

The Trouble with Warts

By scott a. mccain

The thing about them is they show up unexpectedly. They just appear, almost overnight, becoming part of your body. I woke one morning, so long ago that I now forget when, and it was just there. It protrudes from my right middle finger as if saying "fuck you" to me every time I glance down at it. There are times that it becomes so annoying, I will drink myself near death and perform self-surgery, only for it to reappear some days later, and in greater magnitude. I am at the point where I am ready to give up, to just forget about the whole thing and pretend that it isn't there. I will permanently block it from conscious thought. But it's never that easy.

Lately, I have been noticing strange things about it. I can feel an acute pain, so small that it is barely detectable. It is just enough pain, though, to remind me that it is there. I find myself at times crossing my fingers as to conceal the ugly bastard from others. I plunge my deformity into my pants pocket whenever I am near an attractive woman. It is automatic. I wore a bandage over it for several years, but it caused my finger to become emaciated and pale, almost grotesque. The bandages became almost as much a nuisance as the thing itself.

Also, I had been trying for some time now to remove it with an acid-based solution sold over the counter at most drug stores. I had been applying the topical remedy twice daily for nearly three years. Although it never seemed to work, I was vigilant with the applications. The only drawback was the color. It turned it into a bright white, almost like driven snow. But very recently, perhaps even a

matter of one or two days, the ointment has caused my skin to become seriously irritated. It is as if I have suddenly become allergic to the medicine. I have had to discontinue any medical attempt to remove it. It is now growing larger every day.

At first, it was barely noticeable. The growth, that is. But over the last few days I believe it has doubled in size. The acute pain has subsided, but there is now, even at this very instance, a pulsing underneath my skin. It feels like Morse code. Dot dot dot dash dash dot dot. Like that. At any rate, I am running a little behind, so I had better ready myself for work.

I have always considered myself an intellectual. I can bump heads with the best of them, unless of course we are talking physics. I really cannot stand physics. I don't even like the way the word sounds. It even has a funny spelling. P-H-Y-S-I-C-S. What an awful... anyway, I have always prided myself in the fact that I know a little bit of something about almost everything. Take football for instance. I really do not care for the American version of the sport at all, but I can tell you who ran for the most yards in a particular season. Things like that. I am an avid reader of books, from which I take most of my knowledge. Television hurts my brain. But being a self-dubbed intellectual, that is, one without a doctorate or equivalent, comes with its downfalls. I have a blue-collar job that constantly conflicts with my moral fiber. I am not opposed to physical labor. Not even the fact that "physical labor" has the words "physic" in it, it is just that I feel as if I am squandering my talents in a meta-physical sort of way. There goes that word again. I

suffer chronic mental pains about what I do for a living. I complain at every chance I get.

I make cocktails for a living. You wouldn't think it was all that bad, but it can be. Let me tell you. I feel as if I am serving people that should be serving me. It is a bastardized way of thinking, but no one has ever said I was stable. The hardest part of my job is seeing the looks of disgust on patrons' faces after I hand them their drinks. They are staring at my wart. There is no way around it. I thought that having the wart as long as I have had it would ease the pain of knowing that people stared at it. It didn't. In fact, it has become increasingly worse. I think about it all of the time. My self-consciousness about the whole thing has made it nearly impossible to get a better job, thus furthering my education and moving up in the world. Worse though, is the fact that I have not slept with a woman in over seven years. Some may think that it could be worse, and it is. I cannot even masturbate. The sight of the wart on my finger causes my penis to become flaccid. Some would even say to use the other hand. I can't get over the fact that it always feels like someone else. So I am screwed. I am a disgruntled, sexless introvert that could not ejaculate to save his own life.

* * * *

At about the same time my wart began to send me messages via Morse code (I actually began deciphering the pulses), a woman entered my life. She came into the bar one night and she was beautiful. She had large green eyes, like a tiger. I felt the wart begin to pulse and bulge, telling me to walk slowly to her. I thought to myself, "I can't. She is going to see you. It will frighten her and

she will run away." It told me I was a useless dick and that if I didn't approach the woman, it was going to make me regret it. I did as I was told, but not before a small tirade directed at my wart for putting me in such a precarious position.

I don't remember exactly when I began to hear it talk. It was as if the Morse codes had evolved into a crude form of communication, from my finger to my brain. It had even arrived to the point where it could influence my thoughts and control basic motor skills. Sometimes, with a large surge of unexplained energy, it would force me to yell out whatever it wanted me to say. This was, however, quite rare.

I neared the woman at the bar. She was even more gorgeous than I had first thought. She had an exquisite figure and smelled of lilacs. Her hands were the models of perfection.

"Hello," I said. "What can I get for you?" She didn't take her eyes off of the bar. I immediately became aware that she was staring at my wart. My immediate reaction was to pull my hand from the bar, out of her sight. It did not budge. It was as if it was anchored there, by some means apart from my own volition. She continued to stare for some time. I felt my face turning bright red. I began to sweat. My pulse raced and I was overcome by an overwhelming sense of guilt mixed with anxiety. I could not move. I began to speak, not knowing why or what I was about to say. The words were not my own. "I bet you like that, don't you?"

"Wha...what? No. No, I don't think that I do." I was frozen in fear and embarrassment. She immediately rose

from her seat and left the bar. My wart began to tell me that I was a jackass and that I had ruined everything.

"Shut up!" I told it. "What the fuck are you trying to do to me?" The other patrons at the bar just stared. One man shook his head in what could have been disgust, but was probably sympathy. He thought I was out of my tree.

That night at home, I tried to get into my book. I was about halfway through Kosinski's *Pinball*, when I tossed the book to the floor. My wart told me to put that shit down and turn on the television. I couldn't control the hand anymore. I flipped on the television set and stared blankly at the screen. My wart told me to turn to channel 17. There was to my amazement, a sporting event programmed; Olympic handball. I could hear my wart sigh and say that's right you little bitch. I didn't know what to do. I turned my eyes away from the set. The wart told me it didn't matter because he (he now was gender oriented) had his own eyes to see the splendor of a match concerned solely with the use of extremities, more specifically, hands. I looked down at the grotesque blemish and I thought I saw it smile.

That night, my brain was rattled with horrible nightmares. I was in a place I did not recognize. I walked along a surface that was covered by large dimples. Spread out occasionally was a large plant-like object sprouting from the ground. I continued to walk uphill to a series of four forks in the road. They were like large precipices extending into a large void. I took the second path from the left and continued on. I came to what seemed to be a large white stump in the middle of the path. It was of a rough texture I had never seen before. As I neared the object, I became horrified at the fact I was

staring at a wart as tall as I was. It even seemed to be the one on my very own hand. I slowly turned to the opposite direction. I was stricken with fear when I realized I was staring at what once was a gigantic face. It was now covered in thousands of warts! I was standing on the outstretched hand of this monstrosity. As I lost balance and began to fall from the large middle finger, I became aware of a loud, pounding sound ringing in my ears. I awoke to my alarm clock announcing the arrival of the day. I was clothed in a jacket of cold sweat.

* * * *

Later that day my employer accosted me. Without rhyme but plenty of reason, he fired me from my post as bartender.

"That thing is getting too fucking big," he said.

My wart told me he was just jealous because of all the pussy I was getting.

"Pussy? What are you talking about, pussy? I don't know where you came up with that one." He told me that I would see in time. As I exited the building, the same tiger-eyed lady approached me from the previous evening. She did not take her gaze from my hand.

"Can I buy you a drink?" she asked, still staring at my warted hand that now began to throb with what strangely felt like sexual anticipation. It felt, yes, almost like an erection...but on my hand!

I followed the lady to the bar across the street. I don't think I had ever been there before. She ordered a scotch and water.

"I'll give tequila," my wart forced me to say. He was becoming very adept at controlling my speech patterns.

"Tequila? I hate tequila," I told the wart. He told me I

needed to get plenty drunk so he and this fine piece of ass could get it on. She seemed undisturbed about me talking aloud to an extension of my own body. My wart made me drink 15 shots before I blacked out completely.

I woke, still drunk, in a musty hotel room. It was a place entirely unfamiliar to me. I was dazed, but could make out faint murmurs and moans of ecstasy very near me. I was supine on a soiled, bare mattress. I was still clothed but next to me was a very beautiful and very naked woman clutching her breasts. She was covered in sweat and rocking back and forth with such fury, the entire room shook. Just as my vision returned completely, she shrieked with such intensity, as if summoning a demon deep within herself that I thought she might be dying. As her orgasm passed through her body I felt her entire being go limp with exhaustion. She was impaled on my finger! I immediately withdrew my hand from her swollen labia. I the wart on my finger had grown to almost three times its size. As I began to examine it more closely, I could see that my wart had an erection. It slowly deflated, becoming normal again, as a penis would after ejaculation. I passed out like an aristocratic mother who had just walked in on her daughter sleeping with a peasant. I did not dream.

* * * *

I woke the next day in the very same room on the very same bed. I immediately recalled the previous evening with the tiger-eyed lady and my autonomous warted hand. I was too scared to look. I felt a slight pain, not quite as acute as usual. It seemed not to come from my fingertip, but from a place just short of my hand. As I became more conscious, the pain became increasingly more intense, like a dull throbbing at my wrist. I pried my face from the

mephitic pillow, which felt a bit sticky. I became aware that my face was covered with a thick, greasy film. I looked down to see the entire bed covered in blood. My hand was missing. Next to the bed, on the nightstand, stood a blood soaked rag and large hatchet. I looked down at my hand and knew right away that I would not see it. It was not there. The room was completely empty.

* * * *

After hours of intense medical attention, I was stabilized and resting comfortably on an IU bed. Drugs flowed freely through my body from a morphine drip above my left shoulder. My arm was heavily bandaged in starchy white. I felt at ease for the first time in years. I had no more trouble with warts.