

THE BROWN SHOES

by JULIE JENSEN

CHARACTERS

MARK
STEPH
DEENA

NOTE: Lines that are underscored are meant to be addressed to the audience.

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THE BROWN SHOES

[STEPH appears in a pool of light.]

STEPH

I'm walking downtown one day. I come on to this fenced in place. Might be a private park, someone's yard, they're having a party, I don't know.

Anyway, it's hotter than hell this day. And my feet are burning like sparklers on this marble sidewalk. I'm thinking I gotta get someplace quick, someplace cool, someplace nice.

Over the fence, I see these people. They're all very tall. They're eight feet tall. I think, "Where am I? Am I tripping or something?" They are, I'm not kidding you, eight feet tall.

So I knock at the gate and go in.

[We see MARK and DEENA standing on blue chairs, using them as shoes.]

They're all eight feet tall and they look like they're going places.

DEENA

We're all eight feet tall and we're going places.

STEPH

You're all using chairs for shoes. That's why you're eight feet tall.

DEENA

We are beautiful and brave. We are eight feet tall.

STEPH

Yeah, you said that all ready.

DEENA

We like to repeat ourselves. It teaches us how to speak. We are beautiful and brave. We are eight feet tall.

STEPH

That's right. You ARE eight feet tall. Except you're standing on chairs.

DEENA

We are beautiful and brave. Would you like to see us dance?

STEPH

Yeah. Sure. I guess so.

DEENA

For my first number, I will dance "The Dance of the Beautiful and the Brave."
[MARK hums low and DEENA dances. She walks up and down on tables and benches. It lasts about five seconds. It is nothing but walking. Not a dance. She ends with a flourish.]

MARK

You were brilliant.

DEENA

You were also brilliant.

MARK

Thank you so much. You inspire me to go on.

DEENA

You must go on. We must all go on.

MARK

We are destined for greatness if we only go on going on.

DEENA

How beautifully you speak.

MARK

I speak with a deep voice. I have studied for many years.

DEENA

Just as I have studied many years to dance as I do.

MARK

And we both give our talents to the cause that is true.

DEENA

To the cause that is true! How glad am I. To work with you.

MARK

Do you think we'll see each other again?

DEENA

I feel certain of it.

MARK

Then I'll not say good bye until we meet again. For I must leave.

DEENA

We all must leave. We have miles to go before we sleep.

MARK

We have miles to go before we sleep.

[THEY rush off as if they were going places.]

STEPH

Well I'm just standing here thinking, "That was just about the weirdest thing I ever seen." Then up comes the guy. The guy with the deep voice.

MARK

Excuse me, Miss. Your shoes.

STEPH

Shoes?

MARK

Yes. Your shoes.

STEPH

Yeah, I got shoes. "Got shoes, got shirt, got service." *[MARK doesn't get it.]*
Never mind.

MARK

You must wear brown shoes to come here.

STEPH

I ain't got no brown shoes. I got this pair of flip flops and a pair of running shoes, used to belong to my brother, but he died, so I don't like to wear them. You understand....

MARK

You are wearing white shoes.

STEPH

Yeah, I could argue with you. But I won't. They're blue and white actually.

MARK

You must wear brown shoes when you come here.

STEPH

All right, brown shoes the very next time I come here. And every time after that, brown shoes. Without fail.

MARK

We believe in brown shoes here.

STEPH

Yeah, I can tell you do.

MARK

We believe that's the only way to go.

STEPH

Well, it's nice to be so sure of everything.

MARK

Yes, that's one of the good things about brown shoes, they are sure. No one slips, no one dies, no one spreads disease.

STEPH

Yeah, well, good day then. Nice talking to you.

MARK

You cannot go any further in those shoes.

STEPH

I'm just gonna leave.

MARK

No one leaves without brown shoes.

STEPH

[Exploding.]

Look, you're not wearing brown shoes. They're blue. And they're not shoes at all, they're chairs!

MARK

You are precisely the kind of person we're looking for. You'll love our brown shoes. You won't be able to take your eyes off them.

STEPH

All right. You wear your "brown shoes." I'll wear these. I'm quite good at wearing these.

MARK

Here we have rules.

STEPH

Yes, it looks like you do.

MARK

We all wear brown shoes.

STEPH

And you are all eight feet tall.

[Out comes DEENA again.]

DEENA

We are all eight feet tall. And we dance. Do you want to see me dance?

STEPH

Yeah, I guess so ...

MARK

Little Miss Deena will now dance "The Dance of the Brown Shoes."

DEENA

For my second number, I will dance "The Dance of the Brown Shoes."

[MARK hums low. DEENA dances her dance. It is the same dance as before. She ends with a flourish.]

DEENA

That was the "Dance of the Brown Shoes." All dances are about brown shoes. It's how we think, it's what we do.

MARK

You were brilliant.

DEENA

You were also brilliant.

MARK

Thank you so much. You inspire me to go on.

DEENA

You must go on. We must all go on.

MARK

We are destined for greatness if we go on going on.

[DEENA moves off as if she were going places.]

Yes, we believe in Brown Shoes. At first it was difficult. We didn't know how to believe in Brown Shoes. It seemed so unnatural.

STEPH

I can see how you'd have that trouble.

MARK

Then we began to wear them. We put our feet to them. And we knew we were free.

STEPH

Free? That's about the last thing I'd call you guys.

MARK

Look at Little Deena dance. She dances like a dream. She dances "The Dance of Freedom."

[DEENA comes on again.]

DEENA

Look at me. Look at me dance. I dance like a dream. Do you wanna see me dance?

STEPH

Yeah, sure, go ahead.

DEENA

For my third number, I will dance "The Dance of Freedom."

[MARK hums low. DEENA dances the same dance as before. She ends with a flourish.]

MARK

You were brilliant.

DEENA

You were also brilliant.

MARK

Thank you so much. You inspire me to go on.

DEENA

You must go on. We must all go on.

MARK

We are destined for greatness if we only go on going on.

[DEENA goes off as if she were going places.]

Yes, Little Deena is the most famous dancer of all.

STEPH

But what she's doing is not hard. I mean, even I can do that, what she does, I really can. Probably better than Little Deena.

DEENA

You can do nothing better than Little Deena. We have been working at this for generations. We have become accustomed through time. You cannot expect to know what we know. Do what we do. And know the reason why.

STEPH

I see, well listen here, I'll just be on my way, then.

MARK

Uh-uh. Not in those shoes.

STEPH

All right, give me the brown shoes. And point me toward the gate.

MARK

[Pointing.]

It's there.

STEPH

[Looking.]

But they're all coming in the gate. I want to go where they're going out.

MARK

We have very few people going out. Once they try our shoes, they can't take their eyes off them. Here, slip your foot in these. You'll not be able to take your eyes off them.

STEPH

Hell no, you'd fall off if you took your eyes off them.

[STEPH gets on the chairs, takes a couple of steps with effort. Then jumps off and does the same dance DEENA did. She ends with a flourish and runs off barefoot.]

[THEY watch her.]

MARK

She was not suited to this work.

DEENA

She would not learn to dance. She would never understand the way of the brown shoe. She is addicted to something else.

MARK

She was addicted to the work of the wrong way. But you were brilliant.

DEENA

You were also brilliant.

MARK

Thank you so much. You inspire me to go on.

DEENA

You must go on. We must all go on.

MARK

We are destined for greatness IF we go on going on.

DEENA

And IF we repeat ourselves.

MARK

And IF we remember the dangers of all other shoes.

[THEY move off on their chairs as if they were going places.]

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