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Blemish

Kimberly is feeling very sorry for herself as she lies in the hospital with a severe facial injury, until she meets someone who shows her that beauty is really about what's inside a person. . . .

by Eric Alter

Characters

KIMBERLY, 15

DR. TARA LEVINE, *late 30s*

KELSEY, 15

TIME: *The present.*

SETTING: *A hospital room. There is a bed with a table next to it, on which are a couple of vases of flowers, a small hand mirror, and a cell phone.*

AT RISE: *Lying in the bed is KIMBERLY. One side of her face is covered by bandages. She picks up the mirror and stares into it, then quickly puts it down. She tries to maneuver the bandage a little so she can see, but the bandage won't budge. After a beat, she picks up the mirror again, looks at it, then quickly put it down. A few second later DR. TARA LEVINE enters.*

DR. LEVINE: Good morning, Kimberly.

KIMBERLY (*Glumly*): Is it?

DR. LEVINE: Is it what?

KIMBERLY: A good morning?

DR. LEVINE: Well, for one thing, you're finally going home!

KIMBERLY (*Somewhat surprised*): I am?

DR. LEVINE: Yes. I just need to check the area again.

KIMBERLY: Why do you call it "the area"?

DR. LEVINE: What would you like me to call it?

KIMBERLY: The most horrific ugly scar you've ever seen. . .all because of some stupid dog.

DR. LEVINE: O.K., once I check the "most horrific ugliest scar I've ever seen. . .all because of some stupid dog"—you can go home. (*In spite of herself, KIMBERLY manages a smile.*)

DR. LEVINE continues.) I called your mom. She'll be here in about an hour.

KIMBERLY (*Softer, almost to herself*): The longer the better. Do. . . (*Pause*) do I have to go home?

DR. LEVINE (*Nodding slowly*): You do.

KIMBERLY (*Shaking her head*): I don't want to go home.

DR. LEVINE: Well, that would be a first. Most people can't wait to get out of here.

KIMBERLY: I'd rather stay.

DR. LEVINE: How come?

KIMBERLY (*With a shrug*): I just would.

DR. LEVINE (*Slowly nodding*): How does it feel?

KIMBERLY: It's still sore.

DR. LEVINE: Probably will be for a while. (*Nodding*) Let's have a look, shall we?

KIMBERLY: Do we have to?

DR. LEVINE (*Smiling*): I think so. I have to have a look before you leave.

KIMBERLY: Can we just maybe wait until my mom comes?

DR. LEVINE (*Nodding*): Sure, if you'd prefer that. But eventually I have to see it.

KIMBERLY: Right.

DR. LEVINE (*Looking over KIMBERLY's face*): I was worried about your eye. (*Pause*) You're so lucky it missed that.

KIMBERLY: I don't feel lucky.

DR. LEVINE: Well, that dog could have done some real damage to your eye.

KIMBERLY: The dog did real damage to my face. (*DR. LEVINE pulls back from her face.*)

DR. LEVINE: Listen, Kimberly, I know you're in pain—both physically and emotionally—

KIMBERLY:—My face. . . it's going to be horrible.

DR. LEVINE: In time. . . (*Pause*) in time it will—

KIMBERLY: When it heals fully there's going to be a scar, isn't there?

DR. LEVINE: Yes. But. . . I don't know how it's going to look. I've been doing this a while. I specialize in facial—

KIMBERLY:—Deformities?

DR. LEVINE: In facial injuries. Was what I was going to say. Now— (*Hands KIMBERLY a tube of cream*) you'll take the bandages off tomorrow morning, and then this cream goes on every single morning and night. You're going to do this for two weeks, O.K.? (*KIMBERLY doesn't say a word. DR. LEVINE looks at her long, then she checks her watch.*) All right. I have to check on another patient, and I'll be back in a few minutes to show you how to take off the bandages. In the meantime I'm going to send in one of the candy stripers. She works here on the weekends, and she always helps me get patients ready to head home. She's really great, her name is Kelsey. She's your age, a sophomore. She goes to school in Springfield. And she's a cheerleader just like you. Would that be O.K.?

KIMBERLY: I guess. (*DR. LEVINE nods and exits. KIMBERLY picks up the mirror again, and she just looks at it long. Speaking out*) Mirror, mirror in my hand. . . who's the ugliest in all the land. (*After a moment, KELSEY walks in. On one side of her face is what's known as a port wine stain. It almost looks as though part of her face is badly sunburned.*)

KELSEY (*Brightly*): Hi, you must be Kimberly. I'm Kelsey. (*KIMBERLY is slightly caught off guard by KELSEY's appearance. KELSEY extends her hand. After an awkward pause, KIMBERLY extends her hand.*)

KIMBERLY: Hello.

KELSEY: So today's the big day, huh?

KIMBERLY: What?

KELSEY: You get out today. You get to go home. Personally, I don't know how anyone eats the food in this place for a long time. (*KIMBERLY is just staring at KELSEY. . . albeit trying not to stare.*) About the only thing edible is the ice cream. (*KELSEY laughs.*) Promise not to tell anyone? But occasionally, when one of the older patients doesn't eat their ice cream sandwich—well, once in a while I eat it. (*Laughs, but KIMBERLY doesn't respond*) Are you O.K.?

KIMBERLY (*Startled by her noticing*): Yeah—sorry.

KELSEY: So. . . where do you go to high school?

KIMBERLY: What? Oh, um. . . Columbia.

KELSEY: I go to Springfield. We played you guys in football. I think you beat us like 42-0. We stink.

KIMBERLY: Yeah.

KELSEY: And you're a cheerleader?

KIMBERLY: I was.

KELSEY: Oh, I'm captain of the junior varsity squad. We're not bad. Just the teams we root for are. (*Laughs*)

KIMBERLY (*Laughing*): You are?

KELSEY (*Smiling*): Yeah. I've been cheering since I was 5. I love it! (*KIMBERLY continues to stare at her. KELSEY continues, feeling the weight of KIMBERLY's stare.*) Is something wrong?

KIMBERLY: Um—your. . . I'm sorry. Not to be rude, but—your um. . . (*Pointing*)

KELSEY (*Re: pointing*): Is there something on my shirt?

KIMBERLY: No, your ah. . .

KELSEY (*Overly exaggerating*): Oh-h-h! My face.

KIMBERLY: Yeah, sorry, it's just that—

KELSEY: Just that what?

KIMBERLY: Nothing. I'm sorry.

KELSEY (*Smiling*): Well, if you must know, I was at the beach the other day, and I fell asleep on my back and the sun totally burned my face. I had a towel on one side and the other side just got totally burned.

KIMBERLY: Really?

KELSEY (*Smiling*): No.

KIMBERLY: Oh. (*KELSEY sits down on the end of the bed and looks at KIMBERLY long.*)

KELSEY (*Smiling*): It's O.K. I have something called port wine stain.

KIMBERLY: What's that? Is it contagious?!

KELSEY (*Laughing*): No. But in some ways—maybe. More about that in a second. It's just a birthmark. It happens to 3 out of 1000 babies. And no, it's nothing my mother did while she was pregnant. (*Laughs*) They usually result from abnormally formed tiny blood vessels under your skin. (*Pause, then stops*) Without getting all technical. . .it's just luck of the draw.

KIMBERLY: Luck?

KELSEY: When I was younger, I used to tell all the kids my mom ate a lot of cherries. I think it freaked out some of the kids, because from then on like no one ever ate cherries. My mom had to sit me down one night and tell me to stop saying that.

KIMBERLY (*Not sure what to say*): O.K.

KELSEY: You're absolutely beautiful, did you know that?

KIMBERLY: What? No.

KELSEY (*Nodding slowly*): Yeah, you do. Do you have a boyfriend? I do.

KIMBERLY (*Slightly surprised*): You do? I mean—you do?

KELSEY (*Nodding*): Yeah, we've been together since last year. His name is Connor.

KIMBERLY: My boyfriend and I broke up recently, all because of this stupid dog and this stupid face.

KELSEY (*Puzzled*): O.K., that was a little weird. What do you mean a stupid

dog and your face?

KIMBERLY: So I have this dog, a small poodle, and—

KELSEY: —Name? I must know this cute little dog's name before this story can continue! (*KIMBERLY manages a small smile.*)

KIMBERLY: Pepper.

KELSEY: Ah! Pepper! Love it! So—go on. No, wait—and the ex-boyfriend's name?

KIMBERLY: Scott.

KELSEY: I assume the flowers are from him.

KIMBERLY: Yes. So he was supposed to come over and we were going to go the movies, but he texted me that he was going to be late. . .so I decided to take Pepper for a walk, and I went to the park and this dog that wasn't on a leash came running over and started attacking Pepper.

KELSEY: No!

KIMBERLY: Yes! And I'm screaming and I can hear Pepper screaming, so I reached down and tried pulling this dog off of Pepper and now the dog is biting me all over, and he takes a huge chunk off of my face and then he starts biting me all over.

KELSEY: Oh, my God. That's horrible.

KIMBERLY: And I am screaming, and finally the owner comes over and puts the dog on a leash, and the entire side of my face is bleeding. . .it's almost as if I could feel the skin peeling off. And then the ambulance came. Both Pepper and I went to the doctors.