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SOCKS

by Grant Baciocco

Those children who could sleep, awoke just before dawn. They joined the children who could not sleep and began lining up at the front windows of their houses.

Already, as morning's first light illuminated the town and the street lamps clicked off, the dark cloud had begun to swell in the sky. The children's excitement mounted as they watched the cloud grow bigger and darker.

Some mothers pleaded with their children to eat breakfast while others tried to cajole their young out of their pajamas and into suitable street wear. Unfortunately, all arguments fell on the deaf ears of those with their noses against the window's glass.

Fathers, for their part, were trying to continue to sleep despite the loud giggling of their kids. They desperately hoped to get just a little more sleep but knew any attempt to silence the excitement would be futile.

The children just stood. Waiting. Biting their lips in anticipation.

Suddenly, the air grew thick. The hair on the backs of every neck in town stood up due to the static charge in the air and the mounting excitement. Everyone was waiting for it to begin.

The children made their way to their front doors and stood on their stoops. Eyes scanning the skies for the first sign of movement.

On Poplar Avenue, Joey Juarez was the first to spot one. "There!" he shouted and all within earshot looked in the direction he pointed.

Sure enough, a single solitary sock, a navy men's size ten dress sock, floated from the cloud towards earth. The children ran towards the empty streets.

The cloud now began to open up. The single sock became several. A white athletic ankle cut size six. A size two hello kitty print with a ruffle at the top. A tan size seven compression sock. These and more all tumbled from the cloud.

There was a sudden sharp crack of thunder and the storm started in earnest.

Now, a sock falling to earth makes hardly a sound. But when there are many, hundreds of thousands, it creates an eerie muffled roar. A roar that could only be heard between the shrieks of the children who now danced openly in the soft, dry storm.

The Parks children had begun to make a sock fort. They turned socks in on each other to make sock bombs that would be used in the afternoon's sock war. Justin Fuller was attempting to make a sock man in his front yard. Not an easy task he soon found and contented himself with raking up big piles of socks to jump into. Nicole Chin busied herself with a hot glue gun, ping pong balls and pipe cleaners, making an entire sock puppet family. With the abundance of socks, the family tree was extensively complete and included great grandparents, great great grandparents and a cousin twice removed.

The city was enveloped with a dazzling array of colors. Socks covered the houses and hung from the branches of trees. The lawns and mailboxes were now completely hidden. Every car and every street was blanketed in socks. In fact, the streets were quickly made so impassable that the Mayor came on TV and announced a citywide 'Sock Day.' No school. No work.

Inside the houses, the fathers sipped their coffee and smirked. There may be no 'official' work today but they knew full well their afternoons would be spent shoveling and bagging to make sure the driveways were clear before the sock plow made its rounds.

At the far end of Poplar Ave, house 137 to be exact, eleven year old Cameron Herzog stood on her front porch and watched the sock fall. She smiled as socks drifted silently down, just inches from her face. She closed her eyes and, as had become tradition on days like this, slowly reached a hand out from under the porch roof.

Socks brushed past her fingertips as she held out her hand flat. A sock draped, dryer warm, across her bare arm. She ignored it. She simply stood still waiting for that one sock that would drift down from the sky and land squarely across her palm.

Just at the moment she thought it wouldn't happen, it did. She felt the fuzzy warmth of a sock come to rest in her hand. Her fingers curled around it and she smiled and opened her eyes.

It was a blue sock. Woolen, with a red toe. She felt it's soft texture with her fingertips. She examined it's opening. She examined the heel. Her smile growing bigger.

Quickly, Cameron turned to look back at her mother who was

standing in the front window watching her. Her mother smiled and nodded. Cameron turned to look out over the sock fallen world before her and bounded off the front porch into the flurry.

Socks, unlike snowflakes that fall from the sky, each have a twin. Every year, Cameron was determined to find a matching set.