

The Whippy Guy

by jake fuchs

“ . . . don' like it when people laugh at my dancing.”

He was the tall, whippy type. Dangerous. I didn't know what he was talking about: my witty friend, sitting on the couch with me, had been making me laugh, not him. The music at the party was really loud. I thought I hadn't heard him right.

“What?”

“You wanna laugh, we laugh together, outside.”

At this bit of cinema, I laughed. Couldn't help it. I was seventeen and goofy. Everything struck me funny. I think his eyes bugged out

“You got it, motherfucker,” he said and made for the door, tossing his jacket aside and then stripping off his shirt as he went. Half the party followed him. I had to fight him. I'd only been in one real fight in my life, and that was with someone who'd been mocking and bullying me for months, so I was crazy angry. Not so this time, but I still had to. I wasn't afraid, which mildly surprised me, as I was sure the whippy guy could kick my ass. I walked slowly, thinking of the crowd waiting beyond the front door.

As I came through it, he swung at me. I don't know if I ducked or if he somehow simply missed. In fact, I'm not sure that he ever hit me at all. I don't remember being hit. I hit him, I know that. Without my noticing how or when, we'd moved from just in front of the house to the middle of the lawn, a wide Beverly Hills lawn, and I was standing close to him, inside his circling arms, swinging my fists up into his face. A lot of kids were standing around us, watching. Mostly punky little kids, some of them my younger brother's friends.

I felt big, that we were both big, towering over the little kids watching us fight. I heard, or thought I could hear, my punches landing.

Then I was on my back, and he was kneeling on my chest. I didn't know how it happened. There I was, that's all. He asked me if I wanted more, motherfucker, and I shook my head. So he got off me

and went inside, and soon I followed him. He sat by himself, quiet. I did the same. I didn't feel ashamed or even embarrassed.

His friends came and sat with me. Maybe he'd told them to go away and not bother him. They acted as if they wanted to be my friends, almost as if they were proud of me. They told me I'd been doing pretty good out there--nice of them to say that—but how lucky for me their tall pal had gotten me down in the end. For had I somehow won the fight, he would have sought me out later and run me over with his car. That was something one could laugh at, but , for a change, I wasn't in a laughing mood. I didn't hear most of what they said. Like the whippy guy, I just wanted to sit. For a time, I didn't feel anything, an odd condition. Restful. Maybe that's why they do it, guys who fight a lot.

