

Scarred Man, The



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From Publishers Weekly Journalist Michael North terrifies a young student with a ghost story that soon frightens them both in this fast-paced but tame thriller. Invited to spend Christmas at the home of his boss, Carl McGill, Michael meets and falls for Carl's daughter Susannah. While his story about a scarred man is fictitious, Susannah's worst nightmares come to concern a killer with a scar. Someone tries to kill her later at college, and an answering-machine message from a self-proclaimed "scarred man" leads to an attempt on both Michael and Susannah's lives. Michael then remembers that his parents were murdered when he was five, and a scarred man dominates the sudden memory. Hiding with him at the time was a one-year-old girl, and it dawns upon the lovers that they may be siblings. Together they drive to Hickman, Ind., where Michael's parents were murdered, to learn the truth. Lawyer

Howard Marks, who represents a retarded handyman still blamed for the killings, proves to Michael that the man was in fact framed. But who, then, is the scarred man? His identity is the best surprise mustered by Peterson (nom de plume of Andrew Klavan, *A Shock to the System*), but it fails to offset others quite easily guessed. A playful style dilutes the impact of a novel already weakened by a dearth of suspense. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Michael North's life is irreversibly altered when he meets his employer's daughter during Christmas holiday. One night he tells a particularly scary ghost story about a mysterious scarred man, and is amazed at the young woman's horrified reaction. It turns out the two of them have been experiencing similar nightmares for years. As they combine forces and discover more about their backgrounds, they become embroiled in an old murder case and must confront a menace from the past. Generally the writing is excellent, although Peterson overdoes the device of deliberately repeating certain words or phrases in subsequent sentences, and occasionally the poetic language seems self-conscious and distracting. However, readers who are tuned in to Peterson's style will find a tense climax and surprising resolution awaiting them.- William Schoell, New YorkCopyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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