

THE BACHELOR'S COLLAR

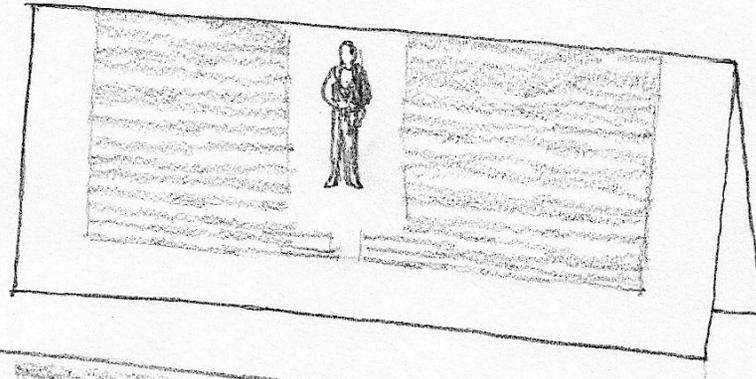
Some collars are single and attach themselves to shirts—formal dress shirts—and make the rounds in weddings. Bachelors make the rounds too, and if they don't find an attachment, feel their time running out. ✂ There lived such a bachelor who owned such a collar, along with his mothballed tuxedo. Besides a shoehorn, a comb, and a few common possessions, he had little to his name. The shoehorn worked his feet into his shoes, the comb kept his thinning hair in place, and as to his name, desperation didn't help that. Women couldn't stand him. ✂ But this story's about his collar, which was as old and worn as he. The collar too, longed for love. Though it bumped into the comb now and then, it felt no attraction, for the comb was missing some teeth. ✂ On a day before a wedding, the collar was whisked off to the cleaners, where it met a woman's garter. "Hello, gorgeous!" said the collar, but the garter ignored it. The collar closed in, whispering, "You have secrets—I can tell." The garter went from pink to red. "But I won't tell, if you'll hook up with me." "How dare you!" said the garter, and tried to tumble free. "You're my type," said the collar. "Useful *and* sexy." "Keep your distance, you creep." "I'm a saint," declared the collar. Which wasn't true of course, no matter how good it sounded. As the garter slipped away, the collar huffed, "Feminist!" ✂ Next came the dryer, then the starch, then the iron. "Ooo!" cried the collar to the iron. "You're so hot!" "Shhh!" sizzled the iron, and flattened the collar out. But the collar persisted. "You warm my heart! I lay down my life for you!" "You're a wretch," said the iron. Which was true of course, because the collar, despite being washed and ironed, had not improved one bit. In fact, it was so worse for wear that



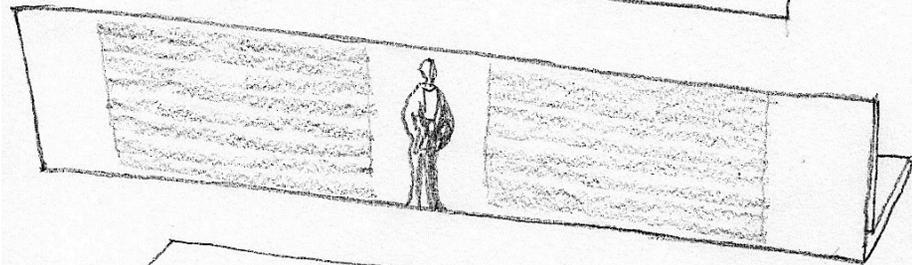
the scissors stepped in to snip away its frayed edges. "What lovely legs!" crooned the collar. "You must be a showgirl." Snip, snip, snip went the scissors. "I love how you tiptoe around me," continued the collar. "You'd make a *perfect* wife." "Wife!" said the scissors, and cut the collar deep. The collar gasped, "I'm undone! I should have gone for the comb. In spite of her missing teeth, at least she had a few hairs." ✂ It would not see the comb again. It was tossed into the rag bin and sent off to a repurpose facility, where fabrics were sorted by content—natural fibers, blends, synthetics. Some of the rags were bold, but the collar was boldest of all. "You should have *seen* them swooning over me! Yet I stood up to them all. No one was dating material. There was the pretty garter, but she clung too tight. There was the iron, who burned with desire for me, but she was too hotheaded. The scissors danced and danced, but made cutting remarks. See all the damage she did?" ✂ Had the collar known its end was near, that it would pass through rollers to be pressed into paper, that its tale would appear thereon, it might have buttoned its lip. This is the paper, and this is the tale. ✂ The forlorn bachelor—what became of him? He went to the wedding, collarless, and went home alone again. These days, he spends much of his time with reading, and may come across this account, and may even see himself in it. It may even do him some good. Though it's highly unlikely, since he and his collar were cut from the very same cloth. ✂ That is one thing, and here is another: We're all headed for the rag bin and the rollers, where the truths of our lives will be told.

From an old Hans Christian Andersen tale, made new by Troy Howell.

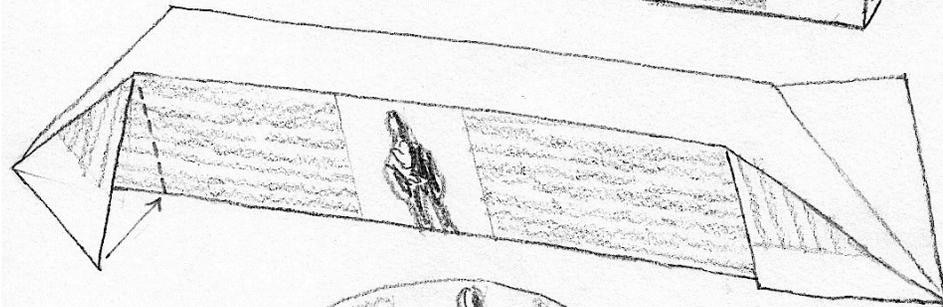
fold in half



fold in half again



fold down each of the four ends
to the outer bottom edges



bring the ends together
to form a circle, tucking
one end into the other

