

A close-up photograph of a person's left foot wearing a red sock. The sock is ribbed and has a distinct cuff at the top. The foot is resting on a dark, possibly wooden, floor. In the background, a white chair leg is visible, slightly out of focus. The word "LEFT" is overlaid in white, stylized, uppercase letters on the left side of the image.

LEFT

LEFT by CAMERON GARRITY

LEFT is a small sock puppet sitting on top of a cardboard box that reads "Free to Take!". He is amongst a pair of trousers and old rubber work gloves.

LEFT

(Sings)

Close your eyes/ Have no fear/ The
monster's gone/ You're on the
run...

(Speaks)

Well, it's about time... You know,
as a sock, this just a part of life
we come to expect: in a box on the
way to some dumb thrift store. I
just guess I never thought I'd be
alone for the trip. I mean, sure,
I have friends... those gloves over
there, that old pair of pants, a
photograph of Abe Lincoln for some
reason...? Who am I kidding,
they're not family.

My brother - ...I wouldn't expect
you to understand any of
this... Socks like me expect a
life of toil. Your unwashed feet
and sweat press against us day
after day. For most of you people
we're just an afterthought -
something you can replace all willy
nilly. My brother wasn't like
that, though. He served a much
greater purpose.

Jordan ended up blaming the dog for
my brother's death. It wasn't
Gordon's fault and he knew
it. Typical human - I hope the
guilt still eats at him. His
mother let me bunk with my cousins
for a bit - she must have thought
my brother may show up again. I
knew she didn't believe that Gordon
story. Eventually I got so
desperate for warmth, I actually
tried pairing up with another sock
- but it wasn't the same.

The last few years have been filled
rejection: I survived
hand-me-downs, garage sales, craft

(MORE)

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LEFT (cont'd)

show season: they wouldn't even turn me into a sock puppet.

Sorry - I'm rambling. Survivor's guilt, I guess. There were many years of happiness. Jordan had weeks worth of socks stored in his top dresser drawer, but if my brother and I were chosen, boy was it a great day. We'd go to school with him, run in the park with him, smell his spaghetti and garlic bread dinners. We had a special kind of love.

And the best part?: Jordan always let us sleep with him. Hours inside a pair of New Balance were instantly forgiven when we were the only clothes that weren't put in the hamper. T-shirts and jeans may have been replaced at night by pajama tops and pants, but not us. We were in it for the long haul. Once Jordan fell asleep, my brother and I could stay up for hours; we told each other ghost stories. We got excited when his toes curled - it meant that he was dreaming. We would try and guess what was happening inside his head.

But then came a very different night. Sure, it began with the normal routine: brush his teeth, read his book, set his alarm for school, and curl into bed... But that night he couldn't fall asleep. At first, we thought he was having a nightmare. He wouldn't stop rocking, and twisting, and turning. Everything about his movement was unsettling. My brother and I didn't dare tell ghost stories that night.

Jordan tore off his blanket and the cold air abrasively hit our skin. His face was red, he was panting, moaning. What was he

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LEFT (cont'd)
enduring? Why wasn't he calling
for his parents? Would they have
been able to help? Would they have
been mad?

He took off his pants. A body
function that had happened many
times before finally seemed to
serve a purpose. What was the
dream he was dreaming? What was in
his head that night? Jordan's body
continued to quake
relentlessly. And then he came for
my brother. If the boy was right
handed, it could have all been
different; it could have been me.

Puppeteer takes duplicate sock and uses that to act out the
remaining flashback.

LEFT
But he choked my brother around his
body and proceeded to stroke. Over
and over again in an endless
rhythm. How did he know to do
that? Even his first time seemed
ritual. I couldn't tell who of the
two of them was in more
pain. Socks aren't exactly made
out of silk.

Jordan's heels pressed me against
the bed. His toes writhed and
curled inside of me. And then

Puppeteer reenacts an orgasm.

LEFT
the whole body tingled; a magic
cycled through his veins.

[...]

Above, I saw my brother turn into a
rag as he transformed a boy into a
man. That would be his
legacy. What better destiny for
such an ordinary bit of
cloth? Inside me, that new man's
curled foot finally relaxed and I
was left alone.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LEFT (cont'd)

There was a stillness. Jordan laid in bed for hours. Or maybe it was seconds? The warmth had left his body. I could have begged him to put the covers back on; to return to sleep. All could be well in the morning.

He rose out of bed. Maybe it was only a mistake; maybe my brother could be cleaned in the laundry, but we walked past the hamper. The house was quiet and empty. How was anyone asleep? Didn't they know what had just happened? Jordan opened a garbage lid and laid my fallen brother to rest. Why couldn't I be that lucky?

Puppeteer returns to using main puppet.

LEFT

I still don't understand why he didn't let me go that night, too. What good is a sock without his twin by its side? Jordan returned to his bed like nothing had happened. Sleep still alluded him, so he cranked his music box - the one he always turned when he couldn't sleep. Why hadn't he just tried that before? John Lennon began to play. I don't think the man understood the irony. So there I laid with him, empty and alone: a Beautiful Boy's second choice.

(Sings)

Before you go to sleep/ say a
little prayer/ every day/ in every
way/ it's getting better and
better/ Beautiful, beautiful,/
beautiful, beautiful boy.