

Jeniffer Wolfe

Pincushion

They walk into the alley, his arm around her neck, elbow pointed forward, his other arm poised distinctly at her side, glinting, dangerous. Their shuffle, their awkward dance into the murk of the alley tell exactly what will happen. The way her feet move, stumble and step, unfold the scene faster than it can unfold itself. There is a noise and she is down, with a thick hand on her mouth.

I ran into the alley

Let me tell you about alleys. People keep trash in them, other people sleep in them, dogs piss in them; they are used as shortcuts, or they are blind; it is always night time in an alley; when I walk through one, my nostrils flare. Wherever you go you will find one and it will be the same as the last one you were in. This could be anywhere.

I walk into the alley with you and know that something is wrong. I don't know what it is yet but I know it's bad, I already know that it's the worst thing I'll ever have to see, and then something clicks and I cry out.

What about the girl with the hand on her mouth? She is still and small as a cat. The man and her Judas feet keep on unfolding; soon his pants are unfolded, then her dress, and then her legs and soon the

whole damn thing is just all unfolded and laying out there, left for anybody to see.

and let one huge flying kick sink into his ribs and lift him, lift him off and up and over where he landed with a thud, with a great satisfying grunt. I stood there, watching him stand up, reach into his pocket and show me the most beautiful knife I had ever seen; the only one ever meant special, just for me. I told him that I was a pincushion, that his gorgeous knife couldn't hurt me and then I kicked the thing out of his hand; told him to zip up his fly and kicked, hard. Now I had the knife and I showed it to him, asked him if he was a pincushion. Kicked some more.

You're going to jail, I said. You're going to jail because I saw what you did and I'm telling. You'll go to jail and they'll find out what you did and one night they will line up around you and rip you apart and no one will save you.

I said, You're going to jail.
and kicked.

Until he was unconscious and the police came and pulled me off of him.

Even as I am crying out, I run into the alley, shouting for you to call the police, and let out one huge flying kick. I pick her up and carry her off to the side. She weighs as much as a cat. I pull her dress down and put my coat around her shoulders. We throw her underwear away, which are ripped. So is her dress. She is all blood and snot and vomit. I hold her like a cat and croon over her small body, her hair, her face. I tell her that she is beautiful, so beautiful and brave, and I'll always love her and nothing will ever hurt her again. We cry together like ancient sisters; unceasing and locked together forever.

The police come and try to fold everything back up. They pour the unconscious man into the back of their car and slowly walk toward the sobbing woman, pulling coaxingly along the edges of the whole scene.

I don't know what happens later. The police come and separate me from the girl and you take me home and I take a bath and go to sleep. Or maybe I have to go down to the station and explain why I kicked the shit out of this guy and they will give me cigarettes and shake their heads. I could ride in the back of the police car with the girl, all the way to the hospital, and hold her hand while she is on the examining table and shout at the doctors when she cries out. I probably never leave the alley again, become locked in a place where there is only holding and crying; never ending and never moving on.