

SOCK LAND

BY JAMES J. COLLINS

"Timmy, get up. Breakfast is ready. Come on down and make sure you dress warm. It's cold outside," called his mother.

"I'm up and almost dressed," he hollered. Just then Tug, his Beagle puppy, grabbed Timmy's sock in his mouth and ran under the bed. "Tug, give me back my sock," said Timmy. But Tug wanted to play. He put the sock down and barked. Timmy jumped across the bed, but Tug picked up the sock in his teeth and ran into the closet. Timmy followed. Pushing aside the clothes hanging down and the shoes and boxes on the floor, Timmy searched for Tug. Then he saw Tug run into a little door in the back of the closet.

"That is strange," Timmy said to himself. "I never saw that little door in my closet before. I wonder where it goes?" Crawling over to the door, Timmy had the strangest sensation that the door was growing, till it was big enough for him to crawl through. At the same time he heard lovely

music and the nicest aromas he had ever smelled. Timmy opened the door and crawled through.

He stood up and found himself in the doorway of a train that was just pulling into a station. But the station was different than anything he had ever seen. There was a crowd waiting for the train, but the crowd wasn't people - it was made up of socks - all kinds of socks, different colors, sizes, and shapes. They were laughing and talking and looking for friends on the train. The train stopped and other socks carrying luggage, got off the train.

Then Timmy stepped onto the platform. Everybody stopped - not a sound was heard until a baby sock cried out, "Why it's a little boy. What's he doing here in Sock Land?"

Then everyone started to talk at once. The socks all picked up their belongings, and, looking over their shoulders, left the station. Timmy was alone except for the station master, who had to stay because it was his job.

The station master was an old white work sock who had seen better days. He had a shock of white hair and patches in the toe, with a worn spot showing at the heel. He asked in a gruff voice, "Who are you? Don't you know that little boys aren't allowed in Sock Land - only socks?"

"I'm sorry sir," Timmy said but I was looking for my puppy Tug who ran off with my sock."

Just then the other sock which was still on Timmy's foot

spoke up. "You're standing on me. Please get off. You hurt. Timmy was so startled, he nearly fell down. Quickly he sat down and pulled the talking sock off his foot. Now Timmy was barefoot. "That's better," said Timmy's sock who brushed himself off. "I was glad to get out from under you. You're quite big for your age and heavy besides. It's difficult being a sock for a little boy. You're always getting me wet or dirty. It seems that I spend half my life in the washing machine."

"This is very strange," said Timmy. "I go to catch my sock to get dressed and the next thing you know, I have to take off the other sock because it yells at me. Where is the sock I was chasing?"

"Well," said Timmy's sock, "My name's 'Lefty', my brother 'Righty' always said he would run away to Sock Land, but I didn't believe him."

"What is Sock Land all about?" asked Timmy.

"Oh," said the station master, "This is the place where all socks come when they get lost, damaged or thrown out. They come in on the train each day and meet the members of their family who got here first. That was the reason for the crowd when you showed up. They were waiting for their mates or their long lost friends."

"Are there many socks here?"

"Millions," said the station master. "Hundreds come on

every train."

"Did you see a puppy with a sock that looks just like 'Lefty' here?" asked Timmy.

"Oh, yes, the train just before you had two puppies and three kittens with socks. They got off and went into town.

"Do you get a lot of puppies and kittens?"

"Oh my yes, but they usually leave the same day. They get hungry and go home - There's no food here you know - Socks don't need food."

Then I will have to leave also, because I didn't have breakfast yet," said Timmy. "But first I have to find Tug and my sock."

'Well," said the station master, "then you will have to go into the city but it is so big, you may not find your puppy. You should go home. He will eventually get back to you."

"No! I'm here. I may as well find him and take him home. He must be frightened. He's only a young puppy."

"Then follow this road into the city. It's the only road there is and it's worn smooth from all the socks who walked this way before."

Following the smooth road, they could see a city in the distance. But instead of tall buildings, the structures were all kinds of old shoes. There were dress shoes in the better districts, working boots in the blue collar sections of

town, and the skyscrapers were made of extra tall riding boots. Timmy just said, "Wow."

"Where else would you expect socks to live?", asked lefty. "This is our heaven."

"Why does Sock Land smell so nice?" asked Timmy.

"If you had to live all your life smelling feet," said Lefty, "you would want a nice smelling place when you retire."

"That makes sense," said Timmy. "Is there also a reason for all the lovely music?"

"Same idea, all a sock hears is the 'Thud' of the shoe and the squeek of the leather or the sneakers. It gets very tiring. We look forward to finally coming here for our final days."

Coming toward them were two of the loudest socks they ever encountered. They were tall woolen Argyle socks. One played a bagpipe while the other beat on a drum. "Hello there lad." said the one with the bag pipe. "Haven't we met before?"

"You do look very familiar," said Timmy. "You remind me of my grandfather's fancy socks that he wears when he plays golf."

"Is your grandfather known as 'Scotty Brown'?"

"Why yes," said Timmy, "Do you know him?"

"Know him?, of course, we were his best socks until he

lost us and we ended up here. The only way we will ever get back is for him to find us. I hope he does soon. We liked him very much."

"Why don't you come with us," said Timmy, "we need help to find my other sock and my puppy Tug. Then we're going back. Maybe we can take you with us."

"That sounds wonderful," said the sock with the pipes. "We'll do it. What did your sock look like?"

"Just like me," said Lefty. "It's my mate and he's travelling with a puppy."

"We just passed them down the road. If we hurry we can catch them. They are going in to register with the police so they can be assigned a place to live."

"Look out for the police socks or the military socks. They'll try to arrest you boy," said the Drummer. "You don't belong here."

"Thanks. We'll watch out," said Timmy, and by the way my name is Timmy."

"Glad to meet you son," said Drummer. "This fine fellow here is known as 'Piper' and I'm known as 'Drummer'. We knew your grandfather for years. We're like distant cousins and we Scots are a clannish lot. You can depend on us to help you."

"We better disguise Timmy," said Piper. "His face stands out. We should cover him up." Reaching into his pocket,

Drummer pulled out a wool Argyle ski hat. "Put this on over your head and nobody will notice you."

Sure enough, as soon as Timmy put on the mask, he looked like any other sock - just a bigger sock.

"We better catch Tug and 'Righty' before they get to the police. Otherwise they will get lost forever in this great land of socks," said Timmy.

Next they came to a large field that was filled with socks participating in all kinds of sporting events. There were teams of soccer socks running up and down the field chasing a soccer ball. A great crowd watching track events roared encouragement to the contestants. High jumping, pole vaulting, and relay races filled the fields, all played by athletic socks.

On the outskirts of town they saw a great factory with smoke coming out of the chimney. In front of the door, a line of poor looking socks stretched for a mile.

"What's that factory for?" asked Timmy.

"Oh that's the rejuvenation complex," said Drummer. "If your mate never shows up, or if you're worn out or too tired to go on, you sign up and get on line."

"What happens to you there?" asked Tommy.

"Oh you are steam cleaned and taken apart. Then all your thread is wound on a big bobbin; You are dyed a new color, and then you are made into new socks and are sent back out

to the big world for another great adventure," said Drummer.

Down the road, they saw a line of socks carrying luggage. They looked like new arrivals, and they were lined up in front of an official looking building (It was a highly polished military boot).

"There's Tug!" shouted Timmy as he started to run for the front of the line.

"There's 'Righty' beside him," shouted 'Lefty' as he ran to his mate.

"Stop!" hollered drummer, "the soldiers will see you and arrest you." But it was too late. Two soldiers keeping the line in order spotted Timmy and gave the alarm. "There's a boy in Sock Land. Arrest him and put him in jail." They rushed for Timmy carrying big shoe laces to tie him up. Lefty acted first. He threw himself at the soldier socks knocking them down. Then Drummer and Piper pushed the soldiers into the building and tied the doors closed with the shoe laces.

"We better get back to the station before they get out," said Drummer.

"I agree," said Timmy. "Now that we have Tug and 'Righty' with us we can get out of here." So the little band hurried back down the road they had just travelled.

Back at the station, Timmy held Tug in his hands while

he and the two pair of socks hid behind the wall of the station. Military socks ran all around the platform yelling orders to one another and stopping socks to ask them to prove who they were. The soldiers were searching for them all.

A train pulled into the station and the crowd surged to the front of the platform taking the soldiers with them.

As the train stopped with a screech of steel on steel and the thumping of one coach hitting another, dozens of socks came out of the coach doors. All was pandemonium. The crowd hollered and shouted greetings to long lost friends who were waving and shouting in turn.

"Now," whispered Timmy as the little group crouched down and scurried to the end car of the train. They got half way across the platform when a police sock shouted, "There's that boy with the rogue socks. Get him. Don't let him escape."

"Run," shouted Timmy. The little band had the advantage because they were in the open while all the soldiers and police socks were tangled in the crowd. Jumping on the coach, Timmy saw the familiar little door in the corner of the corridor. He bent down to the tiny door and as he touched the handle, the door once again it expanded till he could crawl through.

A pair of soldier socks got to the train door as Timmy

started through holding Tug in his arms. The soldier socks caught Timmy by the legs and were pulling him back when Drummer and Piper rushed to his rescue. With a Highland battle cry they threw themselves on the soldier socks. A great fight took place.

Timmy felt his legs go free and he pulled himself through the door. He reached back for the Argyles and pulled his friends through the little door as it shrank and vanished.

Timmy was home. He was back in his closet. He suddenly felt very tired, sat down, and fell asleep.

"Timmy, what am I going to do with you?" asked his mother as he woke up on the closet floor. "I ask you to get dressed and come down to breakfast and I find you asleep in the closet with your socks in your hands."

"But mother, I wasn't asleep. I was in a great adventure in Sock Land. I chased my sock there . . ."

Before he could finish, his mother reached down and picked up two pair of socks that were in the back of the closet. "Well here are your grandfather's favorite golfing socks. He's been looking for them for two years. And here's an old pair of khaki socks that must be old army socks from your father's time in the service. I wonder where they were all this time?"

Timmy didn't say any more. He smiled to himself. He knew

where the socks had been. He knew all about Sock land - he
had been there. THE END