Paper Walls - Piper

*Tap. Tap. Tap-tap.*

*Tap. Tap. Tap-tap.*

*Tap. Tap. Slide. Scream.*

The last time that Piper Ashton had seen this jack-ass he had been committing some other crime. Breaking-and-entering to be precise. She wasn’t really angry at him for that. In truth he was breaking in to places every 10 minutes and getting caught every 20 – If Piper had a quarter for every time she’d had organized his bail then she would be a millionaire by now. No, she was angry at him because it was 03:51 am on a Monday morning when her so-called friend, Harrison Grey, decided that it was great idea to break into her house.

Now, it was not that Harry was unwelcome in her house, on the contrary he was one of her best friends. It was not that this was the first time she’d caught him sneaking into her window like he had no sense of her personal space – because he didn’t. Granted she had snuck into through his window once or twice over the last two years. No, it was that it was 4am in the bloody morning and could he not have at least waited two hours for when he knew she would be getting up? So why exactly was it so urgent that he get to her right now?

‘WHAT THE FLYING FUCK ARE YOU DOING HERE?’ Piper had wanted to scream in his face, except:

1. This was Harrison Grey she was talking to. Screaming at him was the exact wrong way to get him to listen - too many of their teachers had been down that road for Piper not learn.
2. Screaming would wake the neighbors and Piper really didn’t want to deal with a pissed off Mrs. Jacobson before she had, at least, ingested some coffee.
3. When her eyes adjusted to the light properly and she got a good look at his face, Piper understood why he was there.

Instead she set her temper aside and regained her composure before taking a proper look at him. Put bluntly, Harry looked like he’d just gone a 3 rounds with a heavy-weight boxer. Okay it wasn’t that bad. Maybe a little worse than the fight at the Metallic Fire concert she’d dragged him to, but nowhere near as bad as the pulverizing he’d gotten from Greg Madison last year. Harry still refused to tell her just how he managed piss the guy off that badly but then again, he did have a talent for getting under other people’s skin.

[Insert description of Harry and possibly some references to other adventures – Piper looked him up and down.]

The man in question had dropped his hair over his face to create a messy, brown improvised fringe – if you could call it that - in order to hide the damage. Regardless, the artificial light still exposed his injuries. Off the cuff Piper could see a black eye developing -that was going to look worse than shit against his blue irises when the discoloration set in properly - and a bloody nose – not broken? That was a first. There were several cuts on his face, the most notable of which sat above his right eyebrow and goodness only knew what happened to his right arm.

It was at times like this when she felt the need to remind him that she had technically only started medical school last month and that right now she was still running off of her basic first aid training - that and a few dozen hours of treating hockey injuries. But it would be a futile conversation, she already knew that. So instead Piper decided to get to work on cleaning him up. She also decided to erase the mental note she made to kick Harry’s ass for waking her up. Someone else had clearly already done it.

“Cop or Bouncer?” she asked, dragging him into the bathroom.

“Boyfriend” he replied

The bleeding seemed to have stopped around the wounds but she was still going to have to get out her kit and clean it. He needed stitches, no doubt about that.

“Was she worth it?” Piper asked after a second.

“Not even close” he replied

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“I still don’t know what the hell you were thinking.”

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

Piper fought the urge to burst of laughing when Harry told her the story. She managed to keep some semblance of straight face on through most of it but she really couldn’t suppress a smile at the prospect of him offering to motorboat the Jock’s man-boobs. As with all of his stories Piper couldn’t tell where the truth ended and the hyperbole began but either way she always had a fun listening to his exploits.

Right. Serious talk.

“This is not a game, Harrison. You could be seriously hurt. Or worse.” Piper said

“Worse than that needle you’re going to use on me?” he said, gesturing to the open first aid kit on the sink to her right. She’d dragged him into the bathroom after getting a good look at his face. Hell, Piper was still in her pajamas and the Crimson Spark t-shirt Keith had bought her for her birthday two years ago.

“Is everything a fucking joke to you? You could’ve been arrested.”

“You’d bail me out.”

“I’ve done that enough, thanks. It’s Keith’s turn.”

“At least Keith doesn’t lecture”

“He does make you pay him back, though”

“Oh shit I forgot about that. Can I borrow 200 bucks from you?”

Piper briefly debated the value in punching him really hard in the shoulder for that response. No, that wouldn’t do. She didn’t want to do serious damage to his injured right arm and she hadn’t assessed it yet. His left arm, though …

Instead, Piper simply narrowed her eyes and shot him a scowl. She really had spent a small fortune over the past two years on bailing him out of jail. So much so that she and her other best friend Keith had developed a system for paying off Harry’s debts to the judiciary. Currently it was Keith’s turn to pay the court.

“Just do me a favor: be more responsible” she said, beginning again

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

“Your mother doesn’t patch you up after fights.”

“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.]

“Damnit Piper! What happened to ‘Do no harm?’ ”

[Piper disinfects another needle, checks his arm and gets back to work on putting in his stitches]

[Go into Piper’s assessment of Harry’s arm]

“I still can’t believe you pissed Rick off this badly.”

“Do we have to talk about that jerk-off?”

“Do you wanna talk about what that Madison kid did to you instead? “

“I may have actually deserved that one” he conceded

Damn. He was touchy about the Madisons. All Piper remembered was arriving home to find Harry slumped over in her doorway, looking like he’d just been hit by a train. She and Keith had gotten him to the hospital that afternoon and called his mom. They took turns staying with him until she got there. What had really surprised Piper was the fact that he didn’t press charges. All he said was that it was his own fault.

“And what about this one?”

“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 shouldn’t be surprised about, you know, this.”

“The girl has a name, Piper”

“I don’t acknowledge that blonde bimbo.” She replied

[Has to be a story based in reality]

The girl really was a top-grade bimbo. She was pretty -in a plastic, fake-as-shit kind of way - but she was also the kind of person that actively sucked the intelligence from everyone around her whenever she opened her mouth. The Cheerleader had, while surrounded by minions of course, once explained to Piper how her life would be “awesome” once she married for money and got to go on vacation to Fairhaven in the summer while the nanny raised her children back home in Midgard. Piper almost throw up in her face, and not just because the thought of this girl reproducing made her want to nuke the planet from orbit.

Though seriously, who goes to Fairhaven willingly? Even if was for a vacation. Piper spent a good chunk of her life trying to get out of that Hell-hole, so she never understood why the fuck anyone would be stupid enough to set foot there by choice. For her it was nothing more than a graveyard for dead dreams and broken relationships. The city was like The Cheerleader. Pretty, fake and soul-sucking if you stood near it for any stretch of time.

“I don’t think her hair color has any-” Harry said

At that Piper closed her eyes and raised her hand for silence. She soon found herself clenching all her fingers together to form the universal sign for ‘shut-the-fuck-up’. And for the record, the girl wasn’t a natural blonde.

“That is beside the point” Piper added

“What IS the point?” Harry replied

“The point is that you, my friend, are 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.”

It really was stupid. The best thing about Harry was also the worst thing about Harry. He marched to the beat to his own drum. Piper respected that. But seriously, in going about doing the things that he wanted to do, he never stopped to think about the consequences. He never thought about the consequences of mouthing off to a shit-headed teacher or to a scumbag bouncer, or the ramifications of filling someone’s bag with cereal and milk before hoisting it on a flag pole, or the repercussions of putting up porn in a teacher’s classroom 3 hours before school started so that it was there when the first class walked in. They were all equivalent in his mind. Good or bad, legal or illegal, to Harry all that mattered was having fun on his own terms. He was his own person. And despite the fact that she’d probably never tell him - it was something that Piper really liked about him.

The normal result of his actions was that he got detention – normally on a Saturday, once on a Sunday- or he got his butt handed to him. Regardless, Piper –along with Keith- would hear about it afterwards. He would always tell them stories with the same grin on his face and the same devil-may-care attitude.

Still, the fact that he couldn’t give a shit about the social order at Seacrest Academy didn’t excuse how really fucking stupid that comment was.

“See this? This is why people don’t like you.” Harry said, folding his arms

“Well then ‘people’ can go fuck themselves.” Piper replied not even lifting her eyes from cut she was currently stitching up. He was playing around but Piper knew what –and who- he was referring to. Then again, Harry wasn’t the only one who didn’t give a shit about the social order at Seacrest.

“Including me?” he asked

“No. Because you enjoy fucking yourself.” Piper answered

When she first met him, she would’ve said ‘yes’ to that question.

“You do care about me.”

“Not in the mood Harrison.”

“Well I like you too.”

[Rewrite the paragraph below this one – needs to be more in-line with Piper’s thoughts about Harrison above. She likes that he is his own person and that he can make her laugh but laments that his actions aren’t always intelligent]

Piper shook her head and rolled her eyes but she couldn’t suppress a smile at that. Of course she liked him, she wouldn’t tolerate his presence otherwise. As much as she wanted to swat him on the back of the head for the stupid things he said, she would still say this in his favor: he was one of the few people who could make Piper legitimately laugh. But he was still having way too much fun right now.

“There. You’re all sewn up. Get to doctor”

“Thanks doc.”

“Just remember: You don’t block punches with your face.”

Piper had to groan at that. Not her wittiest line. Not by a longshot.

“She makes jokes now.” Harry observed.

[Harrison gets up and moves to hug her]

“Do we really have to -”

[Harrison hugs her]

“Okay fine.” She said, dropping her shoulders and exhaling theatrically. Usually she hated hugged but he’d bought himself some goodwill. She slipped one hand around his waist and patted him on the back with the other. But that didn’t mean that she wasn’t counting down until the hug ended. She’d give it until the count of five.

[The pair hug for a five seconds]

Seven seconds.

“Harry?”

Ten seconds.

“Harrison.”

Thirteen seconds.

“Enough! Enough hugging damn it.”

“Now get out so I can start my day properly.” She added

“Thanks for patching me up. You’re the best.” He said walking through the front door this time.

“I know.” She replied, shooting him a bright smile for the first time that morning.

Piper Ashton watched him walking away from her house, still cradling his bad arm as the night engulfed him. It occurred to her that the one good thing that she had learned while living in her parents’ house had come to her by way of her sister’s favorite TV show. Piper forgot the name of the series but she remembered the scene vividly. The actor had puffed up his chest and looked into his co-star’s eyes before delivering his line.

“I've had and lost enough to know that the only thing that's important in this life are the people in it and I want you in my life.” It had been part of an elaborate proposal speech some middle guy had cooked up for his 30-something girlfriend, a proposal that failed incidentally – a first for any romance drama she’d seen.

As Piper closed her door and sat down on couch she thought about that quote and asked herself whether she could say that of the man who had just left her house. Yes, you couldn’t choose your relatives but that doesn’t mean that you can’t choose your family or your friends. And as Piper thought of Harrison and Keith she hoped that she had chosen well her new family well.

**Notes**

* [This is really about Piper assessing her relationship with Harrison – she has to laugh, get annoyed and wonder why she likes him and whether she should allow him in her life.]
  + At this stage they like one another and are comfortable with each other
* [Trace through their history – before and after reconciliation]
  + That may be a different essay
  + Right now I think that will probably be called ‘Reflections’ and be about Harry and Piper in detention
* [Show the dynamic between her and Harrison]
* Piper hasn’t actually started at medical school yet
  + She has enrolled and is due to start soon but only has her knowledge of first aid to go on now.
  + Either that or she has started Med-school but isn’t very far into it – at least to the point where I could take a basic first aid course and have a rough understanding of what she would be thinking