Paper Walls

‘*Let’s burn a hole so we can climb out of these paper walls in this empty house. Don’t listen too close, their words are like guns with bullets that fly and kill what you’ve won. Some love to hate and some tell you lies. So let’s make a toast and kiss them goodbye.*’

**Mackenzie Anson**

When he stumbled his way through Mackenzie Anson’s bedroom window at 04:51 on a Sunday morning reciting the tale of how he managed to crack his glasses and injure his right arm in the 36-hour period since she had last seen him, Keith Buchant was certain to mention two points. Firstly: the woman involved, and there was always a woman involved, was mind-blowingly beautiful with a set of “sparkling blue eyes that [he] could get lost in for days” and secondly: he hadn’t actually managed to get her number.

Mackenzie’s first instinct was grab her hockey stick and bludgeon whatever was at her window that had just awoken her from her slumber. Keith was lucky that she had realized it was him before she had the chance to do anything - or he’d have a bashed in face to go with that arm.

Mackenzie’s second instinct was bludgeon Keith anyway for scaring her half to death. Seriously, who the bleeding heck breaks into their friend’s house at 5am to tell them about their escapades with some girl?

‘Whatever, Keith, You fucked her. Welcome to the rest of your life! I don’t need to know about it at 5am in the Goddamn morning.’ Mack had wanted to scream in his face, except:

1. Casual sex was more Harrison’s style
2. This was Keith Buchant
3. Screaming would wake the neighbors and Mackenzie really didn’t want to deal with a pissed off Mrs. Jacobson before she at least ingested some coffee.

‘*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.*’

It was a Thursday night when I realized that Hell had frozen over. She checked her watch immediately; 8pm. She looked up to find Skylar Clarke shivering at her door, standing on the welcome mat that read ‘Friends welcome. Relatives by appointment.’ The girl was neither to Mackenzie so what the Hell was she doing here, sopping wet no less? “Hi.” Skylar said, pausing as if not sure how to proceed. “Hi.” Mackenzie responded before silence descended upon them like the

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

” 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**

It was in the summer of his fourteenth birthday that Keith Buchant decided that 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 years 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 the afore mentioned ‘best friends’, leading to Keith becoming a walking cacophony of social avoidance when he was not with them.

And so the paradox of Keith Buchant became 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 what he wanted - or …

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

**Skylar Clarke**

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 Keith had realized his folly before spinning on his heel and exiting the room. 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.

**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.