

Unknown to Me

by Michael J. Solender

My absence of great knowledge manifests itself without discrimination.

It was on display this morning while my wife was cutting my hair in our bathroom. Sitting naked on a step-stool facing the mirror over the vanity, I feel vulnerable while she is quizzing me on polemics. She wants to know my take on Pope Pius and if I agree on his beatification. *Did I know how silent he was during the Holocaust?*

The green comb she likes from the hotel on our mountain trip rests in her left hand where she has taped a Band-Aid in a prophylactic measure around her middle finger. Years of cutting herself and bleeding into my hair have made that a prerequisite to our monthly ritual.

I think I know what polemics means but I'm not sure and finally ask her for clarification. I offer my lame and oft repeated joke that I was sick that day in school. She quit laughing at that 15 years ago, but I still say it when some fact presents itself that I should know, but don't.

My hair is sticky and matted, coating the back of my neck in a thick, pasty mass. It is moist from our earlier walk and delicate beads of sweat roll down the back of my neck into the curvature of the small of my back.

She is maneuvering the scissors that I bought in Japan with precision, her right hand working rapidly, the scissors crisp and clipped against her grasp. She takes about an inch of my wet hair through the green comb in her left hand, pulls it between her index and forefinger and cuts it evenly leaving the sweaty curls to fall onto my chest.

I don't know where or when she learned to cut hair. She said once she used to cut her ex's hair. I make it a point to never ask her about her ex. Very rarely will she bring him up, though when she does it is invariably revealing in curious ways. Once when we were on a plane to Europe she told me that he had scored so highly in officer training

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school that they put him in Intelligence. She told me an involved story about his work for the CIA. It was before she married him, but he knew things. *Troubling things*. The way she said it made me think that she knew them too.

Absolutely nothing precipitated that conversation. I had been napping and she looked out the window at the clouds and ocean for fifteen minutes while telling me the story of how he could hurt people without leaving a mark. He told her they would hold people down and put telephone books on their head or chest and then hit them with a baseball bat.

I didn't ask her any questions. She stopped the story as abruptly as she started it. I never knew why he entered her consciousness.

Ignorance is not bliss. Lack of knowledge is supplanted by supposition. Danger lies underneath the oily surface of assumption. It can be the precursor to action and action in a void will invariably lead to ill-informed decisions and undesirable outcomes.

I don't want to debate polemics while I'm sweaty and naked. I just want my hair cut.

