

- Amon** You got that right.
- (Silence)*
- Little Man** Grown ups can be a real disappointment. Like finding out there ain't no Santa Claus.
- Amon** Or that your favorite rap star don't even write his own stuff.
- Little Man** Or that those toys you see on television don't do half the stuff they suppose to do when you take them home.
- Amon** Yeah, you think you got grown ups all figured out. Next thing you know they doin' something stupid.
- Little Man** *(Under his breath)* Like go crazy on you.
- Amon** You say something?
- Little Man** I said, if we don't go to the game, maybe we can go to see that library lady and have her give us some plays that make sense.
- Amon** I got to get on punishment first.
- Little Man** Okay, you get on punishment. I'll meet you there in half an hour.

(Light fades out.)

SCARS & STRIPES BY THOMAS CADWALEDER JONES

A black urban girl and a white rural boy meet by accident in front of the Vietnam Veteran's Memorial in Washington, D.C., where they search for clues to their fathers' pasts. What begins as a hostile encounter fraught with racism and mistrust eventually develops into a strong friendship which is based on mutual respect, understanding and compassion.

In the following excerpt, the boy, *P.T.*, and the girl, *Jewel*, have spent several hours together. It is at this point in the play that their defenses have begun to melt and they are able to understand one another.

1 Boy and 1 Girl *P.T. and Jewel (young teens)*

Location: The Vietnam Veteran's Memorial.

The boy is reading names on the Memorial. He has been there for a while. The girl watches him.

- Girl There's a directory.
- Boy I know that.
- Girl All you have to do is look up his name. It'll tell you where it's located.
- Boy Didn't you hear me, I know that—
- Girl Then, do it.
- Boy Told you this was special.
- Girl So?
- Boy So what's special about looking up his name in

some directory and walking right up to it? No, I'm gonna start at one end an' read every one of those names till I find his.

Girl That could take you a rather long time.

Boy I got time.

(Silence. He moves closer to the wall, and begins to read the names. He mouths them silently to himself. She watches, finally speaks. She's been thinking this for some time now.)

Girl Mr. P.T. Flagg from Arkansas, may I ask you a personal question?

(He ignores her and continues reading the names.)



Girl When exactly did your father die?

Boy Don't know.

Girl Your grandpa didn't tell you?

Boy Nobody ever told me anything.

Girl Weren't there letters? Didn't you father ever write

Boy If he did, grandpa sorta censored the mail.

Girl Why would he do that?

Boy Because he hated my dad for runnin' off to that war and he hated me for lookin' like him.

Girl What about that other boy?

Boy What other boy?

Girl Your dad's friend. Didn't you ever ask him about your dad?



They went over there together.

Oh.

I guess 'cause they were buddies, best friends, something like that. When Topper finally came back home, I was really little. But I sure remember what he looked like when they took him off that bus. I was standing there, staring, thinking how he sure didn't look like Marlon Brando anymore. How he sure couldn't ride that motorcycle of his ever again. People round town said his family just sorta parked his wheelchair in an upstairs corner room, and that's where he stayed till he died.

They abandoned him?

Something like that. I remember seeing something standing under a hickory tree, in the Williams' front yard, for years after that. It was all covered up with an old, green piece've canvas. One spring we had this big storm, and it blew the green canvas off. There was this bright shiny black Harley-Davidson motorcycle standing there.

The one in the picture.

Funny thing was, nobody ever put the tarp back on it after that. Boy, I wanted that motorcycle bad. Another spring we had a big storm, and it blew the motorcycle over. One school morning, there it was, lying on its side. I kept wondering when somebody was gonna come out of that house and set that motorcycle back up, but nobody ever did. So one morning I went by there and jumped the fence and wrestled that motorcycle back up on its tires.

Good for you.

- Boy** You like that, huh?
- Girl** Well, somebody should've done something.
- Boy** After Topper died, they put a sign on that motor cycle. Hand lettered. Black paint on a white board "For Sale—Cheap." C.H.E.—E. P. Even I know that's spelled wrong.
- Girl** You should've bought it.
- Boy** I did.
- Girl** Good for you again.
- Boy** Well, I had that picture of my dad and him and they're friends. I just bought it to keep somebody else from buying it. It wasn't worth anything, time all rotted out...
- Girl** But you bought it; that's what counts.
- Boy** I musta pushed that motorcycle 'bout seven miles out of town. Took forever 'cause of those flat tires. Draped a worn-out American flag over it, I'd tied off the pole at the high school. Made up a little prayer. Pushed it off an overhang out by the highway 40 bridge into the East Fork of the White River.
- Girl** It was a good thing you did.
- Boy** When I was little, I knew about the war. I asked grandpa if they were gonna send me over there like my dad. He just laughed. "Not till you're eighteen, boy." He said. "...Not till you're eighteen..."
- Girl** I asked my mother that, when I was little, if they sent girls to fight in wars.
- Boy** What'd she tell you?



- girl** "Not if you're good and you eat your spinach."
(Laughs) She was always saying things like that when I was little. Things that didn't make a lot of sense. She laughed alot, too. Then along came my stepfather and everything changed...
- Silence. They regard each other. He thinks she's told him something; he's not sure what. He resumes his search of the wall.)*
- boy** I never dreamed 58,000 was so many names...I wish...
- girl** Careful what you wish, it might come true.
- boy** ...If everybody who made the wars had to read all those names...
- girl** One by one...like you're doing...
- boy** Maybe there wouldn't be any more wars, huh? If they had to spend a minute with every name... All 58,000...thinking about the ones who died. ...Bout how long you think that'd take anyway?
- girl** ...Forty-two days...
- boy** Forty-two...You do that in your head?
- girl** 58,000 minutes...divided by sixty is 966 hours... divided by twenty-four...that's forty-two days...If you spend a minute looking at each name, you're gonna be here a long, long time; I'll say that for you.
- boy** A while back, I thought I'd lost my place. Got to thinking maybe I'd looked right past his name, missed seeing it, didn't even recognize it, when I came to it. All these names start runnin' together, if you don't find one you know.

Girl ...Look. Come over here for a minute...I want to show you something.

Boy I'll lose my place.

Girl No, you won't, I know which panel you stopped on. Come on over here.

Boy *(He goes to her)* Okay, what?

Girl Look right up there. *(She points to a special place on the wall.)*

Boy Where?

Girl Right there. There's my father. Julius A. Robinson. See?

Boy Yeah.

Girl Now that's a name for you to know. Because you kinda know me.

(Suddenly, his face changes.)

Boy Oh, my...

Girl What?

Boy Oh, my goodness...

Girl What's wrong?

Boy Look...Oh, my God, look....

Girl It's two lines down...

Boy My father's name.

Girl Phineas T. Flagg...

Boy It's him...



Girl I must have seen it a hundred times before...It just never meant anything to me until now.

Boy That's him; it's gotta be...

Girl The boy in that picture...

Boy Oh, God, that's him, that's my dad.

Girl *(Staring at the wall.)* He died in sixty-nine.

Boy Yeah.

Girl Same year my father was missing.

Boy I found it. I found his name...

(Lights fade on the two children staring up at the wall.)