

Pamela Miller

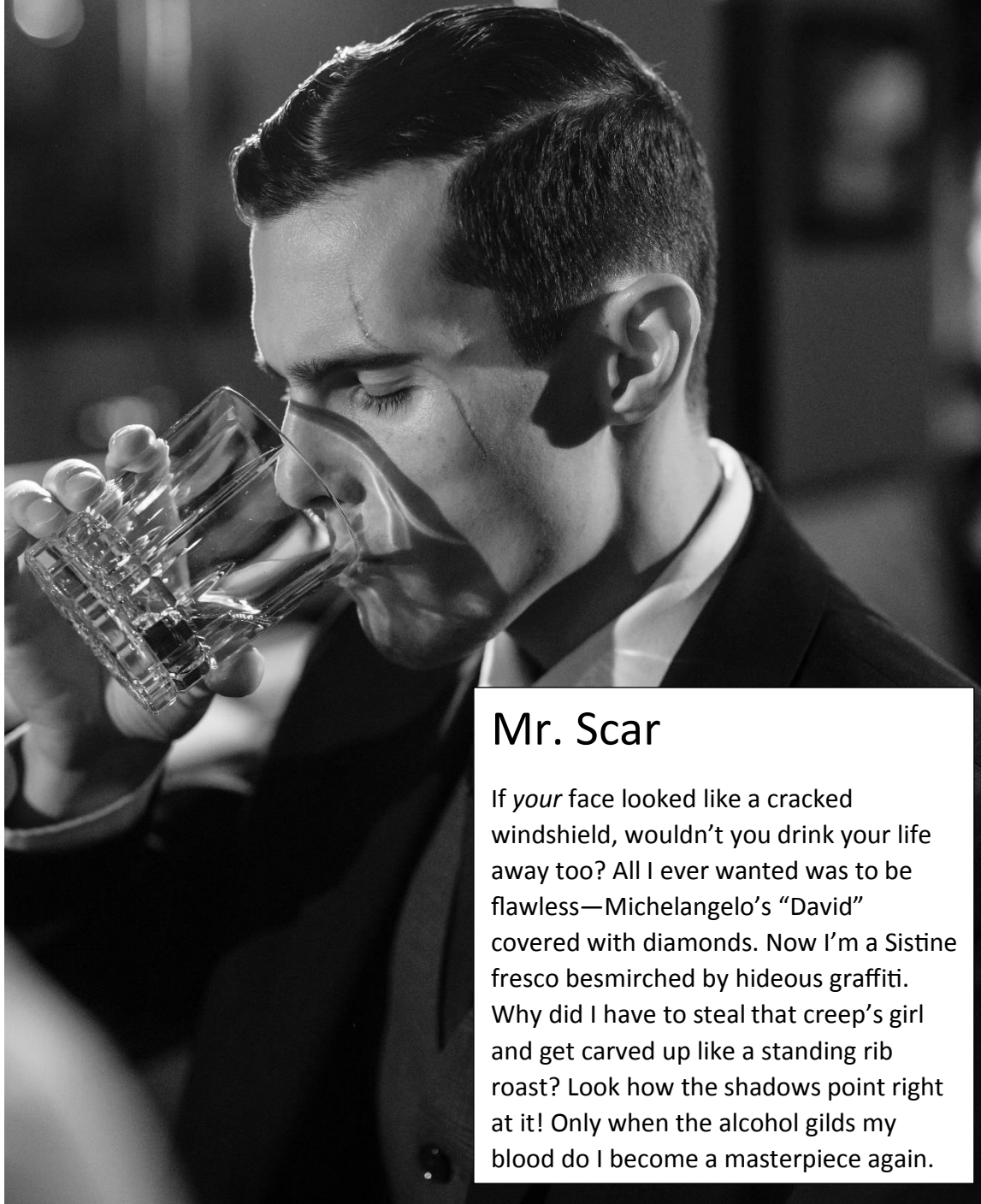
Photo by Maelle Ramsay on StockSnap



## Mr. Bent Out of Shape

Mom always told me I'd have to bend over backwards to make it. So I tried it one night at a gig in San Francisco and—*oh, fuck!* Something inside me snapped like a broken E string. Five years later I still can't straighten up, my locked body arched like a Japanese bridge. Thank Jesus I can still play my ax! The roadies bear me onstage on their shoulders, place me gently on the floor like a three-legged stool. But when the lights come up, I'm warped and proud. I defy you to tell me I don't tower sky-high as I roar my afflicted anthem up to God.

Photo by cottonbro from Pexels



## Mr. Scar

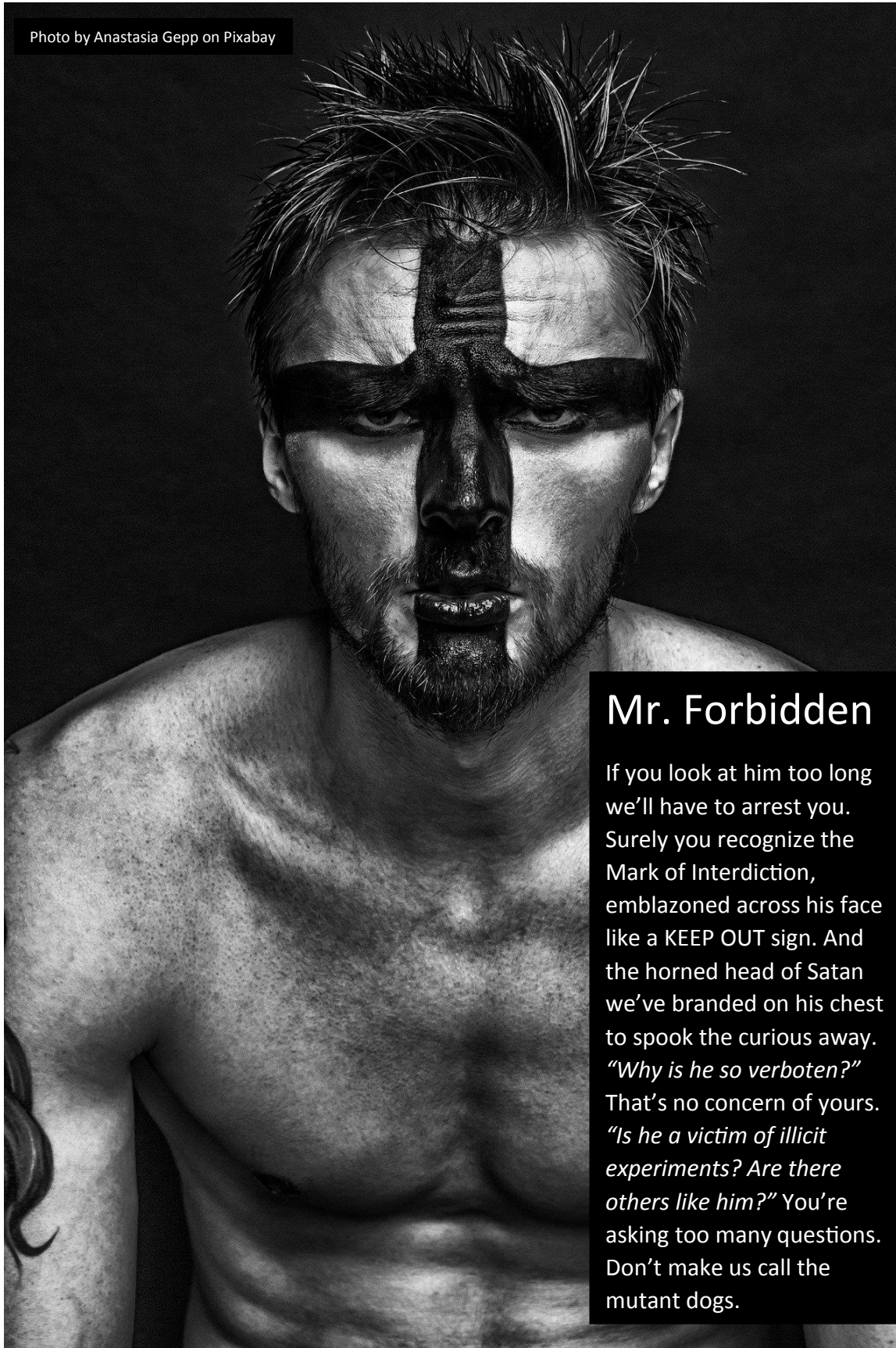
If *your* face looked like a cracked windshield, wouldn't you drink your life away too? All I ever wanted was to be flawless—Michelangelo's "David" covered with diamonds. Now I'm a Sistine fresco besmirched by hideous graffiti. Why did I have to steal that creep's girl and get carved up like a standing rib roast? Look how the shadows point right at it! Only when the alcohol gilds my blood do I become a masterpiece again.



## Mr. Make 'em Happy

This lady hadn't laughed for eleven years till I twiddled her earlobe with my tongue. I once stopped a man from leaping off a ledge by stroking him with a parakeet. Now he beams like a halogen lamp. Sad people are merely houseplants some black thumb neglects to water. Every morning I kiss my hands for an hour to rev up my comforting touch. Now tell me: What forlorn part of *you* can I delight?

Photo by Anastasia Gepp on Pixabay



## Mr. Forbidden

If you look at him too long we'll have to arrest you. Surely you recognize the Mark of Interdiction, emblazoned across his face like a KEEP OUT sign. And the horned head of Satan we've branded on his chest to spook the curious away. *"Why is he so verboten?"* That's no concern of yours. *"Is he a victim of illicit experiments? Are there others like him?"* You're asking too many questions. Don't make us call the mutant dogs.

## Mr. Delusional

There's a nest of Venusians hidden in the walls. Their incessant writhing rattles the house all night. Why did their dastardly planet send them here to torment me? I've been hunting them for months with a Venusodetector I built myself, my hands urgently gloved against stray radiation. My boss has stopped calling to ask why I'm not at work. My wife left me when I bought the flamethrower. Their gleaming green bodies are a buried treasure I must excavate before it's too late. For God's sake, they're all I've got left.

