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The Girl Who Cried Wolf

In an ocean town, a girl with lips stitched as tight as a fist. The thread is worm thick and tarmac black, the fibres woven through with the bite of salt and iron. Inside her mouth, pushing against the palate and mucosa, she heaves up words that slip back down her throat like eels. In streets as neat as trellis and algebra, the townsfolk chase the ones that get loose, weighting them down in hessian sacks with stones and burying them sea deep. In the main drag, under neon signs and mannequin stares, a corpse row bleaches in the sun; the smell of sulfur and a strange sweetness. No one speaks, listening only for the runaways shouting paragraphs and plot endings down alleyways and behind doors. The girl, caged in the town square and circled by a silent mob, plucks at her hair like a penance. But the crowd, tired of the wolf shapes made by her words, only tightens around the cage. As mute as walls, they disappear her into fragments, leaving the smell of burnt paper and a slick of dark ink. Scouring, they gather the scraps and distribute them like a communion, lost fingernails and whisper thin bones, to be buried under the thresholds of their homes as a memory, a warning.

