

Skippy Goes Sailing

by Gary Moshimer

I coughed a little. Some bloody fluid sloshed in the rubber tube coming from my chest.

Outside my door some doctor was ranting. He was looking for the patient in the room across from mine.

"She's in X-ray," the nurse told him.

"It's Friday," he said. "I have to get out of here. The holiday."

He was acting like an ass, and I didn't like the looks of him. He was an ugly fuck. Big everything— feet, nose, ears. I decided he looked like a clown. I decided his name should be 'Skippy.'

I'd just had some pain medicine. I was blameless.

I called out to him. "Hey, Skippy."

He ignored me. He tapped his clipboard impatiently.

"YO, SKIPPY!"

He cocked his fat head and looked in at me. "Excuse me?"

"You know where I'll be for the holiday, Skippy? And that lady? We'll be right here."

He shook his head and turned his back to me. The nurse, Angie, made a dimple at me. I loved her, she was so cute.

"Where are you going, Skippy? Country club? Or do you have a big boat for those big feet? Skippy goin' sailing?"

He mumbled something to Angie and she gently closed my door.

After a bit I saw him from my window. I watched him heading for the parking lot, his lab coat slung over his shoulder. I waited for him to reach his BMW or his Mercedes or one of those cars with the doors that open up like wings. But he just kept walking, past the lot, out into the street. He stood on the sidewalk, looking both ways. He crossed the street and kept going. The white of his coat finally disappeared. I pictured him going into a bar, or visiting a prostitute, or going to his luxury apartment overlooking the water and dressing up in his clown outfit and dancing in front of a mirror, all by himself. I saw him drinking from a bottle and tweaking his ruffled collar and running in his floppy shoes and throwing himself off his balcony

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because he was that unhappy. My automatic blood pressure cuff turned on, and the reading was twenty points closer to normal. I watched the horizon over the bridge. The sun was setting. It was beautiful. A cloud bank had a slice out of it and some of the sunset leaked through and it was the same color as the stuff in my tube. I coughed. I felt better, I really did.

