Paper Walls – Notes

The very things I did right with That-Day I did wrong with Paper-Walls. It’s clear that I didn’t structure this properly and it shows in the reading. I will want to create a rough plot outline (with character arcs) and fill everything in at a later stage. Currently it’s an inconsequential series of vignettes about a group of characters that know each other but nothing really beyond that. I’d love to write a character-driven story surrounding these people but put it in a more urban-fantasy setting. Keith and Skylar’s insane date does feel disjointed from Piper’s lone wolf attitude and coming to grips with other people. Keith has to be the exception to her rules and not the normal.

Skylar had always felt that there was underlying tension between herself and Piper. She’d never been rude to the girl or, as far as she knew, done anything to offend her but still she got a sense that Piper really didn’t like her. The tension itself lay underneath the pleasantries and the niceties that they would exchange whenever they interacted. It was in the looks that Piper gave her, nothing near venom but it almost made Skye think there was something wrong with herself. The girl had a manner of taking what was said to her and making it seem completely preposterous. In truth, Piper Ashton unnerved her. The girl was, and Skye hated to admit this - even if it was to herself, a little bit creepy with her unshaking glare that seemed to pierce one’s soul.

The story of Keith-Piper within the story of Skye-Keith must conclude

I feel like there are multiple stories here. One where Keith narrates his journey to meeting Skylar and starting a relationship with her while he fights against himself and another one where Skylar and Piper talk about Keith and their understanding of him after he goes missing/ commits suicide. The first is a light-hearted romance where Keith overcomes himself and the second is a darker vision of understanding others and being united by a single life done in the context of the funeral of one of a group of friends.

My current idea is to tell the story in chapters. All set from the perspective of Corona/Piper Ashton who has to deal with Keith Buchant knocking on her window at 5am on a Monday/Sunday morning and reciting the tale of how his date with Skye Clarke went.

During the week or next week she then has to deal with Skye herself showing up at her door. Corona is the Bilbo Baggins type who really just wants to be left alone, yet she is particularly good at listening to others and helping them through their problems. Corona will have to deal with her own issues with Skye and Keith for the final chapter where the latter is dead and she reconciles with the former after the funeral.

Being put on pedestal is fun, apparently – at least while the person doing it doesn’t do anything crazy. I suppose being idolized does have its benefits like the person seeing everything one does as perfect, free stuff, the attention is flattering, etc. But there is an intrinsic danger in allowing to run on for too long.

Keith, here, is presented as a selfish jerk who mines his awkwardness for female attention. Piper is his disapproving best friend who, at least at the beginning, puts up with his bullshit. Skylar is the object of his affection, an empathetic and upbeat young woman with more experience than him who intrudes on Corona’s system. While Corona may not want things to change, she realizes that they have to because she cannot allow Keith to continue doing what he is currently doing. The idea for her is that of a system which she is comfortable with that ultimately is going to hell in a handbasket.

Keith is trying to come to terms with his romanticism of Skylar and his awkwardness while learning how to talk to women and get a gf.

Skylar is mostly reacting to Keith’s awkwardness (mainly with laughter and empathy. Skye finds him interesting where Corona is just tired – physically and emotionally – because Keith is truly emotionally draining)

This could actually be framed in the context of a week in the life of Corona Ashton. Keith wakes her up on Monday/ Sunday, she drives him to the hospital to have his arm checked out and they end up hanging out. Skye contacts her mid-week and the funeral is at the end of the week. 3 clear chapters to create. The first would seem to be the longest, the second must be the beginning of the paradigm shift and the end is the revelation.

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‘*Accidents out on the highway to somewhere they tell us about when we’re young. Rescuers working to clean up the crashes before she can see what they’ve done. Nobody told her she’d lose in the first round, the last fight was fixed from the start.*’

‘*Night life, the high life. She just wants a good life so someone remembers her too.*’

I love the idea of Harrison not having much dialogue but singing in the story.

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” The paradox of Keith Buchant” she began, “was that despite being a man of many opinions, he would never actually tell very many people any of them. Instead he would stare blankly at them and shrug or offer a laugh before steering the conversation in another direction.”

To be honest, this reads like a light-hearted romance where Keith is fighting against himself to even make contact with Skylar.

**Keith Buchant – Chapter 2**

It was in the summer of his eighteenth birthday that Keith Buchant decided; of the major problems he had with his life, it was the fact that he was in control of where it was headed that was to be regarded as the most serious. His logic being that his dearth of experience and chronic bad luck would lead him to making the wrong choices at every opportunity.

Keith took on an atypically fervent, yet still systematic, vigor as he went about addressing what he viewed his fatal flaw. He endeavored to, as best he could, offload his decision making to process onto others and being only too happy to accept their advice. Over the forthcoming months after his revelation, he managed to settle himself firmly into the role of the counseled even when the matter at hand was of the foremost importance in his life. Keith did this to the point of nigh on complete codependence with those in his surrounding circle and in the process managed to divide **[need a more mathematical term here]** that circle into one whose borders enclosed but 2 units. This would, in turn, shatter his confidence when not amongst his ‘best friends’, leading to Keith becoming a walking cacophony of social avoidance when he was not with them.

[I could always Pipesezify this paragraph to fit In line with Keith’s entry to Pipes’s house]

Accidents out on the highwat to somewhere they tell us about when we’re young

The paradox of Keith Buchant was that despite being a man of many opinions he would never actually tell most people any of them. Instead he would stare blankly at them or shrug and offer a chuckle before steering the conversation in another direction. If one were to ask Keith himself, assuming he didn’t just dodge the question by pulling from his weathered playbook of social avoidance, he would simply sigh and utter the following quote “I am not a person of opinions because I feel the counter arguments too strongly” and hope for that to kill the debate. In the instances which it did not he would nod appropriately during the forthcoming lecture, all-the-while intensely debating himself about the issue.

Not even his usual utterances were spared from his mind’s eye. So it came to be that on one day he would, in the process of going about his usual routine, be about to deliver this most tired of authorial references when he was pulled into the throngs of internal debate once more. Keith wondered under his breath whether that was something of a commentary on his life up to that point, a headline of sorts, to be placed atop the roll of footage he would see in the process of death. ‘The life and times of Keith Buchant: He was not a man of opinions because he felt the counter arguments too strongly. Also he stared stupidly at those who asked him for one.’

Spelling out the title to himself allowed him to snap out of his reverie and he realize that he had trailed off in the middle of conversation to stare at the table and whisper intensely with himself. He looked up to find a young woman whose doe eyes looked back him with a cocktail of bemusement and genuine concern for his sanity. Keith apologized profusely for his poor etiquette before doing a quick scan of the mental playbook for a way out of the situation. His fear began to mount as he realized he may have to tell the woman something to assuage her doubts about his mental stability. That would be the socially correct thing to do, yes? When she read his expression - and observed what Keith could only assume was confusion on his face - she set her coffee down and touched her hand to his before looking at him, her eyes impossibly blue, and offered him a reassuring smile.

“Relax, Keith. Take a deep breath” she had said. He took several. “Now start again. You were telling me about your complex opinion on pennies.” Keith had two choices: he could angst again and probably hyperventilate while doing so – though that would get him out the situation he’d gotten himself into - or …

“Well, Skylar, it’s like this” he began.

**Skylar Clarke – Story 2**

When he walked through the door to the women’s bathroom Skylar Clarke knew she was in love – or as close to love as Skylar could understand at the time. It was not that he was particularly handsome or tall or exceptional in any of the superficial ways that Skylar had been attracted to then. It was that Keith Buchant had a quiet intellect to him, though occasionally she could see the steam escaping from him his brain when he thought too hard. That was the point: Keith thought. He was a thinker. So different to anyone that Skylar had met before that she had almost wanted to see him so frequently purely for novelty of the experience.

They had scarcely made eye contact when a scream erupted behind her and she had watched Keith’s expression shift as he realized his folly before spinning on his heel to exit the room. As he did so his shirt sleeve catching on the door handle as he did so. Keith had managed to dislodge himself before the security guards, who were racing towards the scene, had managed to reach him. He shot her a confused look as he took off into the mall.

Skye snuck a quick look in the mirror. Make-up? Fine. Hair? It’ll do. Teeth? Nothing stuck in them but they looked a little yellow, she should have them whitened. “Okay, I’m fine.” She said before taking off in search of him.

If there was one aspect of her new P.O.I. that Skylar Clarke found particularly surprising, it was that he was deceptively quick.

**Piper Ashton – Chapter 3**

It was a Thursday night when **Piper** Ashton realized that Hell had well and truly frozen over. She checked her watch immediately, 8pm, before looking up to find Skylar Clarke shivering at her door. The girl stood on the Ashton family welcome mat that read ‘Friends welcome. Relatives by appointment.’ (A rather beautiful holder from the last visit that Pipes’s extended family had paid to her place.) The girl was neither to Piper so what the hell was she doing here, sopping wet no less?

“Hi.” Skylar said

“Hi.” Piper responded before silence descended upon them.

“I’m not sure if we met. I’m Skye”

“Piper.” They hadn’t met formally but Piper knew the girl at her door well enough not to like her.

Skylar paused slightly as if she was unsure how to proceed.

She would have been perfectly happy to stand there and stare at the girl while she froze her skinny little ass off but Pipes had to get her inside before mother caught wind of the situation and spent the next hour fussing over the girl while simultaneously berating Piper for her lack of empathy.

“Come inside” she said with a sigh, relenting.

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Chapter 1 – Piper’s place

The longest week of Piper Ashton’s life began with an unceremonious knock at her bedroom window. At the time she hadn’t regarded it with any degree of significance but that changed when the intruder managed to get the window open and fumble his way into her room at 04:51am on Monday.

When he landed at the foot of her bed, he immediately began reciting the tale of how he managed to crack his latest pair of glasses and his injure his right arm in the 36 hour period since she’d had last seen him. As he did this, Keith Buchant, was quick to mention two points. Firstly: The woman involved, there’s always a woman involved with him, was mind-blowingly beautiful with a set of “sparkling” blue eyes, that he could, “get lost in for days” and second: he hadn’t actually managed to get her number, which was surprising given how chuffed he was with himself.

Piper’s first instinct when she got up was to grab her hockey stick and bludgeon the hell out of the thing that awoke her from slumber. Keith was lucky that she had recognized him before she could try or he’d have a bashed in face to go with that arm. Her second instinct was to bludgeon him anyway for scaring her half to death. Seriously – who the bleeding heck wakes people up at 5am to tell them about their escapades with some girl?

‘Whatever, Keith, you fucked a girl. Welcome to the rest of your life! I don’t need to know about it at 5am in the goddamn morning.’ she had wanted to scream at him except:

1. He didn’t even get her number (which would repulse her if they did actually have causal sex – that level of exploitation was something she thought Keith above. Harrison may be rubbing off on him in that department)
2. This was Keith Buchant she was talking to. A girl only had to bat her eyelashes at him before he began composing poetry about her which Piper would have to suffer through (Seriously Keith’s prose was horrid).
3. Screaming would wake the neighbours and Piper really didn’t want to deal with a pissed off Mrs. Jacobson without ingesting at least one cup of coffee.

Despite herself, Piper made them both a cup of tea before she would sit him down and take a look at his injuries. When she regained a degree of functionality, Piper was relatively impressed that Keith had managed to have a full conversation with a woman other than herself for any extended period of time. Where was the Keith who tripped over his words and ended up whispering to himself about what to say to the woman in front of him? What really impressed her was the fact that he managed to last the 8 hours he claimed to have spent with this girl without doing something stupid or at least awkward.

Piper Ashton was not a patient person, nor was she someone that enjoyed having to deal with the incessant whining of others. It was these two qualities that lead to her being a classified as what one could call a ’loner’. Of course this label was not entirely true, as she was never truly devoid of people she cared about but it did carry a grain of veracity when one took a holistic view of the social paradigm she had created for herself. While boasting of her intolerance, Piper had to admit that she could suspend it if she truly needed to. So it came to be that on Sunday morning, she found herself in a particular quandary when one of the few people she cared for decided to break her peace.

**Harrison Grey**

When Keith Buchant had recounted the story behind his latest set of broken glasses he made sure to mention two critical points. Firstly: the woman involved was mind-blowingly beautiful and secondly: he had failed, at that point in time, to get her number.

“No, that won’t do at all.” Keith Buchant closed the link to the job listing in front of him. A review and an opinion piece. “I am not a person of opinions because I feel the counter arguments too strongly”. If there was one thing that all the threads could agree on it was that: that quote had defined his life up to this point.

meet a woman on whom his

and in the progress of delivering this most tired of references to

On the day that Keith had decided to leave home he decided to afford himself one more internal debate

It was line that Keith himself thought of as a kind of headline for his life up until this point.

**Notes**

Skylar has come out smarter and nicer than I originally envisaged. She’s more intrigued by Keith than anything else at this point and she’ll have a good laugh about this story when they meet up later. She has to talk her way out of this situation as she’s not a runner like Keith.

Corona, however, has come out angrier than originally intended which is fine. She has to learn to accept others for who they are but she is still validated by the selfishness inherent in Keith’s romanticism. At the end of the funeral she must have done so. She should hug Skylar while Harry sings be the young in the background.

“I still don’t know just what the Hell you were thinking” Piper said dabbing the cut above his eye

“I wasn’t thinking, that was the point.” He replied wincing slightly at the feeling of the disinfectant on his exposed skin.

“This is not a game, Harrison. The guy nearly took your damn head off.”

“My head is still very much attached Mac.”

“Well you’re lucky he didn’t after what you said to him.”

“It was a legitimate question.”

“You asked his girlfriend whether she was jealous that his man-breasts were bigger than hers.”

“Hey, you laughed at that!”

“Only because I knew you were about to get your ass kicked again.”

“Still worth it and it was still true. That girl was a cutting board”

“You, my friend, are an asshole.”

“A loveable asshole?”

“No, just the regular kind.”

OR

**Piper – Harrison dialogue exchange**

“I still don’t know what the hell you were thinking.” Piper said dabbing the cut above his eye.

“I wasn’t thinking, that was the point.” Harry replied.

As he did so, he winced at the feeling of the disinfectant on his exposed skin. Pipes had taken his arrival much better than he’d could have hoped for. In truth he didn’t know what to expect when he’d turned up at her house at 4am with his face bruised, battered and bloodied and his right arm potentially broken.

He’d half-expected her to scream in his face and kick him out after he jumped in through her bedroom window, or worse: beat him up herself – something Piper was fully capable of doing if someone made her angry enough. Granted she had very nearly bashed his face in herself with a hockey stick before she realized who he was. It said something about their friendship (and Harry’s circle of friends) that Piper Ashton was the only person he could go to in the middle of night for help.

“This is not a game, Harrison. You could’ve been seriously hurt. Or worse.”

“Worse than that needle?” he said, gesturing towards the open first aid kit sitting on the sink to his left. Once she’d gotten a good look at his face and its current state, Piper had grabbed her first aid kit, dragged him into the bathroom and shut the door. She sat him down and ordered him to tell her the whole sad-stupid-but-true story while she put her gloves on and went to work cleaning his wounds.

“You could’ve been arrested.”

“You’d bail me out. “

“Keith would end up doing that.”

“At least Keith doesn’t lecture.”

“No, but he does make you pay him back.”

“Oh yeah. I’d forgotten about that. Can borrow 20 bucks from you?”

[Shoots him a scowl]

“Just do me a favor: be more responsible”

“You sound like my disapproving girlfriend. Or my mother.”

“Your mother doesn’t patch you up after you get butt kicked”

“Girlfriend it is then.”

[Piper elbows him in the shoulder being careful to attack his left arm – she knows there’s no wound there so it won’t do too much damage.]

“Ouch Piper! Take it easy.”

“I still can’t believe that you said that to Rick”

“Do we have to talk about that asshole?”

“Would you rather talk about the beating the Madison kid gave you last year?”

“Okay, I may have actually deserved that one.”

“As opposed to your innocence this time?”

“Pipes, all I did was ask a question.”

“You went up to The Cheerleader at her own party and asked her whether she was jealous that her Jock boyfriend has bigger breasts than her. You really shouldn’t be surprised that he was upset.”

Well that wasn’t the entire story exactly. First: the girl’s boyfriend had caught him staring and it was all downhill from that point. In Harry’s defence, he had offered to stare at The Jock’s cleavage instead of at Amy’s but he doubted that the guy had appreciated the sentiment.

“The girl has a name, Pipes.”

“I don’t acknowledge blonde bimbos. And that’s beside the point.”

Harry fought the urge to point out that Piper was naturally blonde but resisted it. The last thing he wanted was another attack on his good arm.

“Which is?”

“That you, my friend, you’re an asshole.”

“A loveable asshole?”

“No, just the regular kind.”

“I still think it was a legitimate question.”

“And I still think it was stupid.”

“See these little judgement sessions of yours? They’re the exact reason that everyone thinks that you are an unlikable person.”

“Well then everyone can go fuck themselves.”

“Including me?”

“No. But only because I know you’d enjoy it.”

“You know somewhere deep down in that cold, black heart of yours I’m fairly certain that you like me.”

“Not in the mood Harrison.”

“Well I like you too.”

[Piper shakes her head. Harry thinks that he can see the ghost of a smile on her lips and gets the feeling that he may actually be right for once. Pipes has a nearly flawless poker-face and she barely moves her head or her lips but she isn’t scowling which always a good sign.]

“There. You’re all sewn up.”

“Thanks doc.”

“Try to let yourself heal this time. And remember: You don’t block punches with your face.”

“Funny, Ashton.”

[Harrison gets up and moves to hug her]

“Do we really have to – ”

[Harrison hugs her]

“Okay fine.”

[Piper exhales theatrically, drops her shoulders and hugs him back – She starts counting]

[The pair hug for a five seconds]

[Six seconds]

[Seven seconds]

[Eight seconds]

“Okay, okay. Enough! Enough affection for one day. Now get out so I can go to sleep.”

“You’re the best.”

“I know.”

*Growing up has just begun.*

*But there’s a place we can find*

*Where this pain is useless*

*And we’ll forever be the young.*

There in the darkness Corona found her, legs crossed and make-up running. Corri gave her a hug

*Where I was broken I have healed.*

*I learned to fight, I learned to feel*

*And I can’t believe my eyes.*

*You are still here next to me,*

*You’re all I need and you’re all I see,*

*In this life we hoped to find.*