

## **Show Me Your Scars** by Sarah Clewer

One.

He was at school and she wasn't. She was on the side of the road and needed some food. Just before she crossed, a man ran behind her and pushed.

She grazed her knees and lost almost every layer of skin on her kneecap.

Three stitches in the left knee.

Two.

She had just lost her mother. He was sitting an exam. All she wanted was to die. She was on the bridge and looking at the road. The cars raced by below, a stream of red and silver. If she just took one more step, everything would be over.

"Miss, what are you doing?" She turned at the call. Her foot slipped, and she fell. She could hear him calling out to her, but she didn't care. This was what she wanted.

Ten stitches in her side and five in her arm. She was away from school for weeks.

Three.

He was at his finals and she wasn't. She hadn't been to enough classes. She'd dropped out. This time she was standing in front of her bathroom mirror, a blade in her hand. She was slowly squeezing it, revelling in the warmth of blood running down her palm.

Her aunty rushed into the room and pulled the blade out of her hand. It had almost touched the bone.

Six stitches in her palm.

Four.

She was at their shared home and he was at uni. She was moving a glass bowl and tripped. The bowl shattered, and she fell on top of the glass.

Eight stitches in her back, two on each cut of the glass.

Five.

A knife and her wrist. Need more be said?

No stitches, just a scar.

Six.

Her auntie's funeral. A glass bottle and one too many drinks.

Six stitches in her other palm.

Seven.

She was in church. Alone. Her head hurt. She ran her finger along the scars on her hands and wrist. Then she ran her finger along the scar-free wrist. She raised her head.

No stitches, but a fresh scar.

Eight.

They'd broken up. She'd stepped on three shards of glass. Her head pounded. A look in mirror told her everything.

Four stitches in her forehead.

"Caitlyn! Wait up!" She turned, hair sweeping across the scar on her forehead. He was running toward her, out of breath.

"Hi, Joel. What's wrong?" She leaned forward to peer into his face. He had bent down breathless as soon as he caught up. He looked tired.

"Caitlyn, I've realised something very important. I still love you, even if you are terribly quiet. Will you stay with me?" She brushed her blonde hair from her eyes, ensuring it covered her scar. Her fingerless gloves hid the other four. She was wearing a long-sleeved shirt and her jeans covered her knee.

"I'll give us another chance. But I don't want anything to ruin us, not again." He smiled, then took her hand. She felt the pressure of his hand on her scar, and for once it felt right.

Nine.

Her depression returned. He was at work, and she was walking. A dog ran past her, barking its head off, and she followed it.

A low hanging branch caught her cheek. It struck deep.

One stitch in her cheek.

Ten.

She was at home and he was at work again. She was watching Peter Pan. A noise made her pause the movie and look around.

A robber was in her house, brandishing a knife. She tried to scare him into dropping the knife, but he turned too quickly, and she caught the knife with her elbow.

Five stitches in her left elbow.

She had almost had enough. She had a gun, and the door was locked. Everything was right, he was shopping, and she was alone. Her plans just weren't fully thought through.

"Caitlyn? I think the door's jammed. Caitlyn?" He had gotten home early. She rolled her eyes and sighed. Closing her eyes, she tried to ignore his voice.

The key turned in the lock. The doorknob turned. The door opened. His footsteps. A warm hand on her wrist.

“Dear Lord, Caitlyn. What are you doing?” Taking the gun, he put it on the table, out of her reach. Taking hold of her shoulders, he looked into her eyes.

“Caitlyn, talk to me. What’s wrong?” A tear rolled down her cheek. She touched her fingers to her wedding ring, then felt for his. Sighing, she opened her eyes and looked into his intense green ones.

“Joel, you wouldn’t understand.” She shrugged his hands off her shoulders and stood up.

Walking to their room, she sat on the bed and waited for him to follow her. He walked into the room and opened the curtains. Then he sat beside her and put his arm around her shoulders.

“You know, I always thought you had small shoulders. Even when we were kids, I would think, ‘hey, that girl’s shoulders are tiny’.” She smiled. He pressed his lips to her shoulder.

“If you don’t talk to me, I’ll never understand.” She turned to look at him, then sighed.

“I’m tired of this life. Nothing interesting is going on, and I’m horribly clumsy.” He chuckled.

“Joel, please let me do this. I just don’t see why I need to keep living when fate so obviously wants me to stop. You don’t know how many times you weren’t there for me.” He took her face in his hands.

“Show me your scars,” he said.

“But... Why?” she asked quizzically.

“I want to see how many times you needed me and I wasn’t there,” he whispered, a tear rolling down his cheek.

Her eyes widened, then she nodded slightly and picked up a hairclip from the bedside table. She pinned back her hair, showing the scar on her forehead. She used a wipe and cleaned the makeup off her face. She removed the makeup from her hands and wrists, took off her blouse, and removed her tracksuit pants. Then she took off her socks and lifted her feet.

His eyes widened as he took in the scars.

Forehead.

Cheek.

Wrists.

Hands.

Elbow.

Side.

Knee.

Foot.

She turned so he could see her back. His hands traced the four scars spanning her shoulder blades.

“My God.” She looked at him, tears brimming in both their eyes. He took hold of her hand and kissed the scar on her palm, then kissed the scar on her wrist, keeping eye contact the whole time.

Unspoken words that said everything. She could see now he wasn't going to leave, and he wished he had been there. She pulled him into a close embrace and whispered into his ear.

“Thank you”