

This Story is Not About a Sock

By Evan W. Knierim

A single sock. A single black sock. As was custom for most people, I needed *two* black socks. Yet I could only find one. I probably looked like a crazy person, standing there in suit, tie, and underpants staring at my singular black sock like it was some cryptic puzzle for me to solve.

Truth be told, the more I thought about it, the more I thought about how I didn't really *want* to find this stupid sock. It was Garrett's wedding today, and I needed my stupid socks to go to this stupid wedding. So I could sit there in my stupid seat reserved for the stupid best man. So I could give my stupid speech about my stupid friend in his youth and all the stupid things we'd done when we were stupid kids. The worst part about it, was how I'd have to look his stupid wife in her stupid face and lie to everyone there about how "great they are for each other" knowing damn well that they couldn't be a worse pairing.

I tore my bedroom apart looking for this stupid sock that I knew was here somewhere, I had it *literally* just a second ago. I just couldn't find the thing, right when I needed to put it and it's *allegedly* inseparable friend on. I probably looked like a maniac, so I decided to sit at the edge of my bed and decompress. Most people would solve this problem by just owning another pair of black socks. I however, only owned one pair so this wasn't possible.

My father only had one pair of black socks too. I guess the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. I asked him once at my uncle's funeral why he only had the one pair. He had been having a problem that was quite similar to my current one now though at the time he couldn't have had that kind of foresight.

"Son," he told me through tears he was forcing himself to hold back. "I wear white socks on most days because they're like your normal clothes." I think I gave a look that told my father I didn't understand, because he continued to elaborate. "I only own one pair of black socks because my black socks are special in a way. I treat my socks the same way I treat my suit. I

wouldn't wear my suit just any day of the week. I wear it on special occasions. Since I wear it on special occasions, I don't bother to get more than one because if the event is important than in theory I should always wear my *best* suit. Having one suit helps it maintain the status of being 'the best'. You also start to get more attached to these special clothes over time, so it stresses the importance of wearing them."

I nodded. I had no idea what it had meant, just that his suit and socks were apparently of equal value, and that he had only one suit which I somehow had noticed only after the sock fiasco. It was funny though, part of me could've sworn my father muttered something under his breath right after he'd answered me.

"Your uncle was like a suit."

The sight of the one lonely sock sickened me more than if there had been no sock there at all. Then again, my hatred for the sock almost compared to the hatred I harbored for Ivy, Garrett's "soon to be". She was a force that entered Garrett's life while he was three weeks fresh off of his most recent breakup. He told me he met this girl he liked, I told him that he was a nutcase to even be thinking about a relationship right now. He called me an asshole, we made some jokes, clinked our shots together and took a drink.

Those were the good old days when we were young and stupid. The kinds of things the best man is supposed to remember, so he can talk about how fond those memories were. Calling them memories though felt *wrong* because it's what we kept doing even now, years later. Of course there was one big difference between then and now. Ivy wanted Garrett to move to some nothing town in the middle of Arizona. Good bye drinks and conversations, hello white picket fence!

Maybe I wouldn't complain so much about this if I had other friends. Truth be told, most people don't want to be friends with the guy who tears his room apart in a fit of rage looking for a stupid sock. I was fine with that though because as far as I was concerned, Garrett was the only friend I needed. Why branch out and meet new people when I've got one perfectly good person who already knew everything about me, and who was so easy to talk to. I'd rather have one phenomenal friend than ten mediocre ones.

I went into my living room now, and began to search for this other sock that I could've sworn I'd had only a moment ago. Maybe it was wrong of me not to be happy for my friend on his special day. Was my anger not justified? Garrett knew he was the only person I really had in my life. He'd been with me through thick and thin, I was actually pretty sure he was the one who bought me the socks I was trying to find. They were a moving gift when I first started living in this apartment. I suppose that attribute was what made them important. My dad would be proud.

I went back into my room and put on some pants, the only other place I thought that I might be able to find this stupid sock was in the laundry room downstairs. Somewhere deep within me, a grim and ultimately pointless thought formed in my head. I thought for a brief moment that Garrett's own death would hurt less than him going away. If Garrett just *died*, that would be it, I'd never see him again, and that would be the end of the story. With him leaving though, I could still see him, *but* I'd have to call him to reach out. I could drive over five hours to hang out, but he wouldn't be here when I needed him.

Not to mention if I did go out of my way to meet up with him it wouldn't be the same. For starters, the natural flow of time would already make us different people come three months in the future, so there would be a great schism between us there. It also wouldn't ever just be me

and him again, every hang out would be me, Garrett, and Ivy. Eventually it would be me, Garrett, Ivy, and some snot nosed kid.

Walking into the laundry room I thought about how I should honestly probably get a new distinct pair of black socks here soon anyway. I mean these socks were pretty old now, if I'd had them since I got my apartment then I've probably had them for about five years now, maybe more. They weren't even close to the socks they were when they were gifted to me. If I remembered right, the one that I was looking for was starting to get a hole in the sole at the bottom. The laundry room was relatively empty except for old lady Ethel, who was sitting in her walker-chair hybrid.

"Good morning!" Ethel said, giving me that classic, warm old lady smile. Ignoring her dentures which were staring me in the face I asked if she'd seen a black sock.

"No. The only black sock I've seen today is the one in your hand."

"...The one in my what?" I looked down at my fist and was flooded with a wave of embarrassment as I noticed the black sock in my nondominant hand, with its ever so memorable hole appearing to grow from the sole. I looked up at Ethel who was now content with watching her old lady clothes spin around in the washer. I didn't say anything and just left, she didn't seem to mind too much that I didn't say goodbye. I trudged up the stairs back to my apartment and sat in the same spot on my bed I'd sat earlier.

I put both of the socks on and then slowly laid down with my head resting now against my pillow. It felt as if the weight of the world... no... the entire milky way had just been removed from my shoulders. I sighed, rolled over and grabbed at my nightstand blindly, fumbling around for my best man speech I had thought I'd finished the night before. I gripped

my pen and made an annotation on the side of the margins of my speech. The annotation said this: Garrett was like a suit.