

**SOCKS---**

a one-act play

by Rosemary FrisinoToohey

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**CHARACTERS**

BRAD....male, 20s, any race, wearing tennis gear or sweatshirt

ELAINE...female, 20s-40s, any race, attractive, wearing slacks, nice top, good jewelry

MEYER...male, 20s-40s, any race, wearing sport coat, slacks & tie

CEIL.....female, 20s, any race, wearing dance rehearsal clothes

FEMALE VOICE...offstage

**SETTING**

The inside of a clothes dryer at a laundromat

**TIME**

The present

Socks is published by Lazy Bee Scripts, Southampton, U.K.

*(Lights up on BRAD, back to the wall, arms spread. ELAINE, MEYER & CEIL are slumped on the floor in various positions, ideally, unseen by the audience)*

BRAD

No! No! Why me? What kind of crazy world is this? Forgotten, passed over, discarded. How can they do this?

*(ELAINE comes to life)*

ELAINE

What is all the racket about?

BRAD

Wow! I didn't see you there. I thought I was alone.

ELAINE

Why on earth are you making so much noise?

BRAD

I've been left behind!

ELAINE

It happens to all of us, you know. Sooner or later. This is the life of a sock.

BRAD

But you don't understand, I deserve to be in the game. Being "benched," it's...

ELAINE

My, for an athletic fellow, you're certainly melodramatic.

BRAD

We're talking about my existence here, lady.

ELAINE

Oh, you jock socks are all alike. When you've been through the cycle as often as I have, it's all somewhat passe.

BRAD

Well, it's not passe to me, miss, whatever your name is...

ELAINE

I call myself Elaine. And you would be?

BRAD

Brad.

ELAINE

Is that Bradley or Bradford?

BRAD

It's just Brad, okay?

*(MEYER comes to life)*

MEYER

Hey, everybody! What's up?

BRAD

Whoa! Another one! Where'd you come from?

MEYER

Oh, around.

BRAD

Looks like you've been "around" a while.

MEYER

Yeah, well appearances aren't everything, sonny. Just because I'm going through a bit of a downturn right now, just because the charts have taken a little dip, doesn't mean...

ELAINE

Please. What is, is. Face it with dignity.

MEYER

I'll face it anyway I want to, lady. The name's Meyer, by the way.

ELAINE

Elaine. And he's Brad.

MEYER

First-timer?

BRAD

Yeah, and man, this rejection thing. What's the game plan?

MEYER

You study the trends, mind the ups and downs. You hope to move on, be part of the picture, but sometimes with a throw of the dice...

ELAINE

Oh, blather, blather, blather.

BRAD

Do you mind? Meyer and me are having a conversation over here.

ELAINE

Get real, sonny. You're just what happens to be handy right now. If his other half were here, you'd be so much lint.

MEYER

You're very bitter, did you know that? Vitriolic is the word for you. Ever heard of it?

ELAINE

Believe me, I know more words than you know emotions.

BRAD

Hey, we're all in the same fix. Why can't we think like a team?

ELAINE

A team? Oh, please! There are differences among us.

BRAD

You mean, I'm athletic, he's a business type and you're...

MEYER

Hey! You're looking at a name brand here, buddy. Gold Toe, to you.

BRAD

Sorry, I just meant...

*(CEIL comes to life)*

CEIL

Wow! Where am I? What happened?

BRAD

I don't believe it! Another one!

CEIL

Don't tell me we're...

MEYER

You got it. The lost sock convention. Meyer's the name.

BRAD

And I'm Brad.

CEIL

They call me Ceil. When they call me anything, that is. I'm just a legwarmer, you see.

ELAINE

And a very pretty legwarmer you are, dear. I'm Elaine. Welcome to our world.

CEIL

So we're all solo?

MEYER

You can prowl around, hon', but the odds of finding your partner in here are slim to none.

CEIL

So this is what it's like.

MEYER

Yeah, it's tough coping with the rejection thing, but I say it's all about attitude.

ELAINE

I look on it as holding out for something better. A brighter tomorrow. Maybe.

BRAD

Yeah, sure. Call it what you want, we're off the roster. And I don't belong hanging around a dryer with a bunch of losers.

MEYER

Just watch who you're calling a loser.

BRAD

Sorry, sorry.

MEYER

Anyway, it's just one of the downsides of being a sock.

BRAD

What I want to know is, how can they do this? How can they just go off and leave us...

ELAINE

Panic alert! Brad's unraveling again.

BRAD

Hey! I'm just trying to figure out the rules.

CEIL

Maybe there are no rules. Maybe we're just supposed to explore the emotion. That's what the instructor says to do when there's a new dance routine. Be bold, she says, swim into the...

*(CEIL points toward audience)*

Oh, look! Who's that?

BRAD

Hey! Maybe...

MEYER

I think this guy's going to open the...

CEIL

Oh, please, please! Yes, yes!

*(All freeze as they are flooded in bright, white light. Pause. Lights go down and all-re-animate.)*

BRAD

What the...

MEYER

Sheesh! People are so indecisive.

CEIL

No! No!

ELAINE

It's all right, dear. Try to remain calm. Remember what the dance instructor says.

CEIL

But what about my partner? What's happening to her? What if, you know, when they...

BRAD

You mean, crunch time. When they pair everybody up.

MEYER

It's rough, all right.

*(In an exaggerated voice)*

"Gee, here's one, what happened to the mate? Oh, well, may as well get rid of this."

*(Normal voice)*

And zap! Into the trash!

BRAD

It's like they don't even half look. How can they do that? Are they blind, stupid, or what?

ELAINE

Some of them do hang onto singles once in a while. The more parsimonious types tuck them into the corner of a drawer where they're left to languish alone, hoping for a reunion. Who knows if it ever comes?

CEIL

Forgotten in the back of a drawer or abandoned here. Why are humans so cruel?

MEYER

It's just life on the edge. Hell, the last time I was in this fix, it was with a lacey, little thing who was new and fresh and it was just the two of us and she was...

ELAINE

Scared? Lonely? So you wrapped yourself around her and cuddled up next to the vent. Please, we've got the picture.

MEYER

I'm just trying to explain to the young lady here the ins and outs. Bottom line is, socks always come out on the short end.

BRAD

How would they like it if somebody did that to them? That's got to be the worst.

MEYER

Oh, well, there's even worse than that.

CEIL

What do you mean?

MEYER

Disappearing.

BRAD

How does that happen? How do you just...disappear?

ELAINE

Who knows? I've never actually confronted the possibility.

MEYER

Just one more thing to contend with. Part of the challenge of being us.

ELAINE

They even have places where the others can go, when they've gone astray. Umbrellas, hats, scarves, gloves.

MEYER

Yeah, but you're never gonna see a sock at lost and found.

CEIL

Why is that?

ELAINE

Discrimination. Clearly.

BRAD

I don't get it. We play so many roles---

MEYER

Oh, don't get me started on that. I knew this one guy, hard worker, a real go-getter. He gets separated from his partner and guess what? They turn him into a hand puppet.

*(Childish voice)*

"Hello, Mister Bob, how are you today?" "Just fine, Miss Suzie. How are you?"

*(Normal voice)*

He'll be doing pre-K puppet shows for the rest of his days.

BRAD

Could be fun. It's show business. Kind of.

MEYER

Are you kidding? The guy was a powerhouse. Now he's chatting it up with pre-schoolers at naptime.

CEIL

Talk about career changes, I had a friend, pure virgin wool, a beautiful shade of magenta. Her other half got lost, now she's a dust-rag! Imagine! Pushing furniture polish around.

ELAINE

How tragic! A beautiful thing like that ending up as a domestic.

BRAD

That's nothing. I had a buddy went on to robbing banks.

MEYER

How'd he do that?

BRAD

They used him as a gag to keep the guards quiet while they pulled off a big heist. He went to court and everything. Exhibit A for the prosecution.

CEIL

Wow! That's exciting.



ELAINE

I think it's disgusting. Just more of the ugliness that passes for modern day existence. Oh, for the good old days. Of course, I'm much too young to remember, but I have heard how beautiful it was back then.

BRAD

You mean...

ELAINE

The line. Waving in the breeze out in the fresh air. No one was ever left behind on a clothesline.

CEIL

They do use fresh-air-scented dryer sheets sometimes.

ELAINE

It's not the same, dear, not the same at all. Besides, you know why they put those things in.

CEIL

So we smell nice?

MEYER

To keep us from clinging. You know...

ELAINE

We just have that natural tendency. Anyway, as I hear it, our world used to be different. There was less rough and tumble. You didn't see yourself shrinking thread by thread, disappearing bit by bit, week after debilitating week.

MEYER

Yeah, back in the old days, socks even got darned.

BRAD

What's darned?

MEYER

Fixed, mended. I get all choked up just thinkin' about it.

ELAINE

Imagine being so highly regarded, that someone would actually hold you and take time to repair your failings. Now, no one would dream of doing such a thing. Oh, it takes a strong personality these days to keep one's equilibrium, maintain one's sense of worth.

MEYER

Well, there's nothing wrong with my equilibrium. I know what I'm worth. I go places, I do things. I'm one busy guy, I'll tell you. This? This is just a blip on the screen, a temporary downturn. Things will be on the rise for me very soon. You can count on that.

CEIL

You have a very upbeat attitude, Mr. Meyer.

MEYER

Oh, you have to in my business.

BRAD

What line of work you in?

MEYER

Sales. The guy sells cars. The kind with a little mileage on them.

ELAINE

You belong to a used car salesman!

MEYER

We prefer to call them pre-owned, if you don't mind. And you don't have to sound so snobby. It's a very important part of society, keeping the wheels turning and all. The guy has goals, ambition, a future.

ELAINE

Frankly, I think it's more interesting to have a past.

CEIL

You're a trouser sock, right?

ELAINE

Oh, yes. The tales I can tell...

BRAD

I don't want to be rude, but, what's a trouser sock?

ELAINE

Look, sonny. We're chic, we're stylish and we're worn with ladies' slacks. Well-cut slacks. Designer labels. See? It's a life of marble baths, plush carpeting, resort rendezvous, weekend getaways, hotel room trysts. You haven't lived until you've been stripped off in haste by an eager lover. My owner is always looking for the real thing.

BRAD

The real thing?

ELAINE

True love, of course. We haven't quite found it yet but...well, I've had my moments. Passion. That's what life is all about. Not sales meetings and bottom lines. Don't you agree, Ceil?

CEIL

I don't know if I can fully enter into the conversation, me being just a legwarmer.

MEYER

Hey, we're not prejudiced, hon, come on.

CEIL

Well, to me, it's all about art.

BRAD

Who?

ELAINE

She means culture, the creation of beautiful things.

CEIL

Oh, yes, and when I'm spinning around that rehearsal hall, doing those leaps, it's just, it's the most wonderful thing. It's beauty and truth and, like this piece we did last week. They called it "Three Bears in a Fondue Pot."

BRAD

What does that mean?

CEIL

It was supposed to be a kind of fable. Something about submitting to the present evil lest a greater one befall you. It began with the dancers acting out nursery rhymes and ended in this big tableau that was supposed to mean the end of the world. It was pretty wild.

MEYER

How'd it go over?

CEIL

Well, some people wept, some clapped, some were a little confused, a few walked out...

MEYER

Oh. Reviews were "mixed."

CEIL

What does that matter? It's art! The most beautiful, the most special, anyway, that's what I think.

BRAD

Hey! You should have heard the crowd at the match last week. No mixed reviews there. The ball is ping-pong back and forth and we are all over that court. Talk about excitement! The crowd's on the edge of their seats and we're dominating! Up to the net and back down the court with these booming serves. It was one hell of a match. We beat the bloody pulp out of the...

BRAD (Cont'd.)

...other guy. Now, that, folks, is what life is about. Winning! Winning big! The trophy is this tall, the cameras are popping, man, we are in the zone. A couple more tournaments like that and we're headed for the...

*(ELAINE coughs. Pause)*

Yeah, right. What am I going on about? I thought we had it made, and now...

MEYER

Hold on, everybody! I think maybe...

CEIL

Oh, yes! Yes! She's opening the...

*(All freeze as they are flooded in bright, white light. Pause. Lights go down & all re-animate.)*

BRAD

Geez! I hate that.

CEIL

Not again!

ELAINE

You'd think they could at least make up their minds.

MEYER

You know, in sales, a big part of the game is location. I bet that's the story here.

CEIL

What do you mean?

MEYER

Smell the Clorox, honey. It's the dryers at the end of the row that get all the action. We're out of the mainstream.

CEIL

You mean, they might never...

MEYER

Oh, I'm sure soon somebody will come.

ELAINE

Yes, of course. There are ideas, you know, about why people leave us behind.

MEYER

Mostly hearsay, mind you.

ELAINE

Some think that people do it deliberately. Out of spite.

CEIL

Spite? I don't understand.

ELAINE

Look at it this way. We're paired up from the beginning. They have to search for their partners.

MEYER

And for some of them, whew! Talk about trying to find the impossible dream.

ELAINE

And even when they do get the right one, half of them don't know how to make it last.

MEYER

You'd think they could figure it out. But with them, it's always "me," "me," "me," when it ought to be...

ELAINE

"Us." Like we said before, we know how to couple, we have that "clinging" thing going on and they don't.

BRAD

So they're jealous. And we get left behind in a dryer.

CEIL

That is so not fair! Are there any other ideas?

ELAINE

Oh, there's just a theory.

MEYER

And it's a crackpot theory, at that. All you need to remember is, socks are the basis of civilization, the secret behind the gross national product. Third world countries? Not a lot of socks. It's that simple.

CEIL

So you mean if people in underdeveloped countries started wearing socks, they'd be...

MEYER

On the road to a bigger GNP. Absolutely.

ELAINE

The Canadian prime minister, the president of the United States? They may not always wear a tie, a coat, a button-down shirt, but, they always wear socks.

MEYER

And you can take that to the bank.

BRAD

Geez. You guys make me proud. I never looked at it that way.

ELAINE

Oh, yes. We separate the haves from the have-nots.

BRAD

Well, from now on, I'm going to be, I'm going to be the best damn sock ever.

CEIL

But...this is just a question now, but, is that how they look at it?

BRAD

Who?

CEIL

Them. I mean, that whole basis of civilization thing, is that how humans see it?

BRAD

They have to. They must...otherwise...otherwise...

CEIL

That's the other theory, isn't it?

BRAD

You mean...

CEIL

They don't think we're that important.

BRAD

And that's why we get left behind.

ELAINE

Oh, I don't know that anyone believes that exactly, but, well...

MEYER

I'd just like to see them try and get along without us!

BRAD

But if that's what they really think, maybe...maybe they'll never come.

CEIL

They keep on opening the door.

BRAD

Opening the door doesn't mean anything. If we don't get picked up, we're done.

MEYER

Try not to take it too hard, kids. It's only a theory.

ELAINE

Still, in the end, others may deceive themselves but a lost sock must face the truth.

*(Pause.)*

CEIL

But...how can we be lost if we know where we are?

MEYER

What?

CEIL

If you know where you are, you're not lost, right? I know where I am, I'm here.

BRAD

And... we not only know where we are...we know where we're not.

MEYER

What?

CEIL

Right! Maybe that's why we don't end up at lost and found.

BRAD

Because we're not lost. So we can't be found.

CEIL

We're just not owned anymore. By them.

BRAD

When you look at it that way, hell, I've got fields to cross, courts to conquer. What am I doin' here?

MEYER

What are you getting at?

BRAD

There must be some way to...

CEIL

Hey! There are two openings, right? The door and the...

ELAINE

No! Not the vent.

BRAD

Why not? I say we give it a try.

ELAINE

You don't know where it leads!

MEYER

She's right. Who knows where you'll end up, buddy? Going through the vent, nobody knows what will happen.

BRAD

What will happen is, we'll get out of here.

ELAINE

But what's on the other side? You might...disappear.

CEIL

We can't just disappear. Wherever we are, that's where we'll be.

BRAD

Anyway, what sense does it make to stay? There's nothing here.

MEYER

That's where you're wrong, buddy. We're here. No, I'm, I'm gonna stick around.

ELAINE

You don't have to stay. Not on my account. You can go. You can all go.

CEIL

Why not come with us, Elaine?

ELAINE

I can't. I don't know what's out there. Here, we know where we are.

CEIL

But...what if they never come?



BRAD

You said yourself, Meyer, you follow the ups and downs, you spot the trends...

MEYER

I know, I know, but to just head out there.

BRAD

Right. To just head out there.

CEIL

Would you two follow if you knew it was okay?

MEYER

I'm not sure I could...

CEIL

Look, if we don't come back, it means it's all right, that we're in a new place.

ELAINE

Or, that something's happened to you.

*(Pause.)*

CEIL

It's all right. We'll go. And if we don't return, you'll know it's okay to...

MEYER

You two take off and...we'll see.

BRAD

Well, come on, Ceil.

CEIL

Okay. Bye.

ELAINE

Take care.

*(BRAD & CEIL exit. Pause.)*

MEYER

So.

ELAINE

So. What if it's true? What if there is nothing here? Nothing ahead for us?

MEYER

Hey. We had a good run, didn't we? We can look back and say we made things happen.

ELAINE

You mean we were part of a great design? A grand plan? Is that why you stayed?

MEYER

Maybe it's like what she said before. About the dance. I'd rather submit to the present evil than...

ELAINE

Lest a greater one befall you? I suppose that makes me the present evil.

MEYER

You do hear stories about your kind.

ELAINE

And some of them are even true. Of course, I have lost a few threads along the way.

MEYER

Looks to me like you've kept all the best ones. What do you say?

ELAINE

It's been quite a while since I've clung to a Gold Toe.

MEYER

You're not afraid, are you?

ELAINE

No, but I feel the pull of the dryer sheet keeping us apart. Can we conquer it? Can we...

*(ELAINE & MEYER come together in a rush.)*

MEYER

Aw, I knew we had it in us.

ELAINE

There's nothing about matching up you and I don't know.

MEYER

And as for what happens next...let them come. Or not.

ELAINE

We won't think about it. So long as we're...

MEYER

A pair?

*(They freeze as they are flooded in bright, white light. Pause. Lights go down. Pause. Bright white lights up on an empty stage.)*

FEMALE VOICE

*(Offstage)*

Here's an empty one, Marge, down at this end. I just had to clean out some socks. Do you have any change on you?

*(Lights down.)*

END OF PLAY