



The Man Who Wore Mismatched Socks

Rick Wilson

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The Man Who Wore Mismatched Socks is the story of Aloysius St. James Spottisworth-Gack, a Royal Air Force pilot who comes from a long line of brewers. His family's firm, Gack&Bacon Ltd, dates to the first year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. Their in-house pub, The Pig & Trebuchet, is central to community life in their London suburb of Parsons Green. Aloysius serves in the Battle of Britain as one of Churchill's "The Few" and defends Great Britain from the threat of Nazi invasion. Severely tested by the experiences of combat and the loss that war brings, he comes to despise the treatment of human beings as interchangeable, temporary and disposable. After the war Aloysius and his father Archibald discover that a corporate brewer, Slore's, is buying up as many independent breweries as it can. Slore's uses financial incentives to coerce owners to sell out, converts independent breweries to their own recipes and procedures, and then after a time terminates most of the original staff and assimilates the operations. They brew only two varieties of beer: Slore's Standard Lager and Slore's Standard Ale. Aggressive and escalating marketing strategies drive their sales. As early as 1947, the Gacks are fearful that much of Great Britain's rich brewing tradition will be lost into the mass-market corporate sameness that is Slore's. Aloysius decides to fight back and engages in a long running battle of wits with his corporate rival and its young CEO, Alabaster Prufrock Slore. Along the way Aloysius and his family are caught up in historical events such as the Great Smog of 1952 and the Aldermaston anti-nuclear marches. We also see Aloysius struggle with the externalities of his own creations, as a close friend becomes an alcoholic. Aloysius remains in the RAF Reserves and trains younger pilots in the art of reconnaissance against the Soviet Union. In this role he seeks to strike at what he views as an inhuman system which has crushed the human spirit of millions. Aloysius influences the design of a remarkable low-level spyplane, the Hapax One, and pilots it on a series of daring missions into the Soviet Union. His accomplishments on his final mission end up being central to the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis, in which the United States and the Soviet Union came shockingly close to nuclear war. Upon returning home, Aloysius engages in a very public battle of wits with Alabaster on the BBC Television current affairs documentary programme Panorama, hosted by renowned journalist Richard Dimbleby. Through all his exploits, Aloysius takes a stand against the treatment of human beings as interchangeable, temporary and disposable.

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