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A Scar that Scares me

by Victoria Cooper

It runs from the outer edge of my left eyebrow, travels across the cheekbone and stops sharply at the curve of my top lip.

I notice that the postman stares at it, even directing his “sign here mate” to it, but the bus driver and the woman on the fish counter with the purple streaked hair, like others, avoid it. They stare deep into my eyes as if to convey with their own that they see nothing but a man buying a couple of mackerel fillets. I smile at them all in the same reply, “Look, go on, look.

It does not bother me if they stare, I am disappointed by their politeness, it smacks of disinterest; something that can hurt more than the memory.

Walking home in the chill evening hoarfrost, watching the lighting of each street light lifts my mood and eyes, but the yellow glow does me no favours. The scar misshapes my ghoulish profile and I see children tug at their mother’s coats questioning or pointing. The embarrassed shushing and quickened steps slop down my insides like slime. At least the children are honest.

By the time I have reached the front door I have forgotten anyway, for the scar they see is my bulwark of diversion. Sometimes Janet in the mobile library refers to me as “our regular Harry Potter” but mostly it stops all intimacy gratefully.

Looking up from unbuttoning my coat the reflection in the hall mirror tells me what all the others do not tell; there is always more. Mirrors do lie, they also prod, shove, push and cut. They show a side of me I do not wish to view and it is one that neither children nor bus drivers will ever see. I hide those scars that gave relief in their formation, under hot sticking shirtsleeves in heatwaves.

I turn away from the scars made from broken light bulbs, nail clippers and pen knives. They scare me of times back then and I have to avert my gaze.