

Gumby Won't Die
by Michael Don Anderson

There was darkness: darkness of the heart, darkness of the mind. It was his darkness, a retreat from awareness. He had blanketed himself entirely, but still It came. A single flicker of light, a tiny bit of knowing. An irrepressible memory.

It stabbed at his darkness, echoing with a sound that made the brain stir in resistance. Sometimes it was his brain, but most of the time, the brain, because he kept himself so far removed from it. The brain. The mind.

"Leave," the mind dully murmured.

It darted deeper with irritation, and the mind curled up, afraid to realize a state of awareness. The sound, echoed in the light became visible as a word; a name.

"Gumby!" beckoned a stab of light/sound, followed by a reproachful, "Pokey!" An irrational confusion stirred anger pushed the mind forward. His mind.

"I'm not Gumby! Why the hell are you calling me Gumby!" Images of a small green rubber figure, being torn apart by a young blonde haired boy were linked tightly with that name.

"Gumby." The light faded but the sound was crisp, closer.

"Fuck Gumby!" The image of a match burning paper was set under the once again whole green figure, and the now older, slightly more brunette haired boy watched with fascination as the rubber melted from the wire.

"Gumby's dead!"

"Gumby! Gumby." First a forceful declaration, then a satisfied confirmation.

"No. Not Gumby!" A mother in tight skirt and heavy mascara tore the small green figure (untouched by flames) from the now adolescent dark haired boy. Her face was a snarl of displeasure and guilt was the boy's mask in reply. She hurled the green rubber doll into the kitchen trash and the hinged lid swung mockingly back and forth until finally it stopped.

But the sound did not. "Gumby. Gumby. Gumby." Thrice in rapid careless succession. Almost reproachful.

"Gumby?" asked his mind. Gumby. Why was Gumby so important. Why had the stupid green figure been in so much of his life? Why wouldn't it die.

His obsessive pleasure in destroying the resilient green figure was matched by the perverse pain of having to seek out another of the green figures, to repeat the experience.

"Gumby." Had he thought that name this time? The shame he felt pulled at the word, his resistance weakening.

"Gumby." Sound echoing the light. But the word wavered, tried to be something else; he dug deeper into the shadows.

"Gumby!" he loudly repeated the word, firmly denying that it might be any other word. Or that he might be any other thing. Any other thing?

"No!" Denial. Why had he thought that?

Images. This time, a young, lean man wrestled with him over control of the green rubber doll, each tugging at it in different directions, himself with urgency. The handsome man pulled it towards him, while he pulled it away. He fought to tear the figure out of the man's hand with desperation, even as he pressed against the muscled body and was left weakened.

"Gumby." Frantically he thought the word as the sound began to ring in his head. Had it said, Gumby? He had covered the sound. He began to get angry. No, frightened.

He fought back more pictures, but by his forcing them away, they were swept up irresistibly into his head. He remembered and cringed, naked bodies moving together, silently. Tears rolled down his face, not in his mind.

It hadn't said Gumby, that last time. It. It was him! Or he was it. His own mind had called out that name. But he had altered the word. He watched himself naked in the image, gasping, enjoying the experience he fought against acknowledging, but which would not fade away.

He watched in his mind, that voice his own, as he pulled away from the lean, sweaty man, naked, and the sound came again. His voice. Unmasked.

"Faggot." A whisper. A forever.

Gumby was a child's toy, a past. Gumby was a lean, young male. Gumby was a part of himself he denied. Gumby reached forward and touched him and he shivered.

The End