

Burnt Socks

By C. Angelo Caci

He says this in a colorless, insipid voice, in the way he says most things:

“I’ve been involved with another woman,”

and I really don’t know what angers me the most. It’s as if our years together, our marriage, were no more important than switching brands of cigarettes. I mean, how insulting! So, because of this...I guess, what with the lack of emotion and all...respect, concern, well, that prompted my response. And, talk about colorless!

“Well, I guess what we should do then is to sit down, calm-ly (I emphasized the word calm ly) and detachedly (this one too) and (slightly hesitant for effect) and simply divvy up the stuff. You know, who gets what and all that. Personally...”

he just couldn’t let me finish, that’s how I knew I was on the right track.

“Is that all you have to say?” he blurted, quite uncharacteristically, which of course gave me the impedance to continue, also, noting the ever-so-slight tremor in his voice.

“Well...actually I kind of thought that...I must say that I’m glad to hear this actually. I was beginning to think that you were quite impotent, you know...sexually, I mean. And, I was also beginning to feel somewhat guilty of my own...indulgences.”

I really laid it on with the hesitancy between *own* and *indulgences*.”

“Wait a minute! Just what are you saying...indulgences! Is that plural? In-dul-gen-ces?”

“Well yeah, I mean, what the fuck dude!”

He’s never heard me like this. I’ve always mimicked his impotent speech.

“When did you start...What’s this dude thin...What are trying to tell me?”

“Whoa, man, one question at a time...”

I followed this with a litany so toxic in venue, it would have made a cheap madras print run colorless.

“Look, we’re well, to put it mildly (John, my husband, is blues fan) it’s like the King says: *The thrill is gone / the thrill is gone away*. Soo, I’ve been seeing a few, quite a few, I should say...”

He interrupts...

“A what? You’re obscene! What...”

I interrupt, starting with a short laugh:

“I know, that’s what Ralph says...”

“Ralph! Who the fuck is Ral...”

He’s really starting to blow it now.

“Oh...perhaps I should explain. I’ve been...Well to answer your question (very calm) Ralph is...well, he’s nobody really. I mean, I only see him...you see, he’s a regular, as we say, but I only see him a couple two three maybe, times a month. He’s a sort of fill-in when the agency is slow. He’s funny though, he always says...and you just reminded me of him when you said I was obscene because that’s what he says whenever come up with a new position? You know? He’s a little like, well, like you, really...not too...well rather conventional, concerning sex, I mean. Well, you know how you are.”

The silence that follows drained his tank and filled mine...

“Surely you didn’t think that while you were whiling the way the hours with your, whatever, or whomever, that I (emphasized) was just sitting around the ol’homestead dutifully darning socks, keeping the ol’homestead fire burning...sorry, Ha, I guess I did keep the ol’ fire burning (clearing my throat for more...to rub it in, as it were, like alcohol on an open bruise).”

I then add, before he’s a chance to break my style...

“Ahem, oh yeah!” looking at my bare wrist, mimicking impatience, in a mild sort of way (I did have style). He didn’t even notice that I wasn’t wearing a watch...I seldom do. You’d think after all these years he’d instinctively know this...“Oh my, my, my, it is getting on, isn’t it? Look, you really should be getting on...to work, I mean. And (I followed this with a short laugh) so should I as well.”

“Whaa..”

“No dear, not whaa. Look, I’ve a date? You know? In about an hour? And I really need to prepare, you know, for, oh let’s see...Stevie should be here in about that time and...”

“Who’s Stevie?”

“No one. Just, Stevie...Like in Stevie Wonder? You know? I mean this really is a class outfit I work for and...well, I don’t want you to be here when. Oh look (again I look to my bare wrist) I promise we’ll get together soon and...divvy up, like I said, but for know, like I said this really is a class outfit...You know? That I work for, I mean, and well (I lowered my voice a little for effect) I really would appreciate it if you weren’t, you know, seen leaving here. Be a dear.”

□

He left...tail between his legs. He walked right out the door and that was the last I ever saw of him, except if you count the funeral. He left, I cried, then I went to the bedroom, grabbed the socks I’d been working on...his socks. This was sort of a hobby I’d picked up, nothing extravagant. I cried some more, then I burned them in the bar-b-que pit outside in the patio.

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