

I'M NOT WASHING MY SOCKS

by Jerry Rabushka

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I'M NOT WASHING MY SOCKS*A Comedy Monologue***by Jerry Rabushka**

SYNOPSIS: Jeanne shares the harrowing tale of an auto accident while she was wearing dirty socks. (Honestly, did she even deserve medical attention?) She soon learns the importance of washing her socks—the hard way.

CAST OF CHARACTERS*(1 female)*

JEANNE (f) High school aged. Performer can use her own name, if desired.

TIME: Present day.

SETTING: At home; in the car; in the ambulance; at the hospital.

SET: Bare stage.

COSTUMES: Present day. Clean socks would be a plus.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

This short play makes fun of that old family worry about getting into an accident while wearing dirty clothes. Everyone says no, it won't make a difference, so you'll want to surprise your audience at the end when it actually does. However, the family relationship is important, as is how the speaker is willing to aggravate her mother, then sacrifice her friends and her self-respect to win a battle that she shouldn't even be fighting.

JEANNE: So, I'm going to spend the next ten minutes talking socks. Controversial, political, polemical socks. In my family, we live, love and... fight through socks.

My mother was the ringleader: "Do you even have any? Do you have any that are *clean*?"

My sister was the ring-follower: "Do they match your outfit? Do they match each other? You can't wear those, it's winter and those are for summer..."

And, my father, the ring-finisher: (*Suddenly loud.*) "I SAID NO." Not sure why he even cared, but Dad liked to say no—a lot. Tough love and all that jazz.

My family's obsessed. So are our paramedics, so is our local hospital, and so is our news media, and it all starts... (*Points to herself.*) here.

When great-grandma died—shouting at the TV during a *Wheel of Fortune* marathon—not only did she get the puzzle wrong, but she was wearing oversized argyles from 1954. After the funeral, the mortician washed them, sold them on e-bay as vintage and made a fortune. In fact, Great-Grandma's entire wardrobe hadn't been updated or washed since the Eisenhower administration, but I was young and I egged her on. The more my family realized all this dirty laundry was driving a wedge between me and responsible adulthood, the more they persisted in a daily cross-examination.

(*As mother.*) Are your socks clean, Jeanne?

I don't know, (*Sarcastic.*) Mother.

(*As mother.*) Yes you do, (*Same tone of voice.*) Daughter.

They knew I knew. In my house, “I don’t know” means “I know but I’m not telling because I don’t have an answer that you’re going to like.” If I say “I don’t know, *Mother*,” that translates as “leave me alone, all you ever do is make my life miserable.” It’s just easier to say it in code.

I had to get out of the house, socks or no. Sometimes you’ve got to go places. Like school, like dance practice, like your friends want to do something and you don’t want to miss even a single minute of awkward teenage socialization because it’s just so... much... fun. And I’d get to complain about my parents throughout the entirety of the event to follow. I could barely get out of the house. My mother might be the fashion police but she graduated at the bottom of Fashion Police Academy.

My friends took my mom’s side, but they were stuck with me in a car with yesterday’s socks; or on a Friday, socks from Monday or Tuesday. It was clearly a rebellion that had no street cred, and the more I complained the more they told me to shut up.

“Well, Jeanne,” someone finally said, “I hate to side with your mom, but I’m going to because she was doing you a favor and I can’t believe your mom has more fashion sense than you do but frankly an anteater has more fashion sense than you do and they don’t even wear socks... they just eat ants, so I’m curious how you even fell into that category... but whatever.”

Well anyway... whatever....

By this point, I’d simply like to get dressed without becoming the focal point of a world crisis. My room is full of so-called “appropriate clothing”. Blue jeans, cute little tops, casual wear, dress clothes, even grandma’s hand-me-down prom dress I’ll never wear unless 1950s formals return to vogue. One never knows when vogue returns, so I’m keeping it for now. Guess I can pass it along to my future daughter, and by then, the style may have caught on again. (*Beat.*) Problem is, except for the prom dress, my clothes are scattered around the room.

Laundry around here is considered an ancient art, no longer practiced... like homemade, cooked-from-scratch meals... something you only see in fairy tales and TV commercials. For all the fresh laundry that gets done in this house, you'd think it involved beating clothes on a rock down by the river. And we don't have a river. *(Shrugs.)* Town's been dry since '71. *(Beat.)*

Mom is involved in every charitable work known to mankind, from Meals on Wheels to the 'Save Our Whales' foundation, which is really something considering we live in the middle of Missouri. *(Beat.)* With all Mom has on her plate and none of it home cooked, laundry is a fend-for-yourself activity. As a teenager, laundry simply doesn't rank as a priority, and no one else is begging to throw a load in for me. We own a perfectly good washing machine, but I've yet to learn the operating instructions, and like driving, it's safer to wait until you're well past your teenage years. And I'm certainly not ready for laundry.

Today's outfit was simple: Straight from my floor... long pants, T-shirt with something bordering on inappropriate but not enough to get me kicked off an airplane. Comfy shoes, *(Changes to address her mother.)* "and, *(With that same smart mouth tone of voice.)* Mother, socks that no one's ever going to see."

My mom startled everyone in the county from the swimming pool to the pet cemetery. "YOU DON'T KNOW THAT!"

(Take some time to react to that!) Well, I'm not the smartest bulb on the Wal-Mart shelf, but one thing I do know is no one's going to see my socks.

"Your great grandmother thought the same thing."

And, by the time they did, she was passed on.

"And what about the smell?"

What smell? My socks are completely covered by my shoes and long pants. Any smell will be completely suffocated.

“That’s exactly how anyone with you in tight quarters will feel... completely suffocated.”

Now you might be wondering, at this point, why didn't I just crank up the ole washing machine and ask someone in the know to churn out a clean pair, or nag my mom to take me to Wal-Mart and get about 35 clean pair, or go to a specialty store and get two clean pair for the price of Wal-Mart's 35. For me, it was about having control over my own life and making my own decisions, even if those decisions were smelly and self-defeating.

Finally, mom pulled out the most morbid fear of every parent: If I had an accident while I was wearing dirty socks, what would people say?

I realize that clean socks matter, I mean I'm a teenager with all kinds of out-of-proportion-concerns and the last thing I want is people to see me with even the slightest imperfection. But it was worth it to show my family that they couldn't boss me around. So rather than give in, I dug deeper—or as we call it these days, I doubled down, like a bacon-double cheeseburger with a doughnut for a bun. I would, out of spite, wear the same pair for a week. Again, I have significantly fewer friendships now than when this started, but long books and open windows quickly became my friends and allies. And boys can wait until college. No one does laundry in college, so I'll fit in perfectly at any institution of higher learning.

So, fast-forward to one of those times where there were six of us in a car and someone who had a driver's license for exactly 15 and a half minutes was at the wheel, knowing everything there was to know about how fast to go versus the posted speed limit, when it was OK to text and drive, when to weave in and out of a lane, or when it was advisable to roll up as close as possible to the car in front of him until that car either slammed on the breaks or moved out of the way. We've all been there.

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