

JUMP ROPE

By Larry Mitchell

A ten minute play about circumstances

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

ANDY: M, late 20's - late 40's, knockaround guy.

EARL: M, early 20's - early 40's, younger knockaround guy.

MAN: M, early 20's - mid 30's, suburban dad.

SETTING

A suburban basement on the East Coast.

A chair, a dude, a jump-rope

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AT RISE, there is a MAN, tied up to a chair with a JUMP ROPE. He is also gagged with a GYM SOCK. HE is not squirming or attempting escape, but remains relaxed.

EARL

That's the kind of weird thing that's been happening all day.

ANDY

What, you been finding strangers tied up in your basement?

EARL

No, not exactly "this," but this *kind of thing*.

ANDY

Whatta you mean "this kind of thing?"

EARL

Whatta you mean, "Whatta I mean?" I mean "this kind of thing." I wake up and Shirley's not there. Then I go downstairs and all the kids are gone. I look in the garage, and there's no car there. Well, there's a Buick LeSabre in there, but you know me. I don't go in for Buicks.

ANDY

This is true.

EARL

So, then, I come down here to see if the wash is done, and "Bam!" There's some guy tied up in a chair. And, get this; it's not my chair.

ANDY

That's not your chair?

EARL

Nah, never seen that chair before in my life.

ANDY

No?

EARL

No. You ever see that chair before?

ANDY takes a hard look at the chair.

ANDY

No, I don't think... Well, I don't know. A lot of chairs look alike. I mean, it's a chair... That y our jump-rope?

EARL

Yeah.

ANDY

Really? I've never seen you with a jump-rope before.

EARL

It's my kids', Andy. I think we gave it to the youngest for her birthday, but they all use it.

ANDY

Huh. Well, is that your sock in the guys mouth?

EARL

I don't know. I have gray socks, but I don't know if that's mine. I mean, everybody's got gray socks. Right?

ANDY

I don't have gray socks.

EARL

What?

ANDY

I don't have gray socks.

EARL

Really?

ANDY

Yeah. I just have the white, plus a couple of pairs of black for weddings and funerals. You know.

EARL

Aw, man. I hate weddings.

ANDY

What?! Free cake and beer?! Fuck you.

EARL

Fuck you.

ANDY

Fuck me? Fuck this guy. Who is he?

EARL

I was hoping you might know.

ANDY

Why would I know.

EARL

I don't know, but I thought you might have some idea. Surely you've dealt with something like this before.

ANDY

No way. I was bush league, man. We didn't tie people up.

EARL

Never?

ANDY

Well, yeah, but I didn't use a stranger's house. I mean... Are you sure you don't know this guy.

(To MAN in chair)

Hey! Guy! You know either one of us.

MAN, who has been seemingly uninterested in the banter or being untied for that matter, calmly shakes his head, "No."

EARL

Yeah, well, we don't know you either.

(To ANDY)

You think we should untie him?

ANDY

Well, you might take the gym sock out of his mouth, but I wouldn't untie him just yet. There's no telling why he's here. He might be dangerous or something.

EARL

What if he screams?

ANDY

He doesn't look like he wants to scream. You don't want to scream. Do you?

MAN nods, "No."

See, he doesn't want to scream.

EARL

How do you know?

ANDY

I don't. He just doesn't look like a screamer... if you ask me. I mean we could--

EARL

Nah, I think you're right. Go ahead and pull the sock out.

ANDY

Fuck that.

EARL

What? You scared?

ANDY

No.

EARL

Then, what?

ANDY

I don't know. It ain't my sock. I don't even know if it's clean or not. Hey! Guy! That sock clean?

MAN nods, "No." ANDY immediately lunges for the SOCK and pulls it out, throws it at EARL, who catches it, or picks it up, inspecting it.

EARL
Yeah, that's my gym-sock, alright.

ANDY
Really?

EARL
Yeah.

ANDY
So, it's your sock?

EARL
Yeah.

ANDY
And that's your jump-rope?

EARL
Yeah.

ANDY
But, that ain't your chair?

EARL
Hell, no.

ANDY
Weird.

MAN
It's my chair.

ANDY & EARL jump at the sound of MAN'S voice.

ANDY
Hey! You trying to kill a man, over here?

EARL

(To MAN)

Hi.

MAN

Hello.

EARL

So, uh, that's your chair, then?

MAN

Yeah, I'm pretty sure... Yeah, yeah. This is definitely my chair. I have five more just like it at home. Do you have any chairs?

EARL

What?

MAN

Well, I mean, it doesn't make sense to bring a chair from my house... Hey, Andy, Right?

ANDY

Yeah.

MAN

Andy, can you untie me.

ANDY & EARL share a look. EARL gives a non verbal OK. ANDY begins untying MAN.

MAN (CONT'D)

Thanks.

(To Earl)

Anyhow, like I was saying, It seems to me that bringing a chair over to your basement to tie me up with your jump-rope and gag me with your gym-sock is a bit uneconomical, if you have a chair somewhere, and you do have a chair?

EARL

Of course I have a chair.

ANDY

(Finishes untying MAN)

There you go. Free as a bird... That's just weird. And you don't know why you're tied up here? You don't owe anybody any money or anything like that?

ANDY begins jumping rope.

MAN

Not that I know of.

EARL

And we don't know each other?

MAN

Not that I can recall.

EARL

Well, what are we gonna' do about this? Andy?

ANDY

Don't ask me. It's your basement, man.

EARL

Yeah, but it's his chair. Right?

MAN

Yeah. I'm pretty sure.

EARL

Well...

EARL paces, as MAN begins rolling his shoulders and elbows to stretch them out a little, now that he's free.

ANDY continues jumping rope, until EARL confronts him non-verbally. ANDY sheepishly hands EARL the rope, who then paces back over to the chair. ANDY pauses, then makes eye contact with MAN, then turns to go back off-stage.

After a brief moment, as ANDY & MAN share a glance, EARL returns with a chair that looks EXACTLY like the one MAN is sitting on and the jump-rope.

Hey! Is that my chair? MAN

Nope. It's mine. EARL

It looks a lot like mine. MAN

That is true. ANDY

It's not. It's totally different. EARL

ANDY & MAN share a look. MAN gets up off of his chair and HE & ANDY inspect MAN'S chair, then nod in agreement.

You're right. It is completely different. ANDY

Well. What are you waiting for? EARL

What? ANDY

Tie me up. EARL

What?! ANDY

Tie. Me. Up. EARL

Are you serious? ANDY

EARL

Yeah. It's the only thing that makes sense. There was obviously some kind of mistake. This is my daughter's jump-rope. That is definitely my gym sock. But that is not my chair. So, I have my chair, and, now, you're gonna tie me up.

ANDY

Really?

EARL

Yeah. Just do it. Trust me.

ANDY

Alright. This make sense to you, Guy?

MAN

No, but I still don't know what I was doing here, so who am I to say what's right.

ANDY

You want me to do it, Earl?

EARL

If you don't mind.

ANDY begins tying EARL to the chair with the jump-rope.

MAN

Well, I gotta tell you. I admire your bravery. What you're doing, it doesn't make sense.

EARL

Nothing does, today.

MAN

It's bold, anyhow, and I like that. You're a brave man, Earl.

ANDY

It's true.

EARL

Thank you. Both of you.

MAN

Thank *You*.

ANDY

Earl, you want the sock in your mouth?

MAN

Yeah, might as well.

EARL

He's right.

MAN places gym sock in EARL'S mouth, who mumbles a "thanks," to each of the others.

MAN

You're welcome.

MAN grabs his chair and begins to leave.

ANDY

Well, I guess we'll see you later....

MAN

Later, buddy.

ANDY

We never did figure out who's LeSabre was in the garage.

MAN

Oh, that's mine.

ANDY

How'd your car end up in his garage?

MAN

I don't know. That's the kind of weird thing that's been happening all day. You need a ride?

ANDY nods, "yes," as THEY exit with the first chair.

THE END