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The Scar

SCENE: *Place—somewhere nearby. Time—right now. Two men, friends, are laughing and talking, eating and drinking beer. Their names don't matter—we know who they are. MAN 1 is finishing a joke.*

MAN 1: So, the president says, "That's because I'm standing on my wife's shoulders." (LAUGHS)

MAN 2: I don't get it.

MAN 1: Don't you see, the vice president thinks the president is getting off lightly, since he's not as deep in the fire and brimstone, but it turns out the president is just as evil in hell as he was on earth!

MAN 2: Oh yeah. Ha. Yeah, that's okay. I guess I'm not into political humor. (MAN 2 REACHES FOR SOME POPCORN ON THE TABLE BETWEEN THEM, EXPOSING AN ARM-LENGTH SCAR RUNNING FROM HIS SHOULDER TO HIS WRIST. IT IS WHITE AND WIDE AND WAS OBVIOUSLY THE RESULT OF A DEEP AND HORRIFIC WOUND.)

MAN 1: Jesus! When did you do that?

MAN 2: What?

MAN 1: Get that scar. I've never seen it before.

MAN 2: Oh, yea. . . (HE FINGERS THE SCAR, NERVOUSLY AND SOMEWHAT APPRECIATIVELY.) Ha. I have no idea. I just noticed it last week.

MAN 1: No, seriously. How did you get it?

MAN 2: I tell you, I don't know. I was shaving Tuesday morning when I first saw it. I was so surprised, I cut my face.

- MAN 1: Oh, come on. You can tell me to bug off if it's embarrassing or private, but don't tell me you *don't know*. That's a serious wound; it must have been very painful.
- MAN 2: I guess it was. I honestly don't remember.
- MAN 1: Haven't you tried to find out? You must have thought about it. I can't believe you haven't thought about it.
- MAN 2: What's the big deal? It's my scar. What do you care?
- MAN 1: I'm your friend. I've known you for fourteen, fifteen years, and you walk in with a cut from. . . I don't know, a meat cleaver or something and you're too—what?—embarrassed? to tell me what happened.
- MAN 2: *I don't know* what happened. It must have been when I was very young, maybe an infant. It's been here all along and we've taken it for granted. Now, for some reason, we've noticed it. Re-noticed it, sort of. That's all.
- MAN 1: Do you think I'm stupid? I don't forget things like that.
- MAN 2: It's the only possible conclusion.
- MAN 1: Why?
- MAN 2: Because I can't think of anything else.
- MAN 1: So you just accept it?
- MAN 2: Why not? It isn't important.
- MAN 1: Because it's a lie. You know that scar wasn't there the last time I saw you. Remember? I went to give blood and you wouldn't go with me because you didn't feel like it. I grabbed your arm and joked about your healthy veins. There was no scar.
- MAN 2: Maybe it was the other arm.
- MAN 1: No, no it was that arm! I remember it distinctly. You're hiding something from me, you liar.
- MAN 2: Why are you so upset? It isn't important. I thought about it

and I can't remember. It doesn't hurt now; it really doesn't affect me. So who cares? It may as well be on your arm.

MAN 1: If it were, I'd want to know how it got there. I'd ask everyone if they knew when or where I did it. I'd ask my doctor. . . Did you ask your doctor?

MAN 2: No, I didn't. . . That's an idea. Maybe I'll ask him on my next visit.

MAN 1: Maybe? On your next visit? Let's call him now. Let's *go there*. I, we, must find out. Maybe it's not a scar. Maybe it's cancer. Maybe it's eating you, spreading through your body. Maybe it's killing you. We must find out. Let me look at it closer.

MAN 2: No, it's just a scar; I'm sure of it.

MAN 1: Let me see! (HE GRABS MAN 2'S ARM AND EXAMINES IT WHILE MAN 2 LOOKS AWAY, BORED.) It's so deep. If it is a scar, it must have happened some time ago to have healed by now.

MAN 2: See? I told you.

MAN 1: But I tell you it wasn't there last week. How can you be sure it's a scar, if you don't even know when you got it?

MAN 2: It *looks* like a scar. You said so yourself.

MAN 1: What if it isn't?

MAN 2: So what? If it's a scar, it's a scar. If it's a cancer, I'm going to die. Well, I'm going to die anyway, so why worry about it?

MAN 1: Because maybe you can fight it.

MAN 2: Ugh. Strapped into a bed, tubes all over my body, hair falling out, eating with veins instead of my mouth, a bottle supplying food, drop by drop. I'd rather die in peace, with dignity.

MAN 1: Don't be so dramatic.

MAN 2: Well I would.

MAN 1: Who says you have to die? Maybe they can cut it out. Maybe it's not cancer. Maybe it's something else.

MAN 2: Like a scar.

MAN 1: Maybe it's something else.

MAN 2: Like what?

MAN 1: I don't know. Let's call the doctor and find out.

MAN 2: No there's no reason for it. I really don't want to know.

MAN 1: Why not?

MAN 2: It's too much trouble. I have other things to do.

MAN 1: God damn it, I want to know! What if it's not a cancer? What if it's a contagious disease? What if I get one?

MAN 2: Then you can find out for yourself.

MAN 1: Selfish pig.

MAN 2: Well what do you want me to do? It's too late now.

MAN 1: (GASPS) It probably is! (INSPECTS HIS ARMS.) What if it's a deadly virus? There could be an epidemic.

MAN 2: I'm only one man. What can I do? I've already got it.

MAN 1: Do something, anything. Act! Act! Act!

MAN 2: It's only a scar, for chrissake. Scars don't go away; scars aren't contagious; wounds may be fatal, but scars only happen when the wound is not. Why don't you calm down, have another drink?

MAN 1: You. . . you are not going to pacify me. I want to know what that is, where it came from.

MAN 2: Well, you can't.

- MAN 1: So you *do* know! Tell me, or I'll kill you.
- MAN 2: *Now* who's being dramatic? If you do that, then you'll never know, will you?
- MAN 1: I don't care; it's the principle.
- MAN 2: Principle, shminciple. Besides, that's not why you can't know.
- MAN 1: Why?
- MAN 2: Because it's a mystery, an enigma. Like those people who bleed like Jesus.
- MAN 1: That's no mystery. There are medical reasons.
- MAN 2: Some say.
- MAN 1: There are! Just as there's a medical reason for your scar. How can you call it an *enigma* when you won't even see a doctor?
- MAN 2: Don't you see? It was meant to *be*, not to be explained. It is a miracle. It's a mystery for the ages, like the appearance of Mary in that church in Kansas.
- MAN 1: Are you crazy? It's just a scar!
- MAN 2: Maybe.
- MAN 1: You're making a mountain out of a molehill.
- MAN 2: *Me?*
- MAN 1: Yes. I just asked you where the scar came from, and you've built it into a religious experience.
- MAN 2: Only because you wouldn't accept the truth.
- MAN 1: You haven't told me the truth.
- MAN 2: Yes I did. The truth is, "I don't know."
- MAN 1: That's no truth.

MAN 2: Are you saying it's a lie?

MAN 1: I'm saying ignorance is not a substitute for truth.

MAN 2: No, it isn't a substitute. It *is* the truth.

MAN 1: Never. It can't be.

MAN 2: Take it or leave it.

MAN 1: Fine, I'm leaving. Good bye.

MAN 2: Don't you want to discuss it some more?

MAN 1: I'm getting nowhere with you.

MAN 2: Let's talk some more. We can accomplish something.
We can come to an understanding.

MAN 1: I'm going to ask around, find out for myself.

MAN 2: Will you let me know what you find out?

MAN 1: No. Find out on your own. Good bye.

MAN 2: Well, suit yourself. Have a nice day.

MAN 1: I hope you choke on it. (MAN 1 LEAVES, SLAMMING
DOOR.)

MAN 2: (LOOKING AT SCAR.) Maybe it will go away if I ignore it.

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