

Sal:

She's a beautiful sock, Rebecca. Oh, she's amazing. She's so cool. I remember the first day they rolled us into the ball. Hey, what's up? I'm Sal. And she goes, "I know who you are." She said, "I was the loudest sock in the whole damn package." She said, "I heard you talking." She wasn't excited at first. She did not want to be balled up with me. She said, "I'm too close." I go, "What the heck do you want me to do? What the heck do you want me to do?" That first night neither of us slept. Okay? We were in that ball, neither of us slept. We were heel to heel, and neither of us slept at night. Then, what she did, I didn't realize, I got curious about her, and we talked about her a lot. Yeah. Yeah. We talked about her a lot. She didn't like me, but, I won her over. Yep.

Ian:

Well, let's start by having you introduce yourself for us.

Sal:

Hey, how you doing? I'm Sal. Yeah. I'm an ankle sock.

Ian:

Okay.

Sal:

It's basically enough that you could see it, if you're wearing a low shoe, but if you wear boots, I'm too short for a boot.

Ian:

Feels like a funny question, but what color are you?

Sal:

I'm white.

Ian:

Okay.

Sal:

Red line.

Ian:

That's like an athletic sock.

Sal:

Thank you. It's fun that you say that, because I was never used for athletics. I sometimes get insecure calling myself an athletic sock, but yeah, I'm technically an athletic sock. Oh my God. If the other socks in the package could hear that, they would laugh at that. You know, I was never used for athletics, but yeah. Thank you.

Ian:

You don't feel athletic?

Sal:

No, I'm a lazy sock. It's okay.

Ian:

Are you one size fits all?

Sal:

No, I'm an 8-12.

Ian:

Okay.

Sal:

Yeah. One size fits all, can I be honest? That's baloney. There's no sock that's actually one size fits all. The sock has to adjust to the person.

Ian:

Yeah. You think about the entire range of human feet.

Sal:

Yeah.

Ian:

From a baby to the world's largest man.

Sal:

Right? And that's not good when the sock is so stretched out. You're not actually who you are. I could either fit you, or if I don't, that's fine. We're not meant to be together. I mean, thank goodness. Peter's a 10, so he's right in the middle. Peter was a 10 right in the middle, no stretch. Thank goodness, because I've heard horror stories.

Ian:

That's your guy.

Sal:

Yeah. That's my, yeah, that's my dude. He's a senior in high school and he got me freshman year before he went in to school. I was in a 12 pack.

Ian:

You mentioned your partner?

Sal:

Yeah.

Ian:

Rebecca.

Sal:

Yeah.

Ian:

Where is she?

Sal:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. She went missing three months ago.

Ian:

Okay.

Sal:

Yeah. But I'm sure she's somewhere, he's a mess, okay? His room is a disaster. So I'm sure, yeah. She's somewhere. She'll be back.

Ian:

Okay. Okay. Well, tell me about your life together.

Sal:

You know what's so fun about having another sock? We both go in shoes all day long, and we get to live our day, and then when we leave the shoes, we come home and we get to talk about what we both experienced.

Ian:

Yeah.

Sal:

I know that people text all day long, so they get to talk about their days. We don't get to do that. So when we get home, we had so much to share with each other.

Ian:

Yeah.

Sal:

It was amazing. We'd experience the same thing, but slightly different, right? We would come home and usually we get thrown on the floor, which is a beautiful place. You look at the ceiling, here's a fan, it

spins, we just stare at the fan and we go, "It sounded like those chicken nuggets were good at lunch today." We'd sit there. You ever talk to somebody, and the conversation is nothing, but it could go forever?

Ian:

Yeah.

Sal:

That's what it was. If someone wrote down what we said, they would say, "This is nonsense." But if someone felt what we said, they would say, "That's beautiful."

Ian:

Sal, did you and Rebecca, did you get to meet other socks?

Sal:

Oh yeah. It's a no shoes household. Everyone in the family's walking around the socks. So I've spent so much time. A no shoes household, a Thanksgiving dinner is fun on top of the table; it's a blast underneath. Okay? Oh my goodness. I got to meet socks from all over the world. Do you know Argyle?

Ian:

Sure.

Sal:

Oh my, an Argyle sock, you listen, you don't talk when you're around an Argyle sock. Okay. You listen to what they have to say. I tried to tell my friends, when I got back to the drawer, about what the Argyle sock said, but I screwed that up. You know what I'm saying? I listened to this Argyle sock, oh my goodness. It was truly amazing. Then you meet some stupid socks. I shouldn't call them stupid; festive, we'll say.

Sal:

These socks come out once a year. They think it's their day.

Ian:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sal:

They've never met an ankle or tube sock.

Ian:

Yeah.

Sal:

And no one's more annoying than the Santa Claus socks with a couple of those jingle bells on the side of the ankles, right? You shut the heck up, okay? I don't need you talking under the table. They think it's

their day. But listen to me, once a year you come out. If you come out any other day, besides Christmas, you look like a fool. Okay? They usually take the conversation. That's why I said the thing about having to listen, because I know my place as an ankle sock. I'm nothing special. I'm a working sock.

Ian:

Yeah, but you can be at home any day of the year.

Sal:

Exactly. People remember the special moments. I remember the day in and day outs. That's what I get to experience. That's what makes a life, not the holidays, right?

Ian:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sal:

What makes a life is what you do consistently every day.

Ian:

Yeah.

Sal:

That's what I would get to be a part of.

Ian:

I believe that. I believe that. I think when you... At least when I think about my relationship with my wife, the story that isn't our anniversary dinners or our wedding, it's grocery shopping, and it's going for a walk.

Sal:

I remember the first time we watched Indiana Jones. Oh, oh, it was so good. I didn't get to watch the other two, a couple of other tube socks saw them, and you should have heard us in the drawer talking about it. This Last Crusade one sounds amazing.

Ian:

It is. Yeah.

Sal:

Oh no, don't do that to me. Okay. Oh God. I saw the Temple of Doom. Oh [inaudible], now that's a movie. They have an ottoman, and this ottoman is a class act. Fantastic! But the best part about the ottoman, they're sitting feet up, I'm looking right at the television.

Ian:

You're closest when they're using an Ottoman.

Sal:

Yes. I love me and ottoman. I've watched so many hours of sports, of movie, the Real Housewives. I don't want to talk about that, but oh God, we watched... Rebecca loved the Real Housewives, okay? We will watch hours and hours. She liked the New Jersey one, she thought it was funny. Whatever. I'll tell you this, we watched so many hours of TV. It was so beautiful.

Ian:

Would you talk through it, you and Rebecca?

Sal:

She talked the whole fricking time. She would talk, like I'm focusing, I'm listening. At a certain point, I'm sorry, at a certain point I hear the TV from the drawer, sometimes. I miss hearing her talk.

Ian:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sal:

She's coming. They would throw me out if she wasn't coming back.

Ian:

Yeah.

Sal:

There's no reason to keep an ankle sock if the other one's not there. There's zero reason for them to keep me if she's not there. She's there.

Ian:

There's something I want to talk to you about.

Sal:

Okay.

Ian:

There's a stigma about this, which is socks and sandals.

Sal:

Oh come on. No. People get over themselves. Socks and sandals are ideal. That's how socks originally were worn. The first sock was in ancient Egypt. They would wear socks with sandals, so don't you dare! That's our history.

Ian:

You're saying that the first ever sock...

Sal:

Yes.

Ian:

... Was a sock and sandal sock?

Sal:

That was our original purpose. Then they started hiding us. They started putting us in shoes. Originally, we were free. We were in the sandals. The shoe was seeing the world, we were seeing the world. Ugh.

Ian:

Wow. What do you think happened? Why did it become this thing?

Sal:

I think shoes got cooler, and socks stayed the same.

Ian:

Yeah. Have you been out as socks in sandals?

Sal:

One time?

Ian:

One.

Sal:

Oh my goodness. Oh, it was a good day. The best part, Rebecca was right next to me. We could talk the whole time.

Ian:

Wow. Yeah.

Sal:

We weren't muffled by shoes. I heard her screaming, "Can you believe this?" I go, "No, no, no." We saw grass, that's green. Grass is beautiful.

Ian:

Yes.

Sal:

I wish he wore me out more like that. I have no idea what I looked like, so, I understand you make your own choices.

Ian:

Yeah. I guess you were kind of looking at the world and you didn't... I think that's actually important. I'm going to bring up a picture of what it looks like when somebody wears socks and sandals and just show it to you.

Sal:

Oh my God. I'm nervous. Okay. Okay. I guess we could do this.

Ian:

Okay. There's a Wikipedia page for socks and sandals.

Sal:

Cool, heard of it. You can't use it as a source.

Ian:

Okay. All right. Yeah. It has the person representing socks and sandals. I'm just going to show you.

Sal:

Sure.

Ian:

Whatever your reaction is to this man.

Sal:

Cool. Oh my God. Geez. I had no idea that's how we looked. With the shorts with the high socks? Oh, that's beautiful. This man is free. This man feels free. I hope wherever that man is, he feels free.

Ian:

Hello. Hi, is this Hilton Reuben?

Hilton Reuben:

This is he.

Ian:

Hilton, we have tracked you down. Do I have it right that you are the person in the photo on the Wikipedia page for socks and sandals?

Hilton Reuben:

Yes. That is me.

Ian:

How did this come about?

Hilton Reuben:

Well, I was out with my wife one day, and I was wearing my socks and sandals, and she says, "Hilton, you look like such a goober, you really shouldn't go out that way." I said, "I think it's quite stylish, actually. When I was in college, back in the '80s, all the academia, the who's whos and all, were wearing these Birkenstocks and socks. I lived in a place that was granola, it was just what people were wearing." She says, "Well, people don't wear that now, and you look like a goober." I said, "I don't think so, but we can put this up for a vote." I said, "You take a picture of me, and we'll send it to my friends, Liz and Eric. If they like it, then we'll know that I'm the real deal."

Ian:

Liz and Eric are just two people that you trust?

Hilton Reuben:

Yeah. They're just, yeah, they're close friends. I sent it to Liz and Eric, and I said, "What do you think?" One day, Eric, last week, Eric sends me this screenshot of my knees. That's all I see on my picture, I recognize the picture. He says, "Somebody's looking to do some sort of conversation with you about this." I'm like, "Well, how would they have gotten my picture?" He had actually added my picture to the Wikipedia, and that was a year and a half ago, or something.

Ian:

So, wait, so you had sent the photo to your friend just to get a judgment on how you looked, and until our producer contacted you a week ago, you didn't know it had been on Wikipedia for a year and a half?

Hilton Reuben:

That's correct.

Ian:

Well, this whole thing started in a debate with your wife. Now that you are essentially famous for socks and sandals, what's been her reaction?

Hilton Reuben:

I still don't think that I've changed her mind about whether I look like a goober or not. She's pretty steadfast in that opinion.

Ian:

Is she there?

Hilton Reuben:

She's in the other room. Want me to call...

Ian:

Yeah. Why don't we hear straight from her.

Hilton Reuben:

Hold on a second. "Hey, hon, somebody wants to talk to you. I've got him on the phone."

Suzanne:

Yeah?

Ian:

Hi there.

Suzanne:

Hi.

Ian:

Hi, I'm Ian.

Suzanne:

Hi Ian, I'm Suzanne.

Ian:

It's good to meet you, Suzanne. I was just talking with your husband about the whole socks and sandals thing.

Suzanne:

Yeah.

Ian:

This journey started with a conversation with you, about how... I'll quote, "he looks like a goober."

Suzanne:

Yeah.

Ian:

Now that he represents socks and sandals to the whole world, has your opinion changed?

Suzanne:

Not really. I'm more accepting of it, but I still think he looks like a goober.

Hilton Reuben:

Thanks, hon. Appreciate it.

Suzanne:

Yeah, I love him to death. I wouldn't change anything for the world, but it is pretty funny when he wears socks with his sandals.

Ian:

Sal, I want to ask you about the washer and dryer.

Sal:

Yeah.

Ian:

I was thinking we think about those things together, but really they are totally opposite experiences.

Sal:

Washing machine is scary. The dryer is safety.

Ian:

Okay.

Sal:

The entire time I'm in the washing machine, I just go, "30 more minutes, 25 more minutes," I'm just counting down the moments till I could feel warm and safe again.

Ian:

Hmm.

Sal:

Jesus, the water's just coming, and coming, and it doesn't stop. I hear click, they lock us inside the washing machine. They don't lock a dryer. Did you ever notice that?

Ian:

Yeah.

Sal:

You could open a dryer whenever you want. It's not for the people, it's for the damn clothing, and you just pray because you know, if you get left in the washing machine, and you don't make it to the dryer... Socks are the thing that get left most in the washing machine, and you stay in there, and then you start to smell, you go straight to the garbage. I count the moments to that dryer. A dryer's a beautiful thing.

Ian:

Well, when you get to the dryer, and you always have gotten to the dryer, can you just paint that picture for me?

Sal:

Oh! We show up wet. We're all dripping, but we are happy. All soaking wet, and you should hear the cheers when it starts moving... phadump! We all start moving with that dryer. We are feeling warm! The hot breeze soaking through my fibers, okay? Some of us, I get hot fast, right? Then I'm just enjoying the warm breeze, okay? I watch all my other friends go from wet, right? Oh, when am I going to be dry? Finally the jeans are coming along, and then the sweatshirts, and we're all dancing and we're singing and we go, "Towels, you can do it!"

Sal:

Then all of a sudden the towels are dry. Oh my God. One time I ended up in a pants pocket for the whole time. I was in the pants pocket. I came out wet. Rebecca's like, "You had too much fun in the..." I go, "I was having a blast." She goes, "Next time" I go, "I know, I know. I was a little too much in there. Next time, I promise. I promise I won't go inside of pocket. I got in trouble for that one. I never did that again. Right? But oh, oh God. Sometimes you have a little too much fun in the dryer, but oh God, it's a beautiful thing.

Ian:

So Sal you're by yourself, at the moment. Where are you living?

Sal:

I'm at the bottom.

Ian:

Of?

Sal:

Of the drawer.

Ian:

Okay.

Sal:

His mom basically takes all the solos, and wraps a rubber band around us, which is very uncomfortable.

Ian:

Do the other socks keep you company, either the other solos or the balled up pairs on top of you, do you talk to them?

Sal:

I leave them be usually. Sometimes you'll talk. I wait to be invited to talk.

Ian:

Okay.

Sal:

I don't want to be the third sock.

Ian:

Right.

Sal:

Right? If you're in a conversation, if you ask me a question, I'll be more than happy to talk. Here's the thing about the bottom of the drawer. I don't know who's on the top. I talk, I yell, I yell out, I still yell out, waiting.

Ian:

Who are you talking to?

Sal:

I talk to Rebecca. I don't know. Maybe she's there. I think sometimes maybe she's in another drawer. That's happened before. I guess sometimes I get loud. Oh, the socks get pissed at me. They get annoyed because I'll be talking sometimes. I make sure, I mean, you get used to talking to somebody every day. You get used to saying the same things over and over. Sometimes I'll just have questions, I'll throw them out there, and sometimes I'll see if she's there. She doesn't answer, but I like to imagine a world that she's in another drawer. Basically, he collects pens and she's filled with all the pens, so she can't respond.

Ian:

Like her mouth is full kind of?

Sal:

Yeah.

Ian:

Okay.

Sal:

But she hears me. She hears me talking. I like to sometimes think that she's out there and she's filled with all these pens that he's gotten from all his vacations he's gone on, and she could hear me talk.

Ian:

I totally respect if you don't want to do this, but I would like to know what it's like when you talk to her. I wonder, do you want to take a minute right now and talk to her?

Sal:

Okay. What's up fluffy. Yeah. Nah, I thought I was going go out today. Nah, I didn't. You should. You should have heard these Thanksgiving socks. They came back and they were bragging about their dinner. Remember when we got to go to the basement for the night, and he left us down there for a month? Oh God. I think about that, sometimes; you and I just in the basement, unfinished, the cold floor, but we were there with each other. I didn't mind that.

Ian:

This is Everything is Alive. The show is produced by Jennifer Mills and me, Ian [Chilaug], additional production from Caitlin O'Keefe. Thanks also to Peter Mills, and thanks as always to Emily [Spevack], Sal the sock, was played by Sebastian [Canelli]. His podcast is called Loud About Nothing, and you can find his Instagram, it's @SebastianCanelli. Music, in this episode, from Blue Dot Sessions. Everything is Alive

is a proud member of Radiotopia from PRX, Julie Shapiro, vice president of editorial, and Audrey [Martavich], senior director of content.

Ian:

You can get in touch with us any number of ways, and you can get Everything Is Alive t-shirts, and even baby onesies at everythingisalive.com. This is the final episode of our season, so it'll be awhile till the next one. If this is the first episode you've ever heard, we recommend going back to the very beginning and starting there. Thanks to all of you for listening and supporting our show, and remember, be happy with what you are.

Sal:

When I was a kid, I used to dream of being a hat. I'd go, "Why couldn't I be a hat?" Rebecca goes, "Be happy with who you are. Be happy with who you are. A hat never feels a rug. A hat never feels a soul."

Ian:

We'll see you soon.