

* excerpt 9pg sample *PAPER DOLL*

Setting: Darkness. In the dark, we hear a popping sound - the firing of a champagne cork. Lights come up to reveal a chintz-decorated Victorian-style room in a B&B. The room is furnished in eclectic style: Upstage center: vintage bed beside it a bedside table on which sits a lamp with a frilled shade and a vase of roses. Stage left: armchair and bureau, door to outside. Stage right: a small 'occasional' antique table, door to bathroom. A bottle of champagne rests, open, on the table, with two glasses. Bright green carpet, oddly colored flowered wallpaper.

At Rise: SHE is seated on the antique bed. SHE wears a slip, garter belt, stockings and pearls. HE, seated in an old plush armchair, watches her. HE stands, refills his glass with champagne and hands her a filled glass. HE toasts her.

HE

Ten years.

SHE

(Toasting back, empties glass)

Ten years -- and here we are in this strange little room with pink wainscoting and a small green rug -- where the walls are not quite plumb ...

HE

(Wiggling bottle)

More champagne?

SHE

... where the walls lean in a-kilter and the rug is this artificial green like astro-turf. I'm going to lie on it.

HE

Be my guest.

(SHE rises nimbly from the bed, lies on the floor.)

SHE

A room to die in. Look at my skin on this green. Do you think I look like an albino whale? An albino whale beached in a B&B?

HE

Get off the floor, Jen.

SHE

I always thought I'd die in a white room, but now I think I'd like to die in a room just like this.

HE

Get off the floor.

SHE

Oh my God the wallpaper! Look at those morning glories! The stamens—don't they look like tentacles?

HE

Come over here and let me make you happy.

SHE

No!

HE

You know you want to be happy, Jen. And today's gonna be the day--

SHE

Did you read that story in the paper about those giant squid? They live deep in the ocean, eating prehistoric fish. Do you think they have eyes, Rog?

HE

Uh-huh.

SHE

Maybe they've evolved in some strange way--traded eyes for something else.

HE

I'm going to evolve you. Now get on up here.

SHE

Nobody's ever seen them but they're out there--submerged, but still there. Parts wash up sometimes...

(HE gets up, reaching for her, pulling her. She resists.)

No! Not yet! This place is scaring me!

(Pulling away)

Oh my God. Look! Lavender flowers and pink vines! Please, let's go home.

HE

We have to stay here.

SHE

Why?

HE

Relax and breathe.

(SHE breathes deeply.)

HE (Cont.)

This is the place it's going to happen.

SHE

Oh.

HE

A surprise to end all surprises.

SHE

It feels—it's supposed to be charming but there's something creepy, perverse...

HE

Just crappy décor.

SHE

Who would put those colors together? Only someone in total despair. Or a psychopath.

HE

OK. I'll turn out the lights now.

SHE

No! I'm not ready!

HE

Go brush your teeth and forget about the décor.

(SHE gets up and goes into the bathroom. She brushes her teeth. HE lies down on the bed.)

SHE (offstage)

I know you don't think it's important. But it is. Before you notice the décor creeps in like toxic mold -- and the things take over. The things multiply and get stronger and stronger and pretty soon the things are in charge and you're their slave. The things tell you to bring home other things, "Buy her. I want her, in pink." That big chaise, the one in your den? It said to me "I need a pillow, and it better not be needlepoint." Oh Rog, let's throw everything out before it's too late.

HE

Relax pussycat. Come here and lie down, let me stroke you.

(She comes to him. Lies on the bed. He kisses her neck.)

SHE

(Sitting up)

Wait a minute. Do you hear something?

HE

Crickets. The fan. Nothing.

(SHE gets out of bed and looks out the window.)

SHE

Soon it'll be too late.

HE

For what?

(She goes to her bag and pulls out a tube.)

SHE

Superglue. That invisible adhesive that fills in all the cracks, and sticks together everything that has been torn asunder, all manner of shattered things...

HE

Jesus, Jen. Cut it out. Nothing's shattered here. No one's broken. Yes, it's been a rough patch but we're through it. I've been planning this night for a long time, the surprise to end all surprises...

SHE

Oh! It's leaking.

(Throws the tube away)

I glued my fingers together!

(Holds them up)

I know what to do—you pry your fingertips apart, and then there's this little coating of glue, like a second skin, you can either let time do its work or you can rip it off...And then when your fingertips are healed, you'd be untraceable.

HE

Uh huh. You could begin again.

SHE

You, not us.

HE

We're in this together and we're going to be happy, babe, happy like at the beginning. We're going to start clean.

SHE

Are you deaf to me?

HE

I listen, but what you *say* doesn't matter, because I hear what you don't say.

No you don't. SHE

And I know what you did for me... HE

Eons ago. SHE

You stood by me like no one ever had. HE

Long, long ago SHE

You held me for days. HE

You were puking and sweating. SHE

You patted my back. HE

Your hair was standing on end. SHE

I was twitching and crawling, out of my mind. HE

Cool compresses, Klonopin under your tongue. SHE

You never left me. HE

You couldn't be alone. SHE

And now? Now I can be alone? HE

SHE

Yes!

HE

Oh Jen. Look, I know that you've got this craving—you got to fill it to be happy-

SHE

It's a hunger in my body. It gnaws at me.

HE

I get that.

SHE

It's my fault.

HE

You weren't ready.

SHE

And now it's too late! My tubes are scarred and I can't be fixed, there's no life left in me! There's nothing left but the things and dinner parties and birthdays and car crashes and the calendar that means nothing to me! I can't go on like this!

HE

I know how hard it's been—the surgery and the drugs – if we'd made a different decision way back then maybe it would've been different, but that's over now. So you can forgive me—and yourself—and come to me, let me hold you babe, let me make you happy now and forever.

SHE

You think you know how to do that?

HE

Yes.

SHE

No one makes anyone else happy.

HE

I can. I will. I know what you want.

SHE

No you don't.

HE

Oh, I do, trust me. You're in my power, you're in my fingertips.
(HE reaches for her wiggling his fingertips.)

SHE

Stop it!

(HE grabs at her.)

Not now! I mean it, Rog, I'm not playing!

HE

Oh, I do, trust me. You're in my power, you're in my fingertips.

(HE reaches for her wiggling his fingertips.)

SHE

Stop it!

(HE grabs at her.)

Not now! I mean it, Rog, I'm not playing!

HE

I don't care what you want.

(HE gets out of bed. SHE tries to escape. HE tickles her a little too roughly.)

SHE

Stop! Stop it! Don't!

(SHE pushes him back on bed. HE lets her. HE holds her. SHE gets up. Lies back down on floor.)

HE

You think you want to get away from me? Is that what you want?

SHE

Yes!

HE

You don't know what you want. You don't even know what's possible.

SHE

Yes, I do!

HE

You're gonna be amazed.

SHE

Nothing helps!

HE

Tomorrow you'll wake up and everything's gonna be different.

No way. SHE

HE
And you're gonna be astonished because you're gonna be happy. I'm going to give you what you've been aching for.

No! SHE
(Backing away)

HE
Fine. I can wait. You just spin yourself into butter. I'm going to relax until you soften up.
(HE stretches out on the bed and closes his eyes.)

SHE
You're not relaxed. You're faking. (beat) Rog, Rog? Are you happy?

HE
I couldn't be happier.

SHE
Really?

HE
Uh huh. (Opens his eyes) You look great lying on the floor. Frothing at the mouth that little bit.

SHE
Like-- this?

HE
Uh huh.

SHE
I'm not frothing! I'm... lathered. *Neigh*...
(SHE neighs like a horse.)

HE
Come on up here and I'll ride you round the bend.

SHE
My hooves will clatter and my teeth will chatter.

HE
Whoa!

SHE

Will you curry me? Will you brush me just so?

HE

I'll brush you all over, with steady, gentle strokes. I'll start with your withers, and oh, you're going to whinny.

SHE

I don't think so.

HE

Why not?

SHE

You forgot the whip.

HE

Oh, I'm prepared.

SHE

You are?