**My Socks Are Missing**

**A Short Story by Mohamed Shafiek**

My socks are missing.

 I had 35 pairs of socks exactly. Now I only have 31 and a half. I can remember because I was very meticulous about how many of anything I had thanks to my OCD.

 The farthest back I can remember missing my first pair was a few weeks back when my black cashmere pair was lost. It had been only a few days after my parents went on a three-week honeymoon in another country, leaving the apartment to me, having just turned 18. During those first few days, I became somewhat of a slob when it came to my room. I ended up going out a lot more, only to return home tired followed by tossing my socks on the floor next to my bed to sleep the night away.

 I reuse a lot of my socks. Most people use them for the day, then throw them in the laundry. However, because I had so many socks piling up next to my bed, it just felt easier to pick them up and wear them again instead of opening my sock drawer.

 Eventually, it did get a little out of hand at the end of the first week of being home alone, and I decided to clean them up while giving my room a well-deserved shine. That’s when I realized that I was missing one of them. It wasn’t a pair, but just one was missing. Was there a day that I only wore one sock? That was ridiculous. I would have surely noticed that one of my feet was being sanded on the grainy sole of my shoes or the cold touch of our wood flooring.

 I cursed myself for losing the sock, knowing that it would bug me for another week or so. I’m pretty sure I had a nightmare about it too. To equal out of my sock count, I discarded the other cashmere sock.

 After that, I was more careful about my socks. I made sure that even if I did toss them to the side of my bed, I had paired them off at least. Strangely, another two pairs went missing the following week.

 I was annoyed about my socks going missing but eventually, I relinquished the nagging after a few days. At one point, I considered that there was some “Sock Thief” loose in our neighborhood or some shit. If someone had been stealing from me, why would it be socks of all things?! I had a PS4, High-end laptop, and a big-ass flat screen right in front of the stairs when you enter the apartment. My socks were something that you would have to go out of your way to take and surely weren’t knitted with gold or silver thread for value.

 The next few days, I was on edge. My OCD got the better of me and I decided that maybe I’ve gone out enough and that I needed to stop accumulating socks next to my bed. For a few days, I even went out without socks so I surely wouldn’t throw any on the floor when I came home. For the most part, my sock count stayed at 32…

 …Until the final week of my parent's honeymoon.

 They called me before the day they were supposed to come back but instead told me that it’ll take another two days for them to return. A little disappointing since I was bored in my house alone, but I had to show them that I was responsible, and responded with a positive, “See you soon.”

 In truth, I was terrified. I wanted them back here so badly to protect me from whatever was taking my socks. I decided to get laundry done the following day, hoping it would distract me from my worries.

 “It’s only 2 days,” I repeated to myself.

 But… I don’t think I’ll be able to meet them at the airport tomorrow night. I don’t think I’ll be able to hug them and laugh off my sock incident because last night… I saw it.

 I slept on the living room couch that night, being too tired to go up the stairs to my room. I immediately knocked out from exhaustion.

 I awoke about halfway through the night to hear skidding across our wood flooring. My vision was blurry and groggy, but peering at the cable box clock showed that it was about 2:30 in the morning. But, right next to the cable box, it sat there.

 Something had been burrowing in the laundry bags at the foot of the couch and I wish I hadn’t woken up. It looked like a starving child, but it wasn’t human, that’s for sure. It looked a skeleton with a thin layer of dried up brown skin, peppered with black spots that glistened against the small amount of light from the cable box clock. It had almost no meat to it as I could see its rib cage and bone outlines too clearly. It had no eyes, but I could feel something looking at me from within the black void that was its sockets.

 It quickly dashed upstairs and out of sight from me, in its mouth was a white sock. Even after it was gone, I didn’t dare get up. I quickly hid under the sheets like a terrified child, hell I was. It’s 3:37 AM now and I haven’t heard anything upstairs for the last half hour or so. I don’t know if I should call the police or my parents. I don’t want it to hear me if it’s still up there. My mind is still racing, but what stands out is that my sock count is now at 31 and a half. But, I think it’s done looking for my socks now.

 I can hear the skidding again… next to my sheet. For the first time, I wish I would keep missing socks.