

paper jam

written by
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PAPER JAM

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FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE ROOM - DAY

A minimal bedroom converted into an office, complete with a plastic chair mat over carpet.

CLOSE ON a text document open on a bulky, beige monitor. A pixelated paragraph followed by the words "The End"

A double click.

The print dialog pops up. In the print preview, the title page reads:

"UNTITLED THRILLER MANUSCRIPT"
"By Wanda Wagner"

Click.

CLOSE ON a beige printer. The printer's green digital display reads "Printing". The mechanical gears clonk and buzz inside. Then--

A pop. Smoke rises from the cracks of the printer. A piece of paper comes out on fire.

VOICE (O.S.)

Shit, shit!

WANDA WAGNER (38) grabs the paper, then pulls her hand away from the flames. She scrambles around her desk. Grabs a glass of water, tosses it on the printer.

The flames sizzle out. Steam rises. Wanda sighs heavy.

She has frazzled hair pinned up to save time for more important matters. A bit overdressed to compensate for working from home.

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY

A few people browse around the modest yard sale at the middle-income suburb home. A rack of women's clothing, a table of women's shoes, assorted jewelry. A chubby man in dress-casual, TED (59), reads "Mr. Darcy Takes a Wife" in a lawn chair by the front door.

WANDA (O.S.)

That printer looks like a
workhorse. How much do you want for
it?

Ted looks up from his book. Squints at the sun.

Behind Wanda on a table rests an even bigger printer. Like something you'd see in FedEx.

TED

Five dollars should do it.

Wanda contains her excitement, pulls some cash from her purse, hands it over. She looks around at the yard sale.

WANDA

Lots of women's stuff here. I didn't see the lady.

TED

(sullen)

No. You didn't...

Wanda bites her lip, awkward. Ted rises from his chair.

TED

You need help with that printer?

WANDA

Yes, please. Thank you so much.

Ted tosses the book down in his chair.

As they walk toward the printer.

WANDA

So you liked *Pride and Prejudice*?

TED

I haven't read it.

They get to the table. Ted lifts the printer. They head toward the street.

WANDA

So this printer. Does it work pretty well? I'm going to be printing a lot of pages.

TED

I assume so. My wife was an author.

WANDA

Oh, so am I. Aspiring. I'm printing my manuscript as soon as I hook this up. So, did she write anything I've read?

TED

Nothing I've even read. She never let anyone read it. It was for her.

WANDA

Hmm. That's a shame.

Wanda opens the back of her white hatchback. Ted rests the printer inside.

TED

Yeah, I would have given anything to read it. She spoke so beautifully. Can only imagine how she wrote.

Wanda nods, sympathetic.

TED

Anyway, enjoy. Can't wait to read your book...

He points at her.

WANDA

Wanda Wagner.

Ted snaps his finger. Smiles.

TED

Ted.

Wanda watches as he walks back to the front yard.

INT. OFFICE ROOM - DAY

Wanda slides the paper tray in. Flips the power button.

CLOSE ON the open print preview with the title page. Click.

CLOSE ON the beige workhorse printer. The digital display flashes red "PAPER JAM".

Wanda jams the printer buttons randomly. Pulls the paper tray in and out. Rolls her eyes.

CUT TO:

Printer panels lay on the table. The metal chassis exposed. Wanda lays down her screwdriver, leans over the printer.

Wanda reaches in, struggles, yanks out a piece of paper. It's wrinkled and partly shredded.

Wanda stops as something on the paper grabs her attention. He sets it on the table, flattens it out.

CLOSE ON the paper. Printed at the top: "For Ted"

The page is dense with text. The number 1 in the upper corner.

Wanda scans the paper in awe. Tears well up in her eyes as she reads.

INT. TED'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ted reclines in his leather chair. Reads "Mr. Darcy Takes a Wife". His living room stuff with boxes and assorted items from the yard sale.

A knock at the door.

CLOSE ON the door. It swings open to reveal Wanda with a messenger bag over her shoulder.

Ted looks confused.

TED
Good evening?

WANDA
Hi, I know it's a little late, but the printer--

TED
It didn't work?

WANDA
No, it's fine, it's just. Well, here...

Wanda opens her bag pulls out a piece of paper. Hands it to Ted.

WANDA
It... had a paper jam.

Ted squints at it.

CLOSE ON the paper. "For Ted" at the top.

Ted's face scans the page, then looks to Wanda in shock. She smiles, excited. She points to the upper corner of the page.

WANDA
She did have a beautiful voice.

Wanda reaches back into her bag.

WANDA

There was only that first page,
but... if you'd want to, I printed
an extra copy of my manuscript.
You'd be the first to read it.

Wanda pulls a thick packet of paper. Hands it over to Ted.
He takes it with a warm smile.

TED

I will.

Ted grips the single tattered page.

TED

Thank you for this.

Wanda nods. She closes her messenger bag.

WANDA

Have a good night.

The share a look of appreciation. Wanda heads out toward the
street. Ted watches her as she walks away. Then closes the
door.

FADE OUT.

THE END