

Scarface and the Angel

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young adults

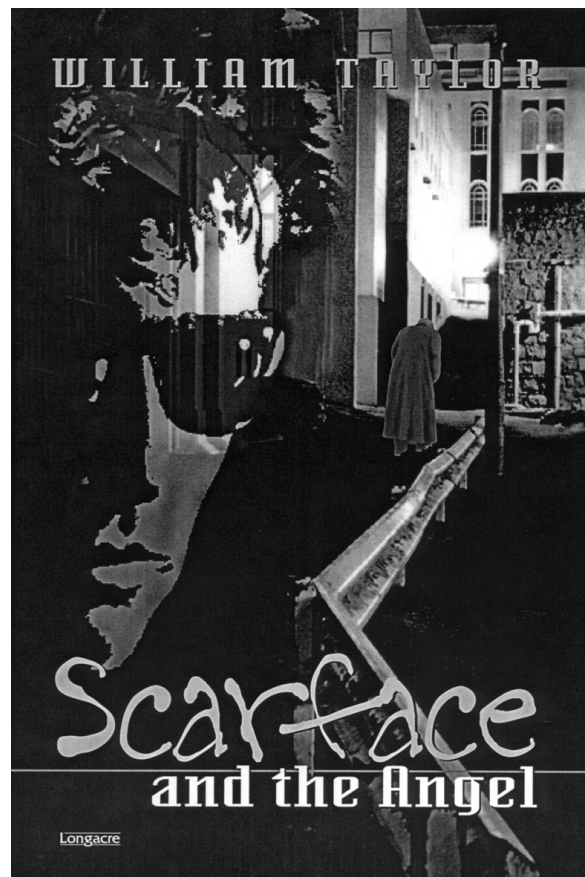
by William Taylor

If it is your intention to knock me on the head, boy, kindly get it over and done with. If it is robbery you're bent on, I might as well warn you the pickings will be slim, scarce worth your effort...

There are two sides to Damon. You can see it in his face – Good Face, Bad Face. But which is the true Damon? The one who hits first and asks questions later? Or the one who acts out of kindness?

When the mysterious Esther enters his life, Damon finds his mask beginning to slip. And even he doesn't know what he'll find behind it.

Good Face. Bad Face. Good Face. Bad Face. Same Face? One Face?



Resource Kit

for use in schools

INCLUDES:

- Author's comment
- Chapter-by-chapter study
- Comprehension/discussion exercises
- Debating, essay and research topics
- Extension projects and activities
- Vocabulary exercises

At The Big Red Rooster is published by

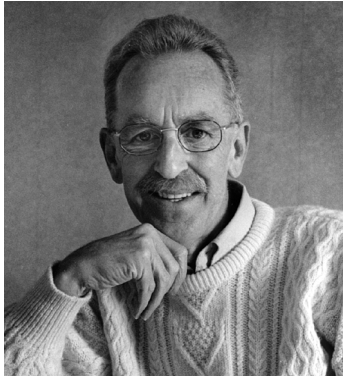
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Author's Comment

There are several avenues that I explore in this novel. I guess that paramount in this regard there is my feeling that while human disability in any form may disadvantage a person there is, generally, more than one way in which such disability may be overcome, accepted and, in some instances, put towards positive ends.

I guess the old adage 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder' is also explored. I have a feeling that the old woman in the story, Esther, genuinely did not regard Damon's affliction as being a particularly important impediment. While of course she could 'see' Damon's damaged face it was certainly not in the sense of believing that it was sufficiently material to prevent the young man leading a perfectly satisfactory life. Esther was far more concerned at what lay beneath the surface. This can, obviously, lead to a further age-old adage: 'beauty is only skin-deep, ugliness goes right to the bone'!

* * *

Several years ago now I was speaking in a suburban library in Auckland. The librarian said to me that she hoped that a certain old lady did not turn up when the time came for me to read to a fairly large group of intermediate-age school pupils. I asked why. She told me that the previous week my very good friend and fellow writer, the late Gaelyn Gordon, had visited to read to younger children her marvellous book, *Duckat*. The reading had proceeded, rather noisily punctuated by an elderly lady counting the contents of a large sack of aluminium softdrink cans. The librarian asked the lady if she would mind not sorting through and counting her treasure trove. 'I'll stop counting,' said the old lady, 'when that strange creature over there stops quacking like a duck and mewing like a cat.' From that small 'seed' has grown my novel, *Scarface and the Angel*.

WILLIAM TAYLOR

Chapter-by-Chapter Study

CHAPTER ONE

- What is a stopwork? How does it differ from a strike?
- What is Damon's initial attitude to the elderly woman at the library?
- What is Damon's attitude to the librarian?
- Is Damon following the old woman out of curiosity, or is some other emotion or motivation involved? How can we tell?
- At this point in the story, what might the reader conclude about Damon's decision to wear sunglasses?
- How would you describe the atmosphere of the city setting on pages 11-12?
- How does this atmosphere appear to affect Damon?

CHAPTER TWO

- At the start of the chapter, why does Damon react as if he has been shot?
- Why does the elderly woman say he might be 'seriously disturbed'?
- What messages about the elderly woman does her accommodation seem to give us?
- What is odd about the way the elderly woman fills her kettle?
- How does she know Damon's name?
- Why does she feel her house is a palace?
- Why does Damon finally agree to take off his glasses?
- Why does he respond so angrily to Esther's comment when she can see his eyes?

CHAPTER THREE

- When did Damon get his facial scars?
- What is Damon's explanation for the damaged surface of his face?
- How can we tell that Esther is a modest person?
- How did Damon's grandparents die? Does Damon seem upset?
- Why does Esther give Damon the pot plant?
- What links the cracked bowl, Esther's coat and the three-legged cat?
- Why does the jagged crack on the bowl seem 'strangely familiar' to Damon?

CHAPTER FOUR

- Reread page 23. Find other similes to describe Damon's scar which could convey the same ideas.
- When Damon looks in the mirror, what issues are most important to him?
- How does Damon try to hide his scars?
- Is there any sign, in this chapter, that one day Damon might accept the scars?

CHAPTER FIVE

- Who usually complains about Esther at the library? Why do they complain?
- What makes Mrs Henderson think that Damon is getting smart with her?
- When Damon tracks Esther this time, how can we tell that he feels differently about her, even before she is assaulted by the other pedestrians?
- Why does the young man insult Esther?
- Why does Damon suddenly want to go home?

CHAPTER SIX

- Where does Esther come from?
- Describe her past, basing your answer on pages 32-33.
- Why doesn't Damon go to school any more?
- How is Queen Marie of Romania related to English royalty, according to Esther?
- What does Damon's mother advise him to do?
- What does the Biblical saying on page 34 mean?
- Why does Damon say he couldn't follow the Bible's advice?
- Why exactly was Damon expelled from his last school?
- Why does Damon think he isn't a bully?
- Why doesn't Damon mind working alone?
- What do you think of Damon's reaction to the three-legged cat?
- Look at the argument between Good Face and Bad Face on page 38. Does either side win here? Justify your response.

CHAPTER SEVEN

- Why does Damon leave the café just as he starts to tell Esther the truth in this chapter?
- The final section between Good and Bad Face in this chapter is very short. What effect does this have?

CHAPTER EIGHT

- Is it the Good Face or the Bad Face that drives Damon to fight with people who abuse him? Explain your answer.
- What seems to be Damon's opinion of the Shakespeare play *Romeo and Juliet*?
- How does Damon pay for his designer clothes?
- What new details do we find out about Esther's past here?
- What questions from Damon reveal that he has begun to grow fond of Esther?

CHAPTER NINE

- Why is Damon so shocked to see Esther near the public rubbish bins?
- Why does Damon keep trying to find Esther?
- What promise does Esther make, and why isn't Damon satisfied?
- What does Esther think friendship involves?

CHAPTER TEN

- How did Damon really get the scars?
- How does his mother earn money?
- Did you expect Esther to be shocked? Do you think she is? Give reasons why or why not.
- How has Damon's and his mother's lifestyle changed over the years?
- Why are Damon's scars so bad?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

- What might the attention Damon pays to the geranium say about his personality?
- What does Damon think Esther is arguing about his scar?
- How does he think her age affects her opinion of his scars?
- What does he think her reaction would have been if it had happened to her when she was a young dancer?

CHAPTER TWELVE

- How do Damon's and Esther's reactions to the demolition of buildings near Esther's home differ?
- Who are the butchers that Damon refers to on page 67?
- What is Damon saving up for?
- Why does Damon laugh about the stories of his father?
- Why did Damon's uncle and grandparents shun Damon's mother?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

- What did Damon's grandparents do when they first heard that his mother was pregnant?
- In what ways was Damon's mother strong, according to Esther?
- To which experiences might Esther be referring, when she says she understands how Damon feels (page 74)?
- What conclusion does Damon's mother make about the anonymous gift of money, and what factors help her to reach this conclusion?

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

- Why is the store assistant dubious about Damon's interest in the coat?
- Why is Esther using a primus and a gas stove?
- Why does Damon go outside to smoke at Esther's?
- Why won't Esther accept a gift of footwear from Damon?
- What do you believe is the gift of 'even greater value and worth' referred to by Esther?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

- What positive reason does Damon give for staying away from school?
- What concerns Mrs Henderson about his absences from school?
- Why does Damon turn down the offer of a part time job at the library?
- Why is Patsy from the library's children's book section so shocked about Esther's coat?

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

- What do you imagine the pins from Esther's coat are made from?
- Why has Damon noticed the small mirror?
- Why do you think Esther might have left this behind?

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

- Why does the young man want to kill Tumbler?
- Why does Damon save the cat?
- What makes Damon think he's seen Esther?
- Do you feel that Damon's character has changed by the time we reach the end of the novel? Explain.

Comprehension/Discussion

- Do you believe Damon ever intended to harm Esther at the start of the novel?
- What does the city setting add to the start of the novel? Could the same events in Chapters One and Two have happened in a small town or country setting?
- What do you think about Damon's attitude to girls? (See particularly pages 24-25.)
- Damon believes most of society is prejudiced against him because of his scars. Does Damon have his own prejudices? Explain.
- Why do you think the author has made Damon open up to an elderly woman?
- What are all the elements in the novel that the title refers to?
- Are Damon's violent responses understandable? Explain.
- In groups of three or four, list what happens at the end of every chapter in the novel. Discuss how the chapter breaks affect the pace of the story, how they build up your expectations, lead to surprises, or even to disappointment. In class, compare each group's thoughts on the structure of the novel. Would you have chosen the same places for chapter breaks, or would you have chosen other points? Why?

Debating

- Divide into teams and argue for and against the following topics, referring directly to the novel if it suits your argument.

'No child should be allowed to study independently, away from the school system. It leads to isolation and an inability to cope with social life.'

'Generation and cultural gaps can never be crossed completely.'

'Violence always breeds violence.'

Essay Topics

'This novel is about how physical scars and emotional scars are very different things.'

- Do you agree or disagree?

*'No saint, definitely a demon: the young Damon in William Taylor's **Scarface and the Angel** never recovers from his past. This novel is about the permanent effects of violence on small children.'*

- Use these two statements to help you write a review of the novel. (You might agree with both, neither, or only one of the comments.)
- Write an essay about how Esther and Damon are similar.

Research

- Find out as much as you can about Romania and Romany Gypsies. Use this information to help describe Esther.
- Find out as much as you can about the Acropolis in Greece. Use this information to explain why Damon laughs at the stories about his father.
- Find out as much as you can about Sir Galahad. Use this information to explain why Esther calls Damon Sir Galahad.

Combined Visual and Comprehension Responses

- Design a mask that symbolises the good and bad sides of Damon’s character, or of your own personality. Imagine this mask is going to be exhibited in an art gallery. Write an entry for an exhibition guide, explaining how the book led to the art work and what each part of the mask design represents.
- Design a new front and back cover for the novel. For the illustration, choose elements from the story that depict the characters, objects, or events that you think would encourage people to read the book. For the back cover, write a blurb that explains what the story is about, but which leaves enough mystery so that the reader is keen to pick up the book and read it.
- Design a mirror frame based on the description on page 89. In the middle of this frame, mount a one-page description of Damon, told from his own point of view.

Vocabulary Exercises

CROSSWORD

- Find dictionary definitions of all the words listed below. (All of them appear at some stage in the novel.)
- **Design a crossword**, using the words below as the answers to the clues. Try to make the questions as challenging as possible. If you want, you can relate these to the events of the novel.

homily	miniscule
intricacies	complexion
fossicking	vehemence
reverie	nictate
unguents	cicatrice
multi-purpose	satiated
derelict	compelled
salutary	uncanny
slaking	interloper

PALINDROMES

A palindrome is ‘a word, verse, or sentence that reads the same backwards as it does forwards.’

One example: ‘Step on no pets.’

- Damon’s name could form part of a sentence-long palindrome. Either using Damon/Nomad, or any other words that you can think of, try to write at least one palindromic sentence.

Drama

- Reread the scene from Chapter Two where Damon first follows Esther. In pairs, imagine Damon’s thoughts as he tracks her through the city. Write a dialogue between the Good Face/Bad Face sides to Damon’s character. Perform this in front of the class.
- In pairs, reread Damon’s monologue about his past, and rewrite it without using any swearing. Take turns performing each version. Decide which version is more powerful. Debate this issue as a whole class.
- Write a short scene where two police officers, suspicious of Damon’s intentions, follow Damon and Esther back to Esther’s accommodation. Imagine that the police question them both, and what the responses would be. Perform this in front of the class.

Creative

- Rewrite Chapter One from Esther’s perspective.
- Write a magazine article based on an accident you, or someone close to you, has experienced.
- Imagine that Esther does carry other souvenirs or small treasures with her, hidden in her coat pockets. Write a short story which tells us how one or two of the trinkets became hers.
- Write a poem about the end of the friendship between Esther and Damon.
- Write the words to a pop song, sung from Damon’s point of view, either
 - about his scars
 - about the abuse he gets at school
 - about his mother’s life or
 - about how other people treat Esther.
- Find a photograph of an elderly person – preferably from a magazine, a newspaper, or a book of photography. Describe what sort of life you imagine they might have led.
- Is there anything about your appearance that you dislike? Write about this aspect of yourself, and compare it to the way Damon feels about his scars.