

The day was bright and sunny as most May days tend to be
In the hills of Appalachia, down in Knoxville, Tennessee
A dozen men put on their suits and quickly took their places
In white robes and those tall and pointed hoods that hid their faces

Their feet fell down in rhythm as they started their parade
They raised their fists into the air, they bellowed and they brayed
They loved to stir the people up, they loved when they were taunted
They didn't mind the anger—it's exactly what they wanted

As they came around the corner, sure enough the people roared
But they couldn't quite believe their ears, it seemed to be... *support!*
Had Knoxville finally seen the light? Were people coming 'round?
The men thought for a moment that they'd found their kind of town

But then they turned their eyes to where the cheering had its source
As one their shoulders crumpled when they saw the mighty force
The crowd had painted faces and some had tacky clothes
Their hair and hats outrageous, each had a red foam nose

The clowns had come in numbers to enjoy the grand parade
They laughed and danced that other clowns had come to town that day
And then the marchers shouted, and the clowns all strained to hear
Each one tuned in intently with a gloved hand to an ear

"White power!" screamed the marchers, and they raised their fisted hands
The clowns leaned in and listened like they couldn't understand
Then one held up his finger and helped all the others see
The point of all this yelling, and they joined right in with glee

“White flour!” the clowns shouted, and they reached inside their clothes
They pulled out bags and tore them and huge clouds of powder rose
They poured it on each other and they threw it in the air
It got all over baggy clothes and multi-colored hair

Now all but just a few of them were joining in the jokes
You could almost see the marchers turning red beneath white cloaks
They wanted to look scary. They wanted to look tough.
One rushed right at the clowns in rage and was hauled away in cuffs

But the others chanted louder, marching on around the bend
The clowns all marched on too, of course, supporting their new friends
“White power!” came the marchers’ cry. They were not amused.
The clowns grew still and thoughtful. Well... perhaps they’d been confused?

They huddled and consulted, this bright and silly crowd
They listened quite intently, then one said “I’ve got it now!”
“White flowers!” screamed the happy clown, and all the rest joined in
The air was filled with flowers, and they laughed and danced again

“Everyone loves flowers, and white’s a pretty sort
I can’t think of a better cause for people to support!”
Green flower stems went flying like small arrows from bad archers
White petals covered everything, including the mad marchers

And then a very tall clown called the others to attention
He choked down all his chuckles and said “Friends I have to mention
That what with all this mirth and fun it’s sort of hard to hear
But now I know the cause that these paraders hold so dear...

“Tight showers!” the clown blurted and he hit his head in wonder
He held up a camp shower and the others all got under
Or at least they tried to get beneath, they strained but couldn’t quite
There wasn’t room for all of them. They pushed, but it was tight.

“White Power!” came the mad refrain, quite carefully pronounced
The clowns consulted once again, then a woman clown announced
“I’ve got it! I’m embarrassed that it took so long to see,
But what these marchers march for is a cause quite dear to me!”

“Wife power!” she exclaimed and all the other clowns joined in
They shook their heads and laughed at how erroneous they’d been
The women clowns were hoisted up on shoulders of the others
Some pulled on wedding dresses, chanting “Here’s to wives and mothers!”

The men in robes were sullen, and they knew they’d been defeated
They yelled a few more times and then they finally retreated
And when they’d gone a kind policeman turned to all the clowns
And offered them an escort through the center of the town

The day was bright and sunny as most May days tend to be
In the hills of Appalachia down in Knoxville, Tennessee
People joined the new parade. The crowd stretched out for miles
The clowns passed out more flowers and made everybody smile

And what would be the lesson of that shiny southern day?
Can we understand the message that the clowns sought to convey?
Seems that when you’re fighting hatred, hatred’s not the thing to use
So here’s to those who march on in their big red floppy shoes