Water, Water Everywhere

by Jack Swenson

When we got back to my place that night, she sat on my lap and loosened my tie. Later we went down to the dock and looked at the lake. “He doesn't want to stay; he doesn't want to go,” she said. I asked her if she wanted to go swimming. She didn't bring a suit, she said. I said that was okay; I wouldn't wear one either. I saw the ghost of a smile on her lips. She wiped away her tears. “You are such an awful man!” she said.

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I did the right thing; I drove her to the hospital and drove her home after the D & C. The nurse who brought her down to the lobby in a wheel chair gave me a dirty look. That night Mark and I got drunk, and later I decided that his wife, Molly, who had gotten fat, looked pretty good, and I tried to get her to go upstairs with me. Mark chuckled and told her to go ahead. Molly said she would think about it. Later I asked Mark if he wanted to watch, but his wife wouldn't let him. She didn't like kinky stuff, she said.

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“Arthur is a very deliberate man,” I told her. “He doesn't make decisions quickly.” Nancy gave me a look. “I'm the opposite,” she said. “If I see something I like, I grab it.” I told her about my friend, a young man about her age, who says that patience isn't a quality that he has much of. It's a character defect, he says, but he can't seem to do anything about it. Her eyes leaked tears. I told her that it was my wife's idea to have a party. “I'm not a party person,” I said. I said that most nights I drank myself to sleep. I liked bourbon and country music, a bad combination.

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Everything was at sixes and sevens. Across the street, a mud slide had taken out a fence. Water ran like a river in the paved streets. Would it rain for forty days and forty nights? I had never met the gay doctor's partner. He was from Iran. The woman doctor, a pediatrician, asked him if he was Persian, and he said no, Iranian.

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Something bothered me about that woman, and I couldn't put my finger on what it was.