

SPARES PARTS
by Paul Watson
Starring Natasha in Pieces

Natasha looks at the sprawling Los Angeles mansion from the road. The white walls around the grounds are topped with discrete but sharp razor wire. You can just about make out some trees, not close enough to climb into, in dark green leaf and the flat roof over the wall. Home of "Merlin, the Great Magician", long retired from the stage and now settled firmly into the upper echelons of LA's milieu that only those both rich and famous get to inhabit. And she's going to be working there. She presses the intercom, "Uhm, hi, it's Natasha? The, the maid?" she stammers, voice rising at the end. "Come in."

The gates swing silently inwards and she sets off up the winding path of gravel. The house is impressive, a sprawling mansion of late Eighties style with whitewashed walls and inset square windows. A gardener can be seen in the distance, clipping the trees.

She walks up to the colonnaded entrance, the patio in the style of classical Greece, slightly out of step with the more modern sensibilities of the rest of the design. The door stands open, a man well into his silver fox years standing there, tanned and tall, with a clipped beard and a full head of white curled hair. He's dressed comfortably in chinos and polo shirt, with only a slight belly over his belt.

"You are Natasha?"

"Uhm, yes, sir, Mr Merlin, sir."

He smiles, rather like a kindly uncle or grandfather. "I have not been Merlin for some years now, my dear. Probably longer than you've even been alive."

Natasha colours up to her light brown hair. "Sorry, Mr Merles." She shifts from foot to foot.

"It's quite all right. It's somewhat gratifying to know that my fame extends so far from when I last courted it. Now, I know you've signed the NDA, rather a tedious formality, but necessary, so please, enter." he steps to the side, ushering her inside. The foyer is tiled alternating white and black, the walls white with a few scattered paintings, mostly Pollock and Rockwell. "Now, first things first. This is an important, possibly the most important, stricture of working here. You do not, under any circumstance, enter that room there." he points to a black door at the back of the foyer, under the sweeping staircases. "It is outwith your duties and you will be dismissed with cause if you disobey me in this matter. I trust you understand?"

Natasha looks at the door. "Yes, sir. Got it."

"It is locked, so you'd have to make an effort to go inside. But I feel it's important to stress. The room contains my old equipment and promotional materials. So this is really for your own safety."

"Yes, sir." she replies.

"Good. Your rooms are through here."

Natasha is kept busy, there's so much of the mansion to keep clean, so much so that she barely even thinks about the door. Mr Merles' is polite but mostly stays out of her way as she keeps the place clean. Mrs Merles looks almost as good as when she was on the stage. Natasha hopes she looks half as good at that age, although she does quail a little at the prospect of however much surgery Mrs Merles' youthful appearance must have taken, never mind the cost. But she treats Natasha strangely, sometimes ignoring her completely, sometimes looking at her with an almost predatory hunger. Fortunately, she spends most of her time by the pool, topping up her tan, or out on her black stallion cantering through the grounds. Mr Merles is usually in his office, dealing with requests, questions, media and the like. Natasha doesn't disturb him in there, cleaning it only when he's done for the day.

She doesn't mind the work, I mean, it's mindless, and tiring, but it pays better than the coffee shop and she doesn't have to deal with customers. And, despite all the teasing of her friends about the perversions of the rich and famous, she doesn't see anything like that, or have to wear a silly, frilly French Maid's outfit. Her room is comfortable, but not especially roomy, like a hotel room but not the suites. All in all, she's doing quite well.

This continues for several weeks, with Natasha's life consisting of work, sleeping from work and a scant few hours online. But then the Merles host a swanky party. Mrs Merles pulls her in to help her prepare. She still doesn't really talk to her, except for instructions on what to get from the cupboards. But Natasha can't help but notice that inside the walk-in closet, that's bigger than her room, the multitude of clothes are tailored for a variety of body shapes and sizes, far more than the gym slim Mrs Merles could ever need.

The dress she's instructed to bring out is luxuriant silk in an emerald green that doesn't really go with Mrs Merles' blonde curls. But she dutifully gets it ready and helps Mrs Merles into it, flushing a little as the older woman unashamedly undresses in front of her to fit the dress. Up close, she can see fine pale lines, like faded old scars, around Mrs Merles' body, especially her waist, thighs, neck and shoulders.

Mrs Merles' watches her in the mirror, reaching out to guide Natasha's hands over the lines. "My husband didn't always get the measurements exactly right." she explains with a smoke-husky voice. "He cut you?"

"A little. Unless you count all the times on stage, of course."

Natasha dutifully gives a little laugh. "Not that he was really cutting you on stage."

Mrs Merles' gives a strange half-smile, somewhat wistful, somewhat secret, "Well, that's the trick, isn't it?" she smooths the silk out, a V of fabric running over her shoulders and chest, the back line plunging down, barely any cloth over the sides but little enough to reveal there's nothing underneath it but Mrs Merles. "How do I look?"

Natasha pauses, caught between honesty and flattery. "You look beautiful, Mrs Merles..."

"But?" she asks lightly, her blue eyes focused intently on Natasha in the mirror.

Natasha swallows. "But...I'm not sure the green compliments your hair as much as black would."

Mrs Merles' tilts her head, turning her head a little, "Hmmm. You may be right." she sweeps out of the room, "Harry!" calling for her husband. Natasha goes back to work. She sees them in animated discussion and stays far away. The couple go to the secret door. Mr Merles takes the key from behind a nearby Rockwell and unlocks it and they're both inside. Natasha struggles against her curiosity.

Five minutes later, the couple emerge again. Mrs Merles beaming, running her hand through bright copper ringlets, her emerald eyes matching the shade of the dress perfectly. She walks past Natasha. "You were right. This doesn't work as well with a blonde."

That incident gnaws at Natasha's thoughts for the next several weeks. She catches herself staring at the closed and locked door. She tries to explain what she saw. Obviously, it's just a wig. And contacts. That would explain how Mrs Merles retains her youthful head of hair. It's a very convincing wig. Even having seen the transformation up close, she'd swear it was real.

The incident that fans Natasha's curiosity from a flame to a raging fire occurs in the Summer. Mrs Merles was out riding when Champion bucks, throwing her off. Her scream of pain brings Natasha, Simon the gardener and Mr Merles running to her side. Her right leg took most of the impact, her knee bending at an unnatural angle under her knee-length white skirt, a shard of bone protruding from her shin. Mr Merles takes charge immediately. He and Simon lift her up, her arm around his shoulder, Simon supporting her legs on a makeshift stretcher. "I'll call the ambu..."

"No." Mr Merles snaps, "No ambulance. Those leeches never let you go."

"But..."

"If you want to be helpful, go inside and unlock the black door. The key is behind the Rockwell."

Natasha stares at him, and the blood dripping from his wife's leg. "Go on. Do not open the door. Just get it unlocked."

"But..."

"Go!"

Natasha goes, running across the grounds, skidding on the tiles she's only just cleaned. She fumbles for the key, trying not to damage several hundreds, thousands of dollars worth of artwork. She turns

the key in the lock, tumblers clicking until it clicks. She stares at the door handle, looking over her shoulder as Mr Merles stumbles up the step supporting his wife. She pulls her hand back from the handle and backs across the foyer, away from the tempting desire to pull the door open, even just a crack.

Merles pushes through the door but before Natasha can get more than a glimpse of the crowded boxes and posters and shining metal blades, it's closed. With nothing better to do, she returns to cleaning, scrubbing the blood drops from the tiles.

After far too short a time, Mrs Merles walks breezily out, her skirt swirling around her thighs, no sign of the injury on her pale legs. Natasha says nothing staring at her as she passes.

Mr Merles walks up to Natasha as she watches his wife. He coughs. "The key, please. We wouldn't want to lose it, after all."

Natasha blinks, pulled out of her churning thoughts, and hands the small key over.

That night she tosses and turns, her mind refusing to let her rest as she tries to puzzle out how Mrs Merles was healed so quickly, in seconds, minutes at most, rather than weeks. She tries to argue with herself that the injury wasn't that serious at which point she recalls the sharp shard of bone ripping through flesh and abandons that argument. She tosses her sheet off. She can't get to sleep like this. Barefoot in a faded t-shirt stretched over her chest, the tattered hem brushing against the top of her thighs, she walks through the empty corridors of the mansion.

She approaches the black door quietly, looking around nervously, although exactly what she's looking for she can't say. The key is still behind the painting. It still turns in the lock. She breathes quickly, nervously, palms sweaty as she turns the handle. The door opens smoothly, soundlessly. Inside, the room is as dark as a windowless room at night can be. She swallows and steps inside, closing the door. She fumbles for a switch and the room finally lights up, dazzling her as the bulb reflects off dozens of gleaming sheets of metal. As her eyes adjust she recognises the brightly coloured boxes and cabinets all around the room, the tools of Merlin's art. Blades of all shapes and intimidating sizes hang from the walls, layering over posters from Merlin's working days. She thinks she hears a murmur up ahead. "H-h-hello?" There is no answer. She heads deeper into the room, threading her way through the narrow gaps between the cabinets.

Shortly, the space opens up, a padded table in the centre of an open space, enough room to walk easily around and for a reasonably tall woman to lie on it. A metal mesh runs around the walls and from it hang immobile mannequin parts. The parts are all female, very realistic, and in a variety of shapes and colours. Hands hang next to feet, both with nails painted. Arms and legs are strapped to the mesh, not quite matching the numbers of hands and feet. Stomachs, flat chests and sexless hips form columns on the walls. There is a basket of breasts, from small to average on one side, while a set of heads sit with closed eyes on a shelf. One of the heads wears a familiar set of ginger curls, a pair of emerald eyes resting beside it. Natasha looks around, stunned by the variety. And then she sees it: resting in a dark corner, a pair of legs, one with a shard of bone jutting from its shin. She blinks, not believing what is before her eyes. She moves cautiously closer. as she touches the leg, she stops, finding it warm, supple, like it's still flesh, which is impossible. And then it twitches. Natasha stumbles back with a shriek. A dozen eyes open on the heads. Mouths open in wordless screams. The limbs twitch in their bindings. Natasha looks around wildly. "Fuck!" she tries to run but the cramped, narrow strip between the cabinets and boxes is cluttered and she trips, sprawling head first at a pair of hideously expensive slippers. She looks up as if in a dream.

Mr Merles shakes his head sadly, "I had hoped this wouldn't happen so soon. They always get curious but this is very quick not to have been picked up in the interviews." he sighs heavily, "It was the accident, wasn't it?"

Natasha's throat closes, her voice coming out as a strangled whimper more than words.

"Of course you realise, I can hardly trust you to keep my secret, now, can I?"

Her eyes widen. "P-p-please. I won't..."

"Simon..." he flicks his finger. The gardener throws Natasha over his shoulder with the care and grace of a sack of potatoes, ignoring her increasingly frantic kicks and punches as he carries her

back to the table.

Natasha lands heavily on the padded leather, the breath wheezing out of her. Restraints close automatically around her wrists and ankles as she lays stunned, holding her in place when she gets the wit to thrash in her attempts to escape. Mr Merles runs his hand across the saws over the wall with tender care, pulling out a handsaw. Natasha's eyes follow the light on the blade as he approaches. The kindly old man is gone now, Mr Merles seeming an implacable force of terror. He places the saw against her shoulders. Natasha opens her mouth to scream and Simon jams a ball gag deep to muffle her. "I must tell Melanie to be more careful. Hiring new maids so quickly is suspicious." Mr Merles mutters as he starts to draw the saw across her shoulder. Natasha screams as her arm is severed, the sharp teeth tearing through her shoulder. Simon takes the severed arm, lifting it up and threading the plastic strap through the mesh, pinching her skin as he pulls them taut. The other arm follows an equally painful route to the wall. Natasha pants as she watches the saw move down, the teeth pricking high on her thighs. She tries to plead for mercy but the gag reduces it to a murmur, replaced by a muffled scream as the saw strokes its agonising way through her leg. Simon whisks it away as Mr Merles saws along the join between her hip and remaining leg. She isn't even impressed that she can still feel her legs despite them being several feet away and suspended from the wall like hunting trophies.

Mr Merles gives her thigh a squeeze. "Hmm. Needs more toning." he hands it off to Simon. He grabs her t-shirt and tears it down the middle. Natasha's squeal is once again muffled by the gag and her thrashing just flops her limbless body over the leather as her breasts pop free. Merles ignores them, placing the saw across her waist. Natasha howls as the sharp teeth tear through her skin, getting louder, more animalistic in her pain as it severs her spine. Before Simon can take the hips away, Mr Merles reaches down, his wrinkled but firm fingers pinch her sex, sending a rush of painful pleasure through her as he pulls, tugs and eventually pulls it away. Simon takes the hips as Merles pulls open a drawer, adding Natasha's sex to the collection of glistening lips.

The saw returns, cutting under her ribs, separating her stomach. Merles gives it testing squeeze. "Melanie will never tolerate this. Make sure this gets toned up as well."

He grips her pale nipple, lifting her breast up. Natasha's eyes go wide as the saw rasps through her stretched skin until the full breast pulls away. As he works on the other, the shadow of Mrs Merles falls across Natasha.

"Those are so huge. Can I have them? Please, darling."

"I should say no. We're only in this position because of your fall."

Mrs Merles pouts petulantly.

"But..." he sighs, "I never could say no to you."

She smiles, shimmying her nightgown open. Natasha watches in a state of awe, surprise and horror as Mr Merles cups his wife chest and casually plucks her breasts away, leaving her chest flat. Her horror does not abate as Merles lifts up her remaining breast to saw it away. She tries to look down her body, seeing the flat discs on her chest and so misses the exact moment that she stops feeling them, but she can certainly hear Mrs Merle's moan of pleasure as ownership transfers. She watches as the older woman fondles her new acquisitions, paying no attention as her former globes are deposited into the bin with the others.

Natasha's attention returns to her own predicament as the sharp teeth at the saw rest on her neck. She goes still, looking up with pleading eyes. Merles' eyes are hard as he pulls the saw back, the blade sinking into her neck.

Moments of agony pass before her chest joins the other parts on the walls. Merles sets her head upright, resting on the flat skin covering the base of her neck. "Don't worry, Natasha. It's almost over."

Her questioning of 'almost' is lost as he pulls her hair away as if it was a cheap wig. He pinches her nose, pulling it impossibly off. Then her ears. Her vision goes black as he peels her eyes away like stickers, and finally her mouth, leaving her head featureless.

Thoughts enter her mind unbidden, her mind retreating from reality, as she begins her final transition from maid to a collection of living spare parts to preserve the lady of the house.