THE CARTOON

Written by

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INT. PARKING GARAGE – NIGHT

A single car waits under weak, BUZZING lights.

High heels CLICK as someone approaches. CLAIRE DIMS, 20’s, pretty, classy, strides across the concrete toward the car. Before she can get there, a THIN MAN, 30s, bearded, pops up from behind the car.

THIN MAN
Excuse me. You’re Claire Dims?

CLAIRE
Who are you?

THIN MAN
I’m a great admirer of Claire Dims. Is that you?

CLAIRE
No, that’s not me. Now, step away from the car.

THIN MAN
I’m sorry, but I thought this was the car of Claire Dims.

CLAIRE
It’s not. Now, step away.

THIN MAN
I’m sure this car belongs to Ms. Dims. If you drive it, then you must be Claire.

CLAIRE
She loaned it to me. Now, please.

THIN MAN
I do not like to be lied to. It is bad manners.

CLAIRE
And I don’t like people hiding behind a car. Now, STEP AWAY!

THIN MAN
I must explain why I admire the cartoonist, Claire Dims. She does fantastic work.
(pulls a sheet of paper from his pocket)
Like this.
He shows her the sheet.

THIN MAN (CONT'D)
This is very fine work. You see?
It looks much like the prophet.

She glances at the page.

CLAIRED
If you say so. I'm no critic.

THIN MAN
And it is very funny. You see the
scimitar in his hand? The Arabic
markings look real.

CLAIRED
I'm glad you like it, but I really
have to go. When I see Claire,
I'll tell her you're a fan.

THIN MAN
Then, you must tell her also that
it is a blasphemy. It is an
abomination in the eyes of the
faithful.

Claire slips her hand inside her purse.

CLAIRED
Since when is a cartoon an affront
to anyone?

THIN MAN
The book is specific. No images
can be made. It is sacrilege.

CLAIRED
That is crazy. A cartoon never
hurt anyone.

THIN MAN
The eyes of god see all. The words
of the book cannot be undone.

CLAIRED
Tolerance is the watchword of true
faith. If faith is so fragile it
cannot withstand a cartoon, how
great can it be?

THIN MAN
I do not write the words. I do not
interpret them.
Claire pulls a gun from her purse.

CLAIRE
Step away from the car.

THIN MAN
You are Claire Dims, aren’t you?

CLAIRE
I don’t want to shoot you, but I will. I’m not going to apologize for any cartoon. No damn religion trumps free speech. If you can’t take a joke, you’re beyond redemption. NOW STEP AWAY FROM THE FUCKING CAR!

THIN MAN
(reaches into pocket)
I just want to –

BLAM
The gunshot echoes through the garage.
The Thin Man quakes, hand in pocket, unhurt.
Claire’s hand shakes badly.

THIN MAN (CONT’D)
No, no, nothing, nothing. I mean no harm. I want only to show you this.

He pulls out a sheet of paper with a cartoon on it and thrusts it at her.

THIN MAN (CONT’D)
I drew this. I thought, I thought you might...

CLAIRED
You draw?

He nods.

CLAIRED (CONT’D)
You want me to...?

THIN MAN
Tell me if it’s good.

He holds out the sheet.
She takes the sheet and looks at it.

CLAIRE
You drew—

The Thin Man lunges and sinks a long knife deep into Claire’s stomach.

THIN MAN

BLAM

The bullet rips through the Thin Man who collapses to the pavement.

Bleeding, Claire staggers to the car. She drops the gun and pulls out her cell phone. She dials 911.

911 OPERATOR
What is your emergency?

CLAIRE
I need help. I’ve been stabbed.

She slowly sinks to the pavement, staring at the Thin Man, and the blurry cartoon by his head.

FADE OUT