

# **21 Pairs of Sneakers**

By

**Stephen LaRocque**

# 21 PAIRS OF SNEAKERS

Copyright © 2004

by **Stephen LaRocque**

All Rights Reserved

**CAUTION:** Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that **21 PAIRS OF SNEAKERS** is subject to a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional, amateur, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, and the rights of translation into foreign language are strictly reserved.

The amateur live stage performance rights to **21 PAIRS OF SNEAKERS** are controlled exclusively by Drama Source and royalty arrangements and licenses must be secured well in advance of presentation. PLEASE NOTE that amateur royalty fees are set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. When applying for a royalty quotation and license please give us the number of performances intended and dates of production. Royalties are payable one week before the opening performance of the play to Drama Source Co., 1588 E. 361 N., St. Anthony, Idaho 83445, unless other arrangements are made.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid whether the play is presented for charity or gain, and whether or not admission is charged. For all other rights than those stipulated above, apply to Drama Source Company, 1588 E. 361 N. St. Anthony, Idaho 83445.

Copying from this book in whole or in part is strictly forbidden by law, and the right of performance is not transferable.

Whenever the play is produced, the following notice must appear on all programs, printing and advertising for the play, "Produced by special arrangement with Drama Source Co."

Due authorship credit must be given on all programs, printing and advertising for the play.

**No one shall commit or authorize any act or omission by which the copyright or the rights to copyright of this play may be impaired.**

**No one shall make changes in this play for the purpose of production without written permission.**

**Publication of this play does not imply availability for performance. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised in their own interests to apply to Drama Source Company for written permission before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre.**

**No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, videotaping or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.**

# Characters

**Dewey** - A college student, the basketball equipment manager, working his way through college.

**Lloyd** - The star of the college basketball team; a legend in his own mind.

**Margaret** - A young woman in her twenties, solid, dependable, apparently (but not really) a little dull.

**Myra** - A young woman in her mid-twenties, aspiring to a career in show business.

**Radio Announcer** - A male voice

## Costumes and Time Setting

The play takes place on Sunday morning, December 9, 1934. The setting is the equipment room of the Manhattan College gymnasium in New York City.

The costumes should conform to 1930's standards for casual dress: neat, but functional. For the men: sweaters, shirts with open collars, trousers, leather shoes. Dewey could (but need not) wear socks that don't match; one of his lines refers to his long-running battles with his socks. For the women: dresses, practical leather shoes (low heels), and tights, because of the cold weather. All characters should have overcoats and scarves for their entrances and exits. Hats are a good idea, but are not absolutely necessary.

## Stage Layout

There is a single interior set – the equipment room of the gym.

Stage right, a door leads to the outside (where it is very cold, so characters should be recovering from the cold on their entrances and preparing for it on their exits).

Stage left is a counter, of a height just about waist level, with a chair behind it.

(Or the locations of the door and the counter can be reversed; they just need to be on opposite sides of the stage, so that there is some distance – and time – between a character's entrance and his or her arrival at the counter.)

There should be a fairly large open space for Lloyd to dribble the basketball.

Onstage props may be as elaborate as desired (for example, 1930's-era sports equipment hanging on the walls, stacks of towels and equipment), but the only essential props are a duffel bag hidden under the counter, a few pairs of old-style basketball shoes (sneakers), a radio, and a basketball.

# Act I, Scene 1

*{The scene is the equipment room of the Manhattan College gym. Dewey, the equipment manager, is sitting behind the counter, folding towels. Lloyd, the star of the basketball team and Dewey's roommate, is dribbling a basketball.}*

**Dewey:** So you're going?

**Lloyd:** I'm going.

**Dewey:** Are you going alone?

**Lloyd:** I'm taking a friend.

**Dewey:** Which friend?

**Lloyd:** A lady friend.

**Dewey:** Which lady friend?

**Lloyd:** A friend named Myra.

**Dewey:** Who is Myra?

**Lloyd:** The new librarian.

**Dewey:** Oh, that Myra ...

**Lloyd:** You know about her?

**Dewey:** Roomie, everybody knows about her. Ever since she appeared on the scene, books have been flying off the shelves.

**Lloyd:** Well, consider the competition.

**Dewey:** Margaret? Margaret is OK.

**Lloyd:** She's quiet.

**Dewey:** She's not.

**Lloyd:** She never gives me the time of day.

**Dewey:** She probably just doesn't appreciate your sterling qualities.

**Lloyd:** That's probably it. Actually, Myra is not really a librarian.

**Dewey:** She's not?

**Lloyd:** This is just a temporary situation, until she gets a break.

**Dewey:** Which break would that be?

**Lloyd:** She is on the brink of a career in show business.

**Dewey:** I see.

**Lloyd:** She had an audition for the Ziegfeld Follies of 1934, and she would have been cast – she would - if it hadn't been for this climber from Chicago who sweet-talked her way into the chorus line. She claimed that she knew Fanny Brice, but the truth is she had no credentials at all and even less talent.

**Dewey:** Life just isn't fair.

**Lloyd:** It isn't. So she's waiting for the Follies of 1935. It's just a matter of time.

**Dewey:** You found all this out at the circulation desk?

**Lloyd:** I showed interest - she responded. What can I say?

**Dewey:** Your eyes met ...

**Lloyd:** ... that they did ...

**Dewey:** ... as she stamped your book.

**Lloyd:** Mortensen's Principles of Accounting, due December 22nd.

**Dewey:** That's amazing.

**Lloyd:** That we hit it off?

**Dewey:** That you found the library.

**Lloyd:** Hey, Dewey, come on ...

**Dewey:** I was convinced that your only strategy for making it to graduation was by palling around with Brother Brendan and his Merry Men.

**Lloyd:** I have done some palling, I admit. But I am more than just a face in Brother Brendan's crowd. I have substance.

**Dewey:** Uh-huh. So you're taking her to the football game?

**Lloyd:** I am.

**Dewey:** Have you asked her?

**Lloyd:** Not in so many words. I asked her if she wanted to do something this afternoon - not further specified - and she said yes.

**Dewey:** She doesn't seem like the football type.

**Lloyd:** She will become the football type, once she's properly introduced to the game. Women's ability to appreciate football is chronically underestimated.

**Dewey:** You hope.

**Lloyd:** Who could not love the game of football? Who could not love my Bears?

**Dewey:** Don't give me your Bears.

**Lloyd:** My champions.

**Dewey:** We know.

**Lloyd:** Two years in a row, Pally - two stupendous years.

**Dewey:** Two years of dumb luck.

**Lloyd:** Not luck, Dewey - destiny! How many games have they won this year?  
Tell me: how many?

**Dewey:** Nine.

**Lloyd:** And how many have they lost? How many?

**Dewey:** You know.

**Lloyd:** Say it; say the syllable.

**Dewey:** None.

**Lloyd:** None is the correct answer - nine and zippo. And how many games has it been since they lost?

**Dewey:** I don't know ... twenty-something.

**Lloyd:** Twenty-three. Twenty-three wins without a defeat.

**Dewey:** There was a tie.

**Lloyd:** What?

**Dewey:** Somebody tied them.

**Lloyd:** Some nonentity. That was thirteen games ago - medieval history. Ever since then, roommate, it has been a Sunday stroll down Easy Street. And today, the 9th of December, 1934, mere hours from now, my Bears will administer the Last Rites to the helpless, hapless Giants ...

**Dewey:** Don't count the Giants out. They've got Ken Strong, they've got Danowski ...

**Lloyd:** Nonentities - no threat, no sweat. The hour of reckoning is here. My boys will rise to the task, and once they have done their duty, let the dynasty begin!

**Dewey:** Don't sell the Bears to me; don't even try.

**Lloyd:** Your enthusiasm is not required. It is not a matter of support, my chum; it's a simple fact of destiny.

**Dewey:** Lloyd, my question is: who cares? More specifically, who cares about professional football? It will never last.

**Lloyd:** What packing crate have you been living in?

**Dewey:** They can't even sell tickets.

**Lloyd:** Of course they can.

**Dewey:** They can't! The college teams sell sixty thousand seats: Michigan, Minnesota, Army-Navy, Notre Dame - they all sell out. But here we are, in New York City, it's Sunday morning, the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 1934, the National Football League championship is an hour and a half away, and in the New York Polo Grounds, with fifty-five thousand seats, they still have two thousand tickets left.

**Lloyd:** Get out!

**Dewey:** It's true! It was in the paper today. They kept the box office open late last night, and they still have tickets left.

**Lloyd:** They can't be good seats.

**Dewey:** They'll be the only good seats in the place today, because they'll be empty. Do you know what the temperature was last night? Eleven degrees. That is twenty degrees below the temperature where life is worth living. {He imitates a newsboy holding a newspaper and calling out the headlines.} Read all about it: Mass Murder at the Polo Grounds! Fifty-three thousand frozen to death in their seats! Burials delayed until spring thaw!

**Lloyd:** Eleven?

**Dewey:** Not only that - it rained last week; it rained all week; it rained, then it froze, then it rained again. You know what you and Miss Follies are going to turn into? Ice sculptures. And the football field will be a skating rink. I can't believe she wants to go.

**Lloyd:** I'm sorry, my friend, it is much too late; the die is cast.

**Dewey:** It is, huh?

**Lloyd:** It is.

**Dewey:** How are you getting there?

**Lloyd:** The subway - Broadway and 7th.

**Dewey:** And where are you picking her up?

**Lloyd:** Wrong question. Where is she picking me up? Answer: here.

**Dewey:** Here?

**Lloyd:** Did I say here?

**Dewey:** You said here.

**Lloyd:** Then I must have meant here.

**Dewey:** You can't do that.

**Lloyd:** Why not?

**Dewey:** Because she's a female.

**Lloyd:** She certainly is.

**Dewey:** This is male territory. You can't have a woman in here.

**Lloyd:** Why not?

**Dewey:** Because the place is full of male stuff. It's full of things that women are not supposed to see - or smell, like a dozen pairs of smelly sneakers, which I really have to wash today.

**Lloyd:** Team sneakers - who ever heard of that? Why doesn't everybody just buy his own?

**Dewey:** There's a Depression on; you might have heard ...

**Lloyd:** I know ...

**Dewey:** I saw a guy in Van Cortland Park yesterday, selling shoelaces, wearing a Knights of Columbus pin.

**Lloyd:** Sad. But you'd think that people could be responsible for what they put on their own feet.

**Dewey:** Don't count on it. Rod Ziegler ...

**Lloyd:** Yeah?

**Dewey:** Thought he was an eleven ...

**Lloyd:** Yeah?

**Dewey:** Twelve and a half.

**Lloyd:** How does he play basketball?

**Dewey:** How does he walk? Coach says he doesn't want any guys messing with their own shoes. I've got the measuring stick, I run the show.

**Lloyd:** My roommate - the sneaker king.

**Dewey:** So Miss Follies is coming here.

**Lloyd:** She is.

**Dewey:** May one ask why?

**Lloyd:** One may. There are wheels within wheels in motion today; there are schemes within schemes; and schemes, once set in motion, acquire momentum of their own.

**Dewey:** This doesn't sound good.

**Lloyd:** It can be good. If everything goes the way it's been planned, then everybody wins.

**Dewey:** And what if it doesn't?

**Lloyd:** Don't ask. I'm going to need some luck. Actually, roommate, I'm going to

need some help.

**Dewey:** I was afraid of that.

**Lloyd:** I need to explain that today's proceedings depend upon a single rendezvous - I use the French advisedly - and it has to be, I emphasize, on the absolute Q.T.

**Dewey:** How come?

**Lloyd:** Because Myra is supposed to be on duty today.

**Dewey:** Do you mean working?

**Lloyd:** Strictly speaking, yes.

**Dewey:** {Charlie Chan imitation} Ah, so ... new librarian, very new, stuck with Sunday shift ... most unfortunate. How Number One Son supposed to take new girl friend to ice hockey football game if she supposed to work?

**Lloyd:** You see my dilemma ...

**Dewey:** It's a good one.

**Lloyd:** But it can be overcome.

**Dewey:** It can?

**Lloyd:** It can. All it takes is a certain sequence of events, none of them having any obvious relationship to the others, except that they all have to happen at precisely the right time. Timing is just about everything. Do you follow?

**Dewey:** Not a word.

**Lloyd:** Actually, the first step has already taken place.

**Dewey:** It has?

**Lloyd:** You opened the gym; I came to the gym. You are here; I am here; both of us are here - so far, so good.

**Dewey:** I have a question.

**Lloyd:** State your question.

**Dewey:** Why are you here?

**Lloyd:** You mean, in the big metaphysical scheme of things?

**Dewey:** No, I mean in the Sunday morning scheme of things. I have never seen any molecular motion out of you on a weekend morning before noon.

**Lloyd:** Ordinarily, that would be true.

**Dewey:** So let me rephrase.

**Lloyd:** Please do.

**Dewey:** What are you doing in the equipment room of the Manhattan College gym at half past eleven in the morning?

**Lloyd:** Practicing.

**Dewey:** You played last night.

**Lloyd:** Brilliantly, I would add.

**Dewey:** You would; so why are you here?

**Lloyd:** As I said: she's coming to meet me here.

**Dewey:** At what time?

**Lloyd:** At one.

**Dewey:** That's an hour and a half from now. So I repeat: what are you doing here?

**Lloyd:** I'm lying low.

**Dewey:** You're what?

**Lloyd:** I'm hiding from Brother Brendan and his Merry Men.

**Dewey:** Are they looking for you?

**Lloyd:** They will be.

**Dewey:** Why?

**Lloyd:** They expect me to go to the game.

**Dewey:** With them?

**Lloyd:** Of course with them. They bought me a ticket, without consulting me, in a part of the Polo Grounds I never would have picked.

**Dewey:** What part?

**Lloyd:** Center field. You can't see anything from there.

**Dewey:** So you're avoiding them at the gym.

**Lloyd:** This is the perfect location – don't you see? It doesn't open until noon. They'll go around to all the old familiar places - the dorm, the quad, the refectory - and they'll fail to find me there, and, with any luck, about half past twelve they'll abandon the search and go down to the game, and leave me to pursue my rendezvous.

**Dewey:** With Miss Checkout.

**Lloyd:** She's a dish, Dewey; she's an ever-loving Blue-Plate Special. If I'm going to have a snowball's chance with her, I have got to steer clear of the Merry Men.

**Dewey:** You said one o'clock?

**Lloyd:** On the schnozz.

**Dewey:** But how can she get off at one, if she doesn't start work until twelve?

**Lloyd:** Margaret is taking the rest of her shift.

**Dewey:** Why is she doing that?

**Lloyd:** Because she's a good egg, I guess; I don't know. Myra asked her to come in at one, and she said she would.

**Dewey:** But, Lloyd, the game starts at two. To get to the Polo Grounds, you'll have to change at 168th St., and then again at Donelson Square. You'll never make it in time.

**Lloyd:** She can't get off until one. There's nothing I can do.

**Dewey:** So how is this all supposed to work?

**Lloyd:** Short and sweet: Myra is going to ten-thirty Mass at Ascension. That's on 101st at Broadway. Mass is over; she hops on the Broadway and 7th, gets off at 242nd St., walks up to the campus in time to open the library at noon. At five minutes to one, Margaret comes in, takes over for Myra, Myra comes here at one. We run down to the subway, catch the Broadway and 7th; and we make it to the Polo Grounds by two.

**Dewey:** You hope.

**Lloyd:** O ye of little faith. We watch the game, the Giants get put in their rightful place; at four-fifteen, we're back on the subway, at five to five, Myra walks into the library, takes over from Margaret; she closes up, and we all go home.

**Dewey:** And she pretends that she was there the entire time.

**Lloyd:** Not the entire time - just the beginning and the end.

**Dewey:** That's dishonest!

**Lloyd:** It is not. Think of it as a long hiatus.

**Dewey:** Think of it as a dumb idea. Why would she even bother to come back at all?

**Lloyd:** Because apparently Brother Cyril comes in at noon and then again at five to make sure that everything is jake.

**Dewey:** So if he sees her there at twelve and again at five, he'll think that she was there all afternoon ...

**Lloyd:** That is one possible interpretation.

**Dewey:** ... which is pretty important, because she's a new employee, and, the economy being what it is - or isn't - there are not a whole lot of jobs to go around, and the last thing she needs to do is lose hers.

**Lloyd:** Nobody is going to lose anything - hopefully.

**Dewey:** Lloyd, do you stay up at night, thinking up new ways to complicate your life?

**Lloyd:** The plan will work. It's simple enough; it just requires timing.

**Dewey:** The Civil War was simpler than this!

**Lloyd:** Get out.

**Dewey:** But wait a minute; wait. If you're willing to go through all this Keystone Cops routine, just to get her to the game - assuming she's even willing to go, on a day when it's cold enough to freeze your goldfish bowl - then why do you have to do it on the sly? Why not just take her to the Polo Grounds and introduce her to the Merry Men, and vice versa, and you can all freeze to death together in the empty seats?

**Lloyd:** That isn't possible.

**Dewey:** It's not?

**Lloyd:** It's not.

**Dewey:** Why not?

**Lloyd:** As I said before, there are wheels within wheels.

**Dewey:** Uh-huh ...

**Lloyd:** There's another wheel.

**Dewey:** Why did I know that? What is the wheel?

**Lloyd:** My Dad is in the Knights of Columbus.

**Dewey:** So is mine.

**Lloyd:** But mine is a Supreme Director.

**Dewey:** Yeah?

**Lloyd:** Supreme Directors know other Supreme Directors. Mr. Tobin, who is Supreme Director in Brooklyn, knows my Dad.

**Dewey:** Brooklyn ...

**Lloyd:** Mr. Tobin has a daughter.

**Dewey:** The woman.

**Lloyd:** If you can call her that.

**Dewey:** What is her name?

**Lloyd:** Marie.

**Dewey:** Marie is not exactly a knockout, I take it.

**Lloyd:** No, she doesn't look that bad, but she does the strangest things.

**Dewey:** Like ...?

**Lloyd:** She giggles.

**Dewey:** So?

**Lloyd:** She giggles at the weirdest times. You can be right in the middle of a story, not saying anything that's even remotely funny, and she comes out with this ... {He imitates a high-pitched giggle.} ... like that. It's very disconcerting.

**Dewey:** Disconcerting?

**Lloyd:** So when my Dad told Mr. Tobin I was coming here, the Tobins arranged for me to meet Marie ...

**Dewey:** ... which you did ...

**Lloyd:** ... which I did, and now one thing is leading to another, and I can see the beginning of the end ...

**Dewey:** The end of what?

**Lloyd:** Of my bachelorhood! My folks will come out, the families will meet, the mothers will get together, and from that point on there will be no way back.

**Dewey:** Are you talking about an engagement?

**Lloyd:** I'm talking about worse.

**Dewey:** I think you're overdoing this.

**Lloyd:** You think arranged marriages are a thing of the past? You do not know Irish Catholicism. Men can be pals, play golf, take life as it comes, but women - mothers - have to plan. They are at this very moment plotting to lure me into the clutches of commitment in the most Catholic way imaginable, and it's only a matter of time before my misspent youth is gone.

**Dewey:** I don't see the problem here ...

**Lloyd:** There's more. Mr. Tobin is married to Mrs. Tobin ...

**Dewey:** I should hope so.

**Lloyd:** Mrs. Tobin is the sister of Brother Patrick.

**Dewey:** Our Brother Patrick? The president of the college?

**Lloyd:** That's the one.

**Dewey:** No wonder he says hello to you. He wouldn't know me from Dillinger.

**Lloyd:** You see my plight? Marie is Brother Patrick's niece.

**Dewey:** So if you show up today without Marie, and with the Blue Plate Special instead, then Brother Brendan will blab to Brother Patrick, who will blab to his sister, who will blab to her husband, who will blab to Marie, who will collapse in tears, and by Monday evening every Catholic in New York will know that you're not being a good boy.

**Lloyd:** It's worse than that.

**Dewey:** How could it possibly be worse?

**Lloyd:** Marie's father is going, too.

**Dewey:** The Supreme Director?

**Lloyd:** Brother Patrick bought him a ticket. Everybody is going! Do you see the noose around my neck?

**Dewey:** Lloyd, why don't you go abroad? There are places in the world where people can escape their past; you could. And I would personally be grateful for the peace and quiet.

**Lloyd:** It isn't fair. I can't make a single move around this place. Should I not be allowed to decide for myself what girl I do and do not wish to go out with? I mean, it is my life, isn't it?

**Dewey:** It doesn't sound like it to me.

**Lloyd:** They shouldn't even see me, really. There'll be 55,000 people there.

**Dewey:** Fifty-three.

**Lloyd:** That's more than a lot of cities. I could get lost and never be found.

**Dewey:** Or you could run into the Supreme Director in the men's room and have to explain yourself for the rest of your life.

**Lloyd:** You know what I need?

**Dewey:** A new identity?

**Lloyd:** An alibi. I need a reason not to go to the game, so that, even if they manage to find me, I won't be able to go, so when I actually do go, it won't be as if I did. Do you see?

**Dewey:** No.

**Lloyd:** What I need is an injury.

**Dewey:** What kind of injury?

**Lloyd:** An incapacitating one that would keep me from walking. I need to be seen in public in obvious distress.

**Dewey:** Lloyd, you're in distress. Believe me, you are already there.

**Lloyd:** I have a plan.

**Dewey:** Keep your plans to yourself.

**Lloyd:** Here is the plan. We can hobble across the campus together ...

**Dewey:** Together? Am I supposed to be injured, too?

**Lloyd:** No, I will hobble; you will walk. We'll call it a sprained ankle - no, better, a twisted knee, because knees don't swell as much. I will hobble; you will support me, and we can be seen making our way across the campus together.

**Dewey:** To where?

**Lloyd:** The dispensary.

**Dewey:** Dispensary's closed on Sundays, except for emergencies. Brother Felix will have to open it up.

**Lloyd:** Oh, yeah ...

**Dewey:** And you know that he's going to want to know how it happened, and the next thing you know he's going to get all fluttery, and he'll say that we can't be too careful, he'll call for an ambulance, and next thing you know, you'll be on the operating table at Bellevue, and they'll probably cut your knee off.

**Lloyd:** My knee!?

**Dewey:** Didn't we agree that that was what you sprained?

**Lloyd:** I've got to rethink this.

**Dewey:** It seems a little extreme, for an injury that you don't even have.

**To Read The Rest  
Please Purchase The  
Script**