

*(Short story written for Carmen Maria Machado's "Flash Fiction" course at the University of Pennsylvania in Spring 2018)*

## HADES' FAVORITE PAIR OF SOCKS

By Nicholas Escobar

Hades lost a sock. His favorite sock. The one with small little skulls on it. Now the sock's pair was useless, and he would have to go to an outlet mall in the middle of fucking nowhere Underworld and buy another pair. What a drag.

He tried to get his assistants to do his laundry. He is the God of the Underworld after all. But his assistants said that doing laundry would be good for him. It would make him more *likable*, whatever that means. Hades didn't believe a word they said.

Zeus frequently makes fun of Hades. Zeus does not do his own laundry, and will call up Hades at odd hours of the evening and boast that Dionysus, in his drunken state, volunteered to do *his* laundry. That he is currently sitting on his balcony sipping tea and making love to Hera. Hades didn't know how those two things could possibly happen at the same time.

Hades still can't find his sock. The laundry rooms in the Underworld are grossly underfunded. Money instead goes to *schools* and *the arts* and *infrastructure*, all things that Hades absolutely despises. The machines are at least three thousand years old. They are rusted, beat up, and scream every time you use them. Hades would buy new machines himself, but that was too much trouble.

He kneels down and looks underneath one of the depressing dryers, desperately searching for his prized sock. He finds a severed finger with small worms lounging under the broken nail,

the miniature carcass of a baby chimera, a wilted flower and a moldy enchilada, but no sock.

A demon clad in a red windbreaker and a Knicks hat enters with a basket of laundry.

“You looking for something”, it asks.

“Yes,” says Hades through gritted teeth, “my favorite sock is missing.”

“What does it look like?” the demon asks.

“It has small skulls on it.”

“Cool. I like fun socks”

“Yeah they are like your own sexy little secret”

“Exactly. My favorite pair of socks have a centaur in a party hat.”

“Cute.”

“So what are you going to do?”

“I probably have to go to the outlet mall.”

“Damn. I hate that place.”

“Yeah, it’s like its own version of Hell...*in Hell.*”

They laugh. It’s a nice moment.

The demon ceases laughing, and puts his hand on Hades’ shoulder. Hades winces.

“I hope you find what you are looking for.”

“Thanks.”

“Wish I could help, but I have my grandmother’s deathday in 15 minutes and I *need* clean clothes for it. You understand right?”

The demon starts to unload his laundry. Hades kills him.

With that inconvenience over with, Hades continues his search. He looks under a couple

more dryers but only finds the rotting eye of a Cyclops with maggots on it. He eats the eye out of spite, though it does taste delicious.

Sighing, Hades accepts the fact that he must go to the outlet mall. He gets into his red 2016 Toyota Corolla and plays Lionel Richie's Greatest Hits. The outlet mall is located in a suburb of *Lugentes Campi* right off of the 205. It is a large one-story complex complete with outlet stores from the most popular Underworld brands. Styx is best known for its tailored suits, Nyx Night sells lingerie, Charon Klein has wonderful men's wear, etc, etc. Achille's Heel is the only store that carries Hades's skull socks, so he parked outside the store (in handicap parking, just to piss people off), and trudged into the sock-filled shop.

A demon with a crew cut and a Metallica t-shirt stands hunched at the counter on his phone.

"Excuse me?" asks Hades.

The demon lazily looks up.

"Yes, what do you want?"

"I am Hades the God of the Underworld and I would like a pair of socks with skulls on them."

There is a pause.

"Ummm, sorry man, but we just sold our last pair."

Hades's eyes turn a dark shade of red.

"No."

"Uh, yes."

"No!"

“Yeah man, we did.”

“I WANT MY SOCKS!”

The demon doesn't look phased.

“We will get a new shipment next week.”

“I WANT MY SOCKS NOW!”

The demon continues to be on his phone. Hades kills him.

Utterly defeated, Hades goes back to his car, turns on Lionel Richie's Greatest Hits, and drives back to his house. He will just have to place an order for his favorite pair of socks and return back to the awful outlet mall next week.

Whilst all this is happening, demon's body in Achille's Heel begins to rot. No one seems to notice.