

INDUSTRY KNOWLEDGE

Dom Carter

I purchased the white single-extruded 50 μm PVC stockings with elasticated tops from a catalogue that had a glossy cover with a picture of an attractive woman wearing a gas mask, which is something I've never been that fond of. I was very clear on the order form that the stockings had to be 50 microns thick. When they arrived I tested them with my micrometer and was happy to see that they were well within the 10% variance allowed in the plastics industry. Toe-snagging is a risk with these things, which is why I never use natural latex. Single-extruded 50 μm PVC gives them the strength they are going to need.

FORTY-FOUR GOATS

Simon Harris

According to tradition, there were three choices: marriage, revenge or goats. His family refused the elders' suggestion that we marry, saying ours was an inferior clan. Revenge was discussed but fighting was always costly and once started it might never end. They would fight for water or camels, not women. So that left goats. Customary law decreed that the number of goats required to settle the matter was forty-four.

They arrived today. His uncle and cousins brought them whilst the man stayed back in his village. My father waited by the gate and I watched from a window behind the curtain. The flat roof opposite looked empty but I knew that my brothers were hiding there. My father had given instructions for them to kill everyone if he gave them the sign.

Any disrespect or less than the required forty-four goats and my father had told them he would shoot the nearest man with a pistol he'd be holding behind his back. After that, my brothers were to open fire.

I started counting as soon as I saw the goats but it wasn't easy from a distance. When they move as a herd, the little ones hide behind the big ones and are constantly jumping over each other, with dozens of tiny kids jostling underneath for their mother's milk or just to avoid being trodden upon.

As his cousins passed them one by one to our servants to count, I closed my eyes and prayed to the mercy of God that the number would fall short.