

New Fiction by Dwight Curtis: “The Thirty-Two Fouettes”

The chair came to a stop and with great effort, haltingly, the figure lifted himself to his feet. He took a single jerky step forward onto the stage and the wheelchair receded from view. It was Lypynsky: it couldn't have been anyone else, though he no longer looked like the man in the poster. His face was gone. There was a general din in the room as people whispered and other people shushed them. I would have been surprised if Lypynsky knew or cared: he had no ears. He wore a skull cap over his waxy, featureless egg head. The hat was the same off-white cotton as the rest of his outfit. He moved across the stage with short staccato steps, favoring his left leg, his ballet shoes scraping the wood as he moved, and when he reached center-stage he turned to face the room. The skin of his face was a shiny mottled camouflage of skintones but missing key features: no eyebrows, one eye completely gone, covered by what must have been a graft, the other eye hooded and searching. His nose was two snakelike slits. Where his upper lip should have been were beautiful tall white teeth that shone under the stage lights.