

Three tires and one sole

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In a usual trip, if one tire gets flat is not something so rare to happen. However, if someone tells you that in just one day, in just one trip, with less than one hundred miles, three tires of his car got flat, probably you would not believe in him. I guess I would not believe as well, so I understand you. You can trust me, this happened with me. More than this, something happened with the sole of one my shoes when I went to fix the tires of my car in the next day, but this I will tell you in the end of this story.

It was a Sunday and my girlfriend and I decided to go to her hometown, to enjoy the day visiting her family. We used to live in Porto Alegre, which is a big city in south of Brazil and her family used to live in a small city, eighty miles far from there. In that time we had a simple car, but we thought this was not a problem to such small trip. So we went to do this surprise to her family, and our idea was to arrive there to have lunch and return after dinner. Following our plan, we left to our usual trip.

The day was perfect, everyone there was happy with our surprising visit. But today I know I should have listened to my father-in-law. Besides his happiness with the presence of his daughter, he told us to leave before the dinner to travel during the day and not to travel during the night. But, you know, we preferred to stay there longer. This was the first advice he gave us, our first sin, let's say. Later, when we were saying good-bye for everyone, he looked to the tires of the car and said something like, "I think it is better you stay here this night and travel tomorrow morning."

"Why?" my girlfriend asked

“You know, if something happens, it is better in sunlight. And, I don’t know, but these tires...”

“What is the problem with the tires?”

“I’m not sure, but they look old and worn out. I guess you should get new ones. What do you think about this, Alex?”

“I don’t think so. The trip is so short, just one hour. We won’t have time to any problem happen.” I was confident no problem could happen with us.

It was more than 8pm, and it was dark. Despite of these two advices from my father-in-law, we took the road back to Porto Alegre.

Everything was going perfect in the first thirty minutes when, suddenly, I felt one of the tires was flat. My girlfriend became nervous and reminded me what her father had said about the tires and about traveling at night. But the decision had been ours; I did not decide anything by myself. I asked her to keep calm while I changed the tire. I confess I was not calm at all, I could feel my hands sweating but I did not have anything to do other than go outside of the car and change the flat tire. However, you know, I pretended everything was fine. She locked the car, because it is a kind of dangerous to stop in a road at night in the countryside of Brazil, at least, we thought it was.

Five to ten minutes later I finished changing the tire and we continued to travel. So, more relaxed and relieved I said to her:

“Did you see? It’s simple, now we just have to stop in some gas station to fix the flat tire. Everything is okay, no more problems. Nothing else can happen.”

You might not believe me, but I did not finish saying this and I felt other flat got flat. Oh, my God! What could I do now? I did not have other extra tire to change and we were alone, stopped in the road at night. This was close to 9pm. If I was scared, I just imagine who she was. I called the police, but as I said, we were in the countryside, this means we had to wait for a while, there, alone, locked inside the car and we both really scared. We simply stopped talking. It was possible to listen to our breathing. Each light on the road let us apprehensive, perhaps the police that was coming, perhaps some thief, most probable none of them.

Almost thirty minutes later, the police car arrived with two policemen. One of them suggested me to go with him until the closest gas station to fix one of the tires of my car, while the other one would stay with my girlfriend in the car. She almost screamed: "No! I don't want stay here without you." Okay, the policemen patiently took one of the tires and they both went until the gas station to fix it for me, while she and I stayed alone again waiting for them. Just later I discovered this was our second sin in the same night.

The policemen returned, I changed the tire and we followed them until the gas station to pay the fixed tire and to fix the other one.

After this we continued our trip. We were less than one mile far from Porto Alegre when I felt one tire flat again, and it was exactly that one which the policemen took to fix without me. I though this was a coincidence, just a little more of bad luck, after a lot of it in the last hour. In this time, everything was easier. In the place where you stopped there were a lot of lights and I could change the flat tire quickly. This last one was almost funny to us, one reason to do jokes with our so strange trip, just to close it with a flourish.

With all these issues, what should be a one-hour travel took more than three hours, and we arrived home close to midnight but we were really relieved, we were feeling the real sensation of “home sweet home.”

Next day, I woke up early and went to fix the tires. When I arrived there, the mechanic told me I had to buy four new tires because my ones were too old and worn out – yes, my father-in-law had warned me. More, he said one of them (specifically that one the policeman brought to me fixed) was the oldest, different from the others, and with uncountable patches. So, I understood it was a bad idea not having gone with the policemen the last night to see what they did. Probably they didn’t care too much and took any old and cheaper tire to replace my one. But that is okay, it was just a small problem compared to the others.

I bought four new tires and the man asked me thirty minutes to change all tires of my car. While he did this I decided walk a little bit just to cool down. Less than ten minutes later it began raining and I started to run to come back to the garage where my car was. I do not know how to explain, but I step in something like a nail that pinned my shoe. When I force to release, the sole of my shoe was plucked and I stay like that, with one of my shoes without sole at all and under rain.

It was unbelievable, in less than twenty-four hours, three tires of my car got flat and I lost the sole of my shoe. I did not know if I had to cry or laugh. I laughed.

I returned to the garage and when the mechanic saw me walking like that, with one of my shoes without sole, he said to me ironically, “Hey, man, I guess you are with some problem in your foundations today, don’t you think so?”

I did not know what he really meant with this, I just know that some time after this a lot of things in my life started to collapse as well: first it was my stable relationship that ended; two months later, I broke with a partner, what meant I lost a lot of customers; and in less than one year I had to sell my car and my house. I guess that trip was a sign that everything in my life was really without any foundation and coming down. My tires that I thought were good enough were not and everyone was seeing, but not me. The sole of my shoes was ready to be taken off at the first nail it met, but I was not aware of this.

However, you know, as the tires, life spins. Soon, there were no longer flat tires and soleless shoes in my life. But, don't forget, as the tires keeps spinning, the lack of awareness can take you again to a road, at night, changing your old tires, or walking with a soleless shoes under rain.