

Adam Wyatt

It was the same routine every Sunday. He would take me out to lunch with his friends in the city to show me off to them and he would pretend that everything was OK. Better than OK really, he'd put on a show and make it out that we were deliriously happy together. He'd always insist that I wear something pretty and today he had chosen a ghastly pink scarf with green polka dots. The problem was, he was a cruel man and a drunkard. Thankfully I'd rarely see him as he worked all day and then would spend the early evening down at the pub, drinking and carousing with his friends. I knew if it was going to be a bad night as he would be at the pub for longer than usual which immediately put me on alert.

At first, I'd hear his car pull into the driveway and the very sound of that engine sent shivers down my spine. Next, I'd hear the slamming of the car door and perhaps some cursing or muttering if he dropped his wallet or keys. Then there would be the unsteady clapping of his boots on the footpath as he approached the door, always stumbling slightly so that the tattoo of his footsteps wasn't consistent - it was always a bit off kilter as he walked to the door like every other drunk in the world, swaying and staggering from side to side. Then I would hear the door unlock and see him enter the house. No matter where I sat or what I was he doing would always find fault with me.

Then the abuse would happen. He might be a drunk, but he was a smart one and knew how to knock me around to cause maximum pain without bruising or marking me where people could see. The worst nights were when he came home with cigarette in hand and he'd had a bad day at work. He'd take it all out on me like it was all somehow my fault and these were the nights when he would burn me with his cigarettes. Not somewhere obvious of course - never on my face or arms. No, he indulged himself by putting out the cigarettes on the soles of my feet, sometimes one by one as he sat in the living room ranting about his crappy life and job as the room slowly filled with the rancid aroma of cheap tobacco and sweat. Everyone else saw him as a somewhat handsome man with an easy smile, nice white teeth and the ability to effortlessly insert himself into social interactions with charm and grace. To the outside world he was a well-spoken and perfect gentleman, the perfect facade for a monster. Evil and rotten to the core wearing his facade like an expensive tailor made suit which covered all his faults and imperfections beneath.

Today was hotter than usual with no sign of the Fremantle Doctor coming to rescue us from the heat and we stopped on the footpath in the city while he flirted with a shop girl right in front of me. It was appalling behaviour from the pair of them. She glanced at me once and then never looked at me again as she responded to his clever flirtations and easy smile. Suddenly, I saw opportunity. He reached into his pocket to take out his little black book and a pen and in that moment he was distracted, his attention fully on the shop girl and the promise of her phone number. I took my chance and ran. I wasn't thinking, I just

took off like a startled gazelle and tried to put as much distance as I could from him as quickly as possible.

I sprinted out onto the street and heard the screech of tyres and the squeal of brakes as a car tried vainly to stop from hitting me. The front bumper hit me hard and knocked me to the hot asphalt. I looked up and saw the driver opening the door of his shiny silver car to see if I was OK. At the same time I heard him yelling at me, 'Patricia what are you doing! Get back here!' But I was never going back to him, not today, not ever. I pushed myself up onto my feet and started running again. I was dizzy and the left side of my hip burned with fiery pain every time I moved my leg but the agony was worth it to get away from him. As I approached the other side of the street I looked aghast as I saw one of his friends that we were going to meet for lunch lurching towards me. Trying to grab me.

I stepped left and changed direction, narrowly missing the friend's grasp and raced into the open door of a building, finding myself at the base of a gunmetal grey staircase. With no choice but to keep moving I ran up the first flight of stairs, my hip and my feet screaming to me in pain. Behind me I could hear him calling to me. As he shouted out my name some of his debonair facade cracked a little and I heard the sharp edge of his true inner nature. I ran and ran up the stairs which seemingly went forever, my breath haggard and gasping, my lungs screaming for more oxygen and my injured body full of a cocktail of pain and adrenaline.

Finally, I made it to an open door and ran outside onto a rooftop bar where people stopped their conversations and stared at me, drinks in hand, like I was crazy. Some of them gravitated towards me and fearing that they would slow me long enough for him to catch me I ran out onto a small ledge that wrapped around the buildings external wall and then stopped, my chest heaving from the exertion. Then I saw him appear, his face red and sweating, his practiced facade showing more signs of cracking. 'My god Patricia, come back over here!' As he called out to me others from the bar began calling to me too, clueless as to the person that he was and the abhorrent abuse I suffered at his hands. Suddenly, there was an audible gasp from the gathered crowd as he stepped forward, placing one foot on the ledge, moving towards me.

I had no choice, I couldn't go on suffering at his hands. I looked him in the eye defiantly for a few seconds, then leapt off the ledge, falling and tumbling nine stories to the pavement below.