



ART IN DERMATOLOGY

SKIN

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Background: In Roald Dahl's short story titled 'Skin', an old man called Drioli had his back painted and tattooed with a picture of his wife Josie brushing her hair by Chaim Soutine in 1913. Soutine was called 'the boy' then, and became famous as a painter after the war.

Observation: Drioli bought the three of them wine one night in 1913, saying he made some money and was exceptionally rich. He played on the boy's interest in his wife to strike the deal of painting and then tattooing over his back. The boy agreed when Josie was to be the model, initially thinking tattooing a painting over the back was outrageous. In 1946, when Drioli was aged and alone after the war with Josie dead, he had a sudden impulse to stroll into an art exhibition. He paraded the painting on his back to the well-dressed individuals when asked to leave, with a dealer offering to buy the skin off his back with removal via a skin grafting operation after the individuals awed at Soutine's art over his back. A man wearing expensive gloves advised that he would perish in a major operation at his age, and tempted Drioli with offers of food and wine with promises of further discussion. Drioli left with him. The story ended with Drioli's skin framed and varnished for sale a few weeks later, and his fate is left to the readers to hope for the best.

Key Message: In the era of global dermatology, the story serves as a reminder to be prudent and be against avarice when dealing with the skin, and all other matters.

