Paper Walls - Piper

*Tap. Tap. Tap-tap.*

*Tap. Tap. Tap-tap.*

*Tap. Tap. Slide. Scream.*

When her window slid open and she heard the sound of the intruder slithering his way into her house, Piper Ashton nearly wet the bed. Shit. She knew she should’ve gotten those burglar bars installed of postponing it for another month.

Through her sleep-induced delirium, Piper had thought the pitter-patter at her window was nothing but the rain or something natural. As such she treated it as an irrelevance before adjusting her blanket, turning her pillow to the cold side and dosing off again.

Piper shot up in her bed and nearly had heart-attack when she opened her eyes to the sight of a hooded figure landing in her bedroom. He was over in the corner, an agent of darkness sat coiled and ready to strike out at her when she made her move. Fuck. She needed to think. No there wasn’t any time. Now she needed to act. And quickly.

Piper moved the covers away and slowly reached for her hockey stick, making sure to keep her eyes on him at times. Her vision had adjusted to the blackness and she could see the bastard perfectly now. With her composite stick in hand, Piper was perfectly ready to beat the ever-loving-shit out of the invader when he moved across the room and switched the light on.

The last time that Piper had seen him he had been committing a 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 multi-millionaire by now. No, she was angry at him because it was 03:51 am on a Monday morning when her so-called friend Harry 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 year. 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 to anything (she’d been down that road too many times.)
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 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. He had dropped his hair over his face to hide the damage but the artificial lighting exposed his facial injuries. Off the cuff she could see a split lip, several cuts on his face, swelling, possibly a black eye and goodness only knew what had happened to his right arm. Piper erased her mental note to kick Harry’s ass for waking her up– someone else had clearly already done it.

“Cop or Bouncer?” she asked, moving across the room.

“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.”

[Begin talking about their relationship]

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

“Worse than that needle you’re going to use on me?”

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

As much as Harry was ‘The funny one’ between the two of them, sometimes his cavalier answers made Piper want to smack him in the face.

“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 quickly 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”

“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?’ ”

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

“Do we have to talk about that asshole?”

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

“I may have actually deserved that one”

“And what about 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. I’m just surprised she didn’t kick you in the nuts.”

“The girl has a name, Pipes”

“I don’t acknowledge idiots.” She replied

The girl was a top-grade, class ‘A’ bimbo. She was pretty (in a plastic, fake-as-shit kind of way), sure, 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 in the south of France every summer while the nanny raised her children back home. 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.

“And that is beside the point” she added after a second

“Which is?”

“That you, my friend, are an asshole”

“A loveable asshole?”

“No. Just the regular kind.” She replied. Okay maybe he was a tad loveable. Just a tad. Like 5%.

“I still think it was a legitimate question.”

“And I still think it was stupid.”

“See this? This is why people don’t like you.”

“Well then ‘people’ can go fuck themselves.”

“Including me?”

“No. Because you enjoy fucking yourself.”

“You do care about me.”

“Not in the mood Harrison.”

“Well I like you too.”

Piper shook her head and rolled her eyes but she couldn’t suppress a smile at that. Of course she liked him, he was one of her best friends for a reason. Underneath his rampant anti-authority/ jester persona Harry was actually a sweetheart. A witty, sarcastic sweetheart that she sometimes wanted to punch for the stupid things he did – actually come to think of it he was probably the only person who could legitimately make Piper laugh.

[Go into Harry and Piper’s history?]

“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.”

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.

As 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 she’d seen drama. Now as Piper sat on her couch at 04:42 am she considered the point that actor had made

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 and jobs can be fleeting 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.]

[Trace through their history – before and after reconciliation]

[Show the dynamic between her and Harrison]

[Show how Piper views him as her surrogate brother]