

Plastic Wrap Girl

She's sadness and gold satin hair; it depends on the day which one people notice first. Today is a snowy Monday evening, the holidays just behind them, and it's the hair he notices.

A pretty girl, solo at the bar, usually means either damaged or prostitute - probably both.

"No. No one is sitting there," she offers without looking up, without him asking. And he thinks, briefly, he will always remember the first word she spoke to him was no.

He feels her sadness. It's like an imaginary friend she's had lingering beside her since childhood. But their banter is light and easy. Even over the usual bar noise, somehow he hears every word she speaks distinctly.

And when he walks her to her car she hesitates, then turns to ask, "Aren't you going to invite me back to your place?"

And he wants to. He just wants to ditch her hopeless, invisible friend first. This girl, Violet, those big round eyes of hers have shed more tears than he cares to imagine.

So he doesn't.

So he does invite her back to his place.

A brand new bachelor pad for a brand new bachelor.

A single barstool, a single leather club chair, a single lamp on a single end table for a single man.

And there she falls upon his bed, her hair spilling across the sheets, the pillow, draping over the side of the bed. And there she stays, for a month and a day. Unplanned, never discussed.

He has been accustomed to sharing his home for over twenty years, and it feels familiar to fill this empty void with a young girl, with hair like silk, and her ever present shadow of sadness.

It's day 4 and the early A.M. The first streaks of sunlight violate the privacy of the room but cause it to glow a surreal hue of amber. She, on her side, a sort of nude serpentine shape; following the valley of her neck, the swell of her breast, the dip of her waist, the rise of her hips. She studies him as he dresses for work; goes through the mundane routine of the morning.

"What you need is a dapper woven silk tie." He glances down at the one he's wearing. "Maybe blue and slate. Versace, of course."

And this is how it starts; where it starts.

"You think?"

From supine to seated, she floats. Grasping his necktie and pulling him close to her.

"Not think, I know," she says, and for just a moment seems less sad. Effervescent, almost. She kisses him, and the moment passes.

Her existence is the sort of thing that gives a man reason to smile in the middle of a workday, as well as cause to dash home after. Today he detours long enough to stop at the department store. The salesgirl, maybe a year younger than Violet, helps him with his purchase and agrees with Violet.

"Sharp," she comments. "Very sharp indeed."

At home, his home, he tries it on for Violet. She demonstrates her approval by removing it with ferocity and making love to him on the cold, leather, club chair for the first time. He worries about that though,

and conditions the rich hide surface while she showers. Using the gentlest cloth, he kneels down and applies the liquid in small, perfect circles, until it once again, looks as if never touched.

She emerges, stepping naked from a plume of steam, wrings her hair to drip onto the plush bathmat, then lights a cigarette.

"Next," she says as she exhales, "we work on furnishing this place."

He steals a drag from her cigarette and smiles. This is him agreeing with her. The touch of a woman, the touch of a younger woman with swanky, cultivated style and taste is exactly what this place, this bachelor pad, this single man, needs.

"You have such potential. We'll make you marketable to the female masses yet."

He reaches for her; thumb against her jaw, hand fitting snugly beneath her chin, pressing against her throat, and gently, he pushes her against the wall. His eyes searching for something in hers, but he finds nothing. So he closes his and kisses her until the moment passes.

Day 8, the bookshelves and matching coffee table arrive. The 13th day, they go to browse leisurely for clothing together. There she coaxes him into a side trip to the spa where she introduces him to the importance, and luxury, of proper skin care.

"Fixing you before you break me," she whispers as he pays their tab. Her words, the soft, icy lips forming those words, the petite wisps of breath behind those words, are all Violet. She smiles when he turns to her, as if to laugh it off, make it small and meaningless.

Her youth, her nudity, her shimmering hair and her Siamese twin of melancholy fill the space and time of his life... for exactly 32 days. She adjusts and fine tunes him. She applies herself, but idly, slowly, methodically, to his superficial metamorphosis. And he accepts these alterations.

Day 19, over wine, splayed across the newly acquired Oriental Scatter rug, he asks, "Doesn't anyone wonder where you are?" He swipes a lock of hair behind her ear.

The heavy sigh she fills the room with, that is her reply. Imposed upon them more from the intruding guest of anguish than Violet herself. She masks tears by kissing his throat. She distracts herself by interlocking her fingers at the back of his neck. Then hides underneath her security blanket of goldilocks. On the 31st day, the new bed arrives. Her smile reappears as she takes a kitchen knife to the thick, translucent encasement and unveils the mattress.

With tools, he assembles the bed frame. Slowly, methodically. She slides the plastic loose and nudges the mattress just enough to send it falling flat to the floor, and she goes tumbling after.

He glances over his shoulder at her. She pats the spot beside her.

"Let's break it in," she whispers, coyly. And she may as well be saying, "Validate me."

He pauses, considers his options, then drops his tools to join her. Violet stretches her arms overhead and arches her back, where one of his hands fits neatly, while the other discreetly locates the discarded plastic wrap that once protected the mattress.

As he runs his tongue along her throat, she moans. As his teeth lightly graze her earlobe, her fingernails bite his skin. As he slips the plastic across her face, she barely reacts. So he tightens the slack, and feels

her hands begin to thrash; sees her eyes widen. But finds nothing behind them - still.

It's on day 32, their last day together, the monogrammed leather valet box arrives. A shade named Espresso Stain; a gift from her, even if he paid for it. A personal item Violet chose. An elegant piece to go on his bedside table, where he will look at it as each day begins and each evening comes to a close. He admires it, runs his fingers over the smooth leather surface, and the raised stitching of the monogrammed letters, then returns to the task at hand.

He gathers the ends of the plastic securely, but not before lightly fingering a loose strand of silky hair, and then tucks it into this cocoon. You always remember your first, he knows and, in this case, your second as well. This girl and her sorrow; delicate and breakable twin fawns.

And tomorrow is day 1 - for someone, and this single man.