the cobbler prepared for the worst. He heard screams, but they weren’t his own.

Opening his eyes he saw the barber and customers writhing on the floor. The barber had let his foam drip too much, and all had tripped.

With a brisk sigh the blueberry cobbler rushed out the door and ran far, far away from the barber shop. Catching his breath at a lamp post he thanked goodness that barber had been so clumsy.

“To think. . . those clods would have eaten me! How, oh how could they want to eat me when I offer them my unrivaled skills as a cobbler?” He remained indignant for awhile, but calmed himself down, reasoning that he would show this town, and those foolish men that a blueberry cobbler was too valuable a commodity to eat!

“Shoes,” he said, straightening. “I came here to cobble shoes, and that’s what I shall do!”

But where would he find shoes to cobble? Certainly not back in the direction of the barber shop. They might try to eat him again.

He looked around the street he was on. It was very flamboyant, with colorful awnings over each false front store, sporting silly names. The cobbler had to squint to read the swirly letters.

“Ka. . . fee. . . loo-vere,” he read, then fixed his gaze at the entrance, seeing numerous girls, mostly teenagers, come in and out of the store. They giggled as they came in and out with steaming cups of coffee, and were constantly pointing at each other’s shoes.

The cobbler’s bright blue belly bulged with each hearty laugh. “And to think, a great cobbler such as I didn’t realize young ladies were my prime business targets.” He chuckled his foolishness away, righted his tool belt, and strode across the street-ignoring the loud honks coming his way-and dutifully marched into the dim-lit coffee shop.

At once the Blueberry Cobbler feared he’d made a mistake. At each and every cast-iron table and rumped beanbag sat loud individuals with long hair, bright rainbow beads, and shoes with open toes, and no laces.

The Cobbler’s fear turned to anger, and he threw his hat on the ground. “Doesn’t anyone here wear shoes!?” he exclaimed. Then, as he prepared to stomp on his hat he heard the high giggling of young girls.

“Those are the best shoes I’ve ever seen-ever!”

“I know! Aren’t they the best? The buckles might be tarnished, but they’re real brass!”

As quick as he had thrown it the Cobbler scooped up his hat, carefully affixed it, and ran in the direction of the young ladies. “Tarnished brass buckles, eh? That shouldn’t be a problem for the great Blueberry Cobbler!”

*I was a fool, he thought, to think young ladies had given up quality footwear.*

Through the cluttered shop he dashed, tracing the voices behind the counter, where two teenage girls, one blonde and

one brunette, were hurriedly placing muffins into their baskets.

The Cobbler harrumphed to see that the blonde girl's shoes were in more disrepair than she had let on. The buckles were so tarnished they barely reflected any light, and a few pieces of leather wore torn, as if from scraping against a hard surface.

Grabbing for his tools the Cobbler smiled. *The girl might be a bit irresponsible-as most girls are-but no shoe is too badly damaged for a cobbler such as I.* His hammer became entangled and he struggled to free it. As he did so the girls spoke,

“Do we have any more blueberry muffins?”

“All out-and we can't make more.”

“What? Why not?”

“We're outta blueberries.”

“This is bad. Worse than my shoes. If we don't have blueberry muffins then everyone'll go to a different shop, and the manager. . .”

“Will dock our pay. . . .”

“And then I can't get my shoes fixed!”

Hearing the desperation in the blonde girl's voice was enough for the Cobbler to free his hammer. Tools at the ready he leapt before the two girls who gasped at his arrival. “Fear not, young lady,” he said, bright blue belly raised high. “I am the Blueberry Cobbler, and I would be more than happy to repair those fine shoes of yours.”

There was a silence, and the Cobbler wondered if he had been a tad too dramatic for them. *No*, he decided. *Girls, especially young girls, love drama!*

Then, the brunette girl spoke. “So. . . you're a real blueberry, huh?”

Before he could speak, the blonde girl added, “Well of course he is. Just look at him!”

Both girls licked their lips, and the brunette said, “Make a

lotta muffins.”

The Cobbler felt as he had when the barber shop turned against him. *Are these girls planning to eat me too?*

The girls advanced slowly, and there was no doubt as to what they were planning.

“N-now see here, young ladies!” the Cobbler said forcefully. He took small steps back. “I’m here to cobble shoes—nothing more! If you need more muffins than I suggest you find a baker.”

The Cobbler’s words were met with more lip-licking. Apparently these girls wanted muffins for themselves, not their customers.

“Get back!” the Cobbler warned, and he brandished his tools like weapons. “I don’t want to use these on anything other than shoes, but if I must, I will.”

The girls stopped, and the Cobbler smiled satisfactorily. *That will teach them to mess with a Blueberry Cobbler.*

“That’s the trouble with blueberries nowadays,” the brunette griped. “They talk too much!” And before he knew what was happening the girls tackled the Cobbler!

“Let me go, you foul little witches!” The Cobbler shouted, twisting and squirming. But the girls were screaming too, and no sound could be heard over the twin shrieks of teenage girls.

Their nails dug into his rubbery flesh, and he worried he might be popped. The thought of gushing juice was all the motivation the Cobbler needed to wriggle free of their grasp. It helped that his bright blue belly was slippery.

Huffing and puffing he turned to face the girls, entangled together. Brandishing his tools, he scolded, “That’s not very ladylike! Trying to bake the Cobbler which offers to fix your shoes.”

The girls screamed and lunged for him.

The Cobbler dodged them and ran as fast as he could out of the Ka-fee Loo-ver. He ran down several roads, dodging

lamp-posts, people, and mail boxes, until he came to a corner devoid of people. The sound of teenage girls screaming was still in his ears.

“Perhaps,” the Cobble panted, grabbing his knees, “I was wrong to have come to this town.”

Then he ruffled his moustache in disdain. How could he think such a thought? After all, he was The Blueberry Cobbler! Any town, no matter how small, or filled with lunatics, it was his job to find shoes to cobble, and by jove, he was going to find shoes to cobble!

“Now let’s see where we are,” he muttered, and gazed all about him, searching for a place which was sure to have lots of people. He was in luck, for right behind him was a wide, massive structure resembling a steel bowl, with towering lights about its lip.

He scratched the side of his head. *That looks big enough to house this whole town, he mused, but if there was anywhere near that many people inside their voices would be echoing out.*

There must be *someone* in there, he decided. And besides, he had never seen the likes of this structure and had a nagging itch to see what was inside. He pulled up his tool belt and walked over to the structure, finding a simple door which read BASEMENT.

The door was locked, but the Cobbler opened it with his hammer. Hate to break in, but there are shoes to be cobbled!

He followed a staircase into a basement with bright white walls and linoleum floor. His bright blue reflection was everywhere, and he felt as if he’d entered a hall of mirrors. Admiring his reflection as he traveled, he came to another staircase which brought him up to the inside of the bowl, where there was a huge stretch of grass with white numbers painted every ten yards, and two yellow fork structures were at each end. One cast a shadow over the cobbler, and it made him nervous.

*What an incredible place this is!* the Cobbler marvelled.

By a wall he found some benches with boxes on them. And more important, shoes! Shoelaces were hung like limp noodles out of the boxes, and the Cobbler ran about thirty yards down the painted field to get to the boxes and examine the shoes.

“Hey!” he heard someone yell. “That guy sure can run!”

He looked down the other end of the field and saw nearly a dozen men in hulking uniforms. The big men were intimidating as they shoved and tackled each other for a pointed brown ball, but as the Cobbler examined their shoes, thick and tough with big spikes poking out of them, he knew that these men would be appreciative of his cobbling skills.

“The way those athletes handle each other,” he said, righting his belt, “they must break their shoes as often as they break their bones.”

A whistle blew, and the men all headed over to where the Cobbler stood. Mustn’t keep them waiting, he decided, and rushed to meet them halfway. He smiled at the prospect of repairing, and perhaps making, shoes for them.

“Man is practice getting tougher!” one man complained.

“I wanna beat Central, but practice five days a week is killer!”

“I’m all for pounding Central, but no junk food at all!? Coach is too tough.”

“Man, oh man!” said the first one. “To think I’m gonna miss my Grandma’s blueberry pie.”

“And my girlfriend’s blueberry muffins.”

“And storebought blueberry cobbles.”

At that moment the Cobbler jumped in front of the advancing athletes. “Did someone say Blueberry Cobbler?” he asked loudly. “Well, you’re in luck, my fine, strapping young lads! After such a rousing workout I’m sure you and your shoes are in need of a cobbling.”

The hulking athletes stared at the Cobbler in dumb surprise. The Cobbler grinned. *Guess theyve taken too many bumps tp the head.*

One of them spoke. "Do you see what I see, guys?"

"A walking, talking blueberry?"

"I see it, too!"

Again, they stared blankly.

The Cobbler harrumphed impatiently. "Yes, yes, I'm a Blueberry Cobbler!" He took out his tools, and stabbed them at the men's shoes. "Now do any of you need a cobbling or don't you?"

The frst one licked his lips. "I don't know about a cobbling," he said.

Another licked his lips. "But we sure could use. . ."

"A cobbler!" finished the third."

And the whole team of men charged at the Cobbler as if he held that pointy ball they loved so much. With a scream the Cobbler ran as fast as he could, the athletes's feet pounding behind him. *I can't outrun them! he realized,* beginning to tire. *They're too strong, and too young for me.*

Suddenly he felt two powerful arms wrap around him.

"Got him!" one man yelled.

Then, the Cobbler went flying!

"I don't got him."

The Cobbler's bright blue body was so smooth and squishy that the man's powerful grasp had basically squeezed the Cobbler into flight. Buildings, streets, the whole town passed underneath him as he soared in an arc. Pointed roofs and rough brick roads gave way to dirty grass and jagged rocks, and the screaming Cobbler entered his descent.

"I'm done for!"

He landed in a tuffet of grass, and rolled downhill until he came to a hard stop, bumping into a tree. Dazed, he brought himself up, thankful he hadn't been pierced, doubly thanful he



hadn't been squished.

“The nerve!” he hissed, shaking dust off his hat, and righting his tool belt. The disgruntled Blueberry Cobbler stood at an outcropping and gazed at the small town that had conspired against him.

“These ungrateful good-for-nothings don’t need their shoes cobbled,” he griped. “They need a-a-a. . . a swift kick in the rear!”

And he turned on his heel, righted his hat and belt once more, and stomped off into the forest. Maybe there he would find someone who needed their shoes cobbled.

THE END