

The Flower Gag - 1996

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A woman wakes up one morning next to a clown. It must be her husband because he has the same hands, crooked little finger, tiny callus rough on her cheek, and thin gold band. The eyes vaguely familiar with golden flecks pasted to the backdrop of night, it's hard to tell sometimes with all the makeup. Now he sleeps with those big shoes on. Some days he stays in bed all day, making a tent for the cat. When the cat runs away, he polishes that big red nose. Sometimes he refuses to speak, honking a bike horn instead. She takes lessons to learn his new language. One honk for "no," two for "yes," three for "come sit by my side." She waits patiently for three honks. He insists on only coconut cream pie for dinner, so she buys a new cookbook. He traded in their station wagon for a miniature car, little people pile out leaving sawdust and dirty dishes everywhere. She doesn't match socks anymore because he wears them mismatched with the big tie and polka dot pants. Still, certain things never bothered her; the grease paint on the pillowcases, the whoopee cushions on the chairs, even an occasional pie in the face or a smell-the-pretty-flower gag. Her smile is painted on, and no amount of soap will change that.