

# JACK

## *Would You Rather*

On my twenty-first birthday, Ken bought me a Jameson and told me to start putting hair on my chest, laughing through his smoker's cough about how his sons were too soft to work the punch, how his daughter could kick my ass. Ryan, that suave pretty boy who always fixed his hair in the greased window of his CNC machine, bought me a Stoli, told me to start watching my figure. Billy, eyes following his Keno numbers flashing across the TV behind the bar as carefully as they scanned the odds in the *Free Press* while he sat by his laser cutter, bought me a 7 and 7, told me to get lucky. Matt, all bullshit testosterone and bulging back muscles from five years at the shear, bought me a Slivovitz, slapped my shoulders, reminded me to go to Mass in the morning to thank God if I survived the night. Jim and Ben, whiskered veterans of the press room, bought me a Budweiser, told me to pace myself, muttered something about the separate trajectories of their namesake sons, and went home to their wives. Brad, the welding department's resident philosopher, bought me a Jägermeister, made me toast to Karl Marx. Dennis, Mike, Steve, and Harry, the rabble-raising fucks that they were, so notorious for pranks they were banished to the four corners of the shop, bought Four Horsemen shots for all of us—Jack, Jim Beam, Johnnie Walker, and Jameson—and while I tried to keep them down, they told me that it was about time I got my tolerance up and started hitting the happy hours around Ferndale with them. And last but not least, Peter, my haggard comrade in deburring, hanging on longer than everyone, stalling for time, not wanting to go home to the wife he didn't love and the kid he didn't want, bought me a shot of Rémy Martin, told me to savor it, that it might be the last good drink I ever took.

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Then, Jess's head on my shoulder, her hand on my leg. "Would you rather have a Pom Bomb or a Lemon Drop, Jack?" Her favorite shot or mine.

"I think I'd rather have a water." I felt clever, giddy, like I always did with her.

The bartender shouted something at Jess. She leaned in to whisper, "Would you rather have ice or no ice?"

I balanced awkwardly on my stool. Jess—and the room—spun around me. I brushed her dirty-blonde hair behind her ears, focused my eyes on hers.

"No ice." I kissed her on the forehead. "Let's go swimming."

"We have all weekend for that." She reached into the pocket of her jeans and flashed the keys to her aunt's cottage that she had gotten for my birthday weekend up north on Lake Huron.

We were all at Kady's Bar on Nine Mile, halfway between John R and Hilton Roads, where, girded against the blight of other shops, Dynamic Fabricating stood, lucky possessor of one of the last defense contracts in our inner-ring Detroit suburb of Ferndale, manufacturing all the parts of an armored personnel carrier for the wars six thousand miles away. My place of work, employer to two shifts' worth of shearing, deburring, pressing, welding, and machining sons of bitches—and all the sordid bastards drinking to my health.

"Happy birthday," Jess said, and we kissed among the crack of scarred pool balls and garbled baseball scores from the plasma TVs and a sloppy, off-key karaoke rendition of Bob Seger's "Feel Like a Number."

It is my favorite memory, and it haunts me now.

Jess let me sleep in, packed up the car without me, filled the tank, grabbed us coffees, jerky, and trail mix from the gas station, then chocolate and champagne from the convenience store across the street.

"How's the head feel?" she asked, pulling open the curtains.

"It hurts." I dragged the covers over my head.

Outside the open window of our bedroom, September bloomed ecstatic, exhaling summer's final breath over the roaring diesel engines

on I-75. Inside, empty moving boxes and Jess's textbooks from her night classes at Wayne State covered the floor.

"Would you rather have aspirin or Advil?"

"Surprise me," I said.

Jess opened the drawer of the bedside table, sifting through paystubs for plastic bottles. "You get your check yesterday?"

"Shit . . . guess I was too eager to celebrate."

"We'll swing by the shop and the bank before hitting the freeway."

"What's your hurry, anyway?" I asked, tossing off the sheets, fingers circling Jess's spot.

She crossed her arms. "I thought you were hungover?"

I stood up, cupped the small of her back. "Thank you for last night."

"I was a good sport." She ran her hands through my hair, smoothing out drowsy clumps before we embraced.

Sex when you're in love is like talking without speaking—bodies and breathing synching before collapsing, drunk with bliss. It is more than intimacy, and when we caught our breaths that morning I think I realized, for the first time, how people could grind through routine, the utter mundanity of labor, to pay for a life with someone who is a reflection of their better self.

These were our early days together, where everything seemed to be a running conversation, when we were always in proximity, as fascinated by each other as the day we finally met.

Although we'd gone to high school together, I'd never talked to Jess—captain of the softball team with a 3.6 GPA and out of my league. Besides, I was sure I wouldn't find the words to articulate feelings I couldn't define. We actually "met" at Dynamic—she was filing contracts in the office, and I was starting off in deburring, grinding off the jagged edges of steel pieces cut from the laser and sheets of aluminum clipped from the punch. I'd waved at her without reciprocation during lunchtime, watching her leave for the Double EE Restaurant with the rest of the office as I waited for the food truck to pull into the parking lot so I could choke down a wet turkey sandwich.

I finally got a chance to talk to her at the Hazel Park Carnival the weekend before Memorial Day in Green Acres Park, a few blocks northeast of Dynamic. The whole shop went—an all-expenses paid reward for a month of sixty-hour weeks.

We wound up next to each other at a water-gun game, trying to pop a balloon with a plastic Uzi.

“Good luck,” she said as she eyed her target.

“I don’t need it,” I said, faking suave.

She cracked a smile and pushed my arm as the bell rang.

“No fair,” I said.

“I didn’t see the rules.”

She won, handily. The proprietor walked her over to the prizes: cheap, plush apex predators with toothy smiles.

“Would you rather have the crocodile or the jaguar?” he asked.

“That’s an alligator,” she said.

“How can you tell?” I asked.

“It’s tiny.” She examined her suitors. “Alligators are tiny crocs.”

“I never knew that,” I said.

“Someone didn’t pay attention in biology.” She tucked the alligator under her arm.

“How about a victory meal?” I asked.

“You don’t want a rematch?”

“There’s no shame in second place.”

As we walked through the midway toward the food carts, sporadic fireworks shot from the bungalows around us, hissing and bursting in the thick spring air.

“Would you rather have an elephant ear or a corndog?” I asked.

“You’re buying?”

I nodded, trying to hide my grin.

Over cotton candy and Icees, Jess said she’d always wanted to tease me about the indolent flop of my hair; that I should’ve built up the nerve and talked to her sooner. I told her what passed as my philosophy: that things work themselves out if you give them time and space. She told

me about the night classes she'd finally saved up for, that her ambitions weren't constrained to carnival games—she wanted to be the first person from her family to graduate from college, then get a master's in counseling so she could teach the kids from our neighborhood that ringed Dynamic that they could do whatever they wanted as long as they worked for it. I told her I thought work was immaterial—something we had to do to pay for life outside of it—feeling the air vibrate between us. Then we waltzed from cart to cart, chewing caramel apples and kettle corn, trading horror stories about our exes, laughing until we snorted. We ate until our teeth throbbled from sugar, then tried to stump each other with classic rock questions as the flashing lights of the midway colored our faces: *Would you rather see the Who in '69 or the Stones in '72? Would you rather live in London in the '60s or New York in the '70s? Would you rather go to your place or mine?*

And as our days together became weeks, it became our motif—would you rather, choosing between trivialities that provided the opportunity for us to goad, to laugh, to fall in love. Friends at work told us to cool it, to be careful, but we couldn't. We were spending every day then every night together, so after my first raise, I got a low-interest loan and bought a two-bedroom shack three blocks from the shop, and Jess moved in.

Dynamic was quiet, which was eerie—I'd never been on the floor without a pair of green foam earplugs to soften the deafening thuds from the shear or the precision grinder's metallic cries. Jess and I walked through the chipped bay doors in the back toward the filing office in front that looked out across Nine Mile.

"I've never been in your office," I said. "I've never seen what you do during the day."

"You want a tour?" She opened the door of the office, turned on the lights. "This is where the magic happens."

It was a large, beige room roofed by fluorescent lights. Floor-to-ceiling filing cabinets, bulging with contracts, were separated by a few small, metal desks covered with pencil jars, rulers, and old desktop computers.

Jess walked me over to hers, picked up a contract, pantomimed turning on her monitor, before walking to a cabinet by the front windows, near the receptionist's desk, where my paycheck sat.

"Just do that a hundred times a day," she said, putting my paycheck in her purse. "Come to think of it, I've never taken a tour of the shop floor."

I took her hand and led her out of the office to the shear, a massive version of the scissors we used on construction paper for grade school art projects. "It starts here," I said, mimicking the motion of Matt's arms before launching into a history of the shop as told to me on the floor.

Dynamic didn't start in defense. Like all the other shops on the east side of Ferndale, Dynamic was founded after World War II and supplied auto parts for the Big Three auto companies. After the Japanese and Germans rebuilt their auto industries (*with our goddamn money*, my grandfather used to say) and started eating away at their market share, Dynamic adjusted and adjusted and adjusted again, eventually winding up in defense work, which they'd been doing for ten years by the time I joined.

From the shear, I walked Jess through the fabrication process: the punch, where Ken dissected aluminum sheets into rectangular pieces; the laser, Billy's job, which cut elaborate patterns out of steel; deburring, my department, where the excess metal of the resulting pieces was ground off with belt sanders and hand tools; the press room, where Jim and Ben inserted the smoothed pieces into massive calibrated presses and re-formed them; welding, where Brad, mask lowered, melted the folded pieces together in a haze of acrid smoke; and machining, where Ryan washed and drilled the welded product one last time before they were inspected, boxed, and shipped to be finished with a chemical treatment or a coat of paint.

When we reached the shear again, I handed Jess a fender from a half-full shipping box. She turned it over with her hands. "It's crazy to think we're made of the same stuff."

"What? Steel?"

"Well, carbon and iron make steel, right? They're both in us—a part of us."

I took the fender back from her and studied it, puzzled.

She grabbed it back, tossed it in the shipping box, and pulled me to the back door. “We’ll discuss it in the car.”

We took my check down Nine Mile and deposited it at the bank before Jess drove her rusty Grand Marquis up all four levels of the neighboring parking garage—the highest point in the city, where we went during that summer’s rainbow sunsets: softened light trapped by the hazy dome of carbon that compressed it into outrageous hues of purple, orange. From our vantage point, those evenings and that morning, the neighborhood was a leafy, pungent grid of warehouses and industrial shops surrounded by two-bedroom bungalows and dotted with postage-stamp parks. The borders, roughly, were Hilton Road to the west, I-696 to the north, I-75 to the east, and Eight Mile to the south, bisected diagonally by the CN train yard and horizontally by Nine Mile. To the west, the rest of Ferndale: bungalows in the southwest, stately two-story brick colonials and knock-off Tudors sprinkled with bars and restaurants in the northwest along the Woodward Corridor. To the north: Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak—the verdant Oakland County suburbs. To the east, Hazel Park and Macomb County—a network of fading blue-collar cities that emptied out into Lake St. Clair. And to the south, the sprawling enigma of Detroit that ended at the river and Windsor, Ontario.

Our eyes drifted, as they always did, toward Dynamic, sitting in the industrial artery that spread southeast from the intersection of Nine Mile and Hilton.

“Isn’t it pretty?” I asked. “In its own way.”

“More than Lake Huron?” Jess asked, pulling at the bottom of my shirt, urging me back to the car.

I-75 was empty when we left Oakland County, giving a salute to the giant portrait of Christ on the side of the Dixie Baptist Church in Clarkston.

“Which apostle would you rather follow?” I asked from the passenger seat. “Peter or Paul?”

“I don’t get to pick James?” Jess asked.

“Those aren’t the rules.” I rolled down my window, felt the pulses of country air cool my forehead.

“Paul,” Jess said.

“Says the Catholic.” Treeless fields flew by us, the tall grasses waving in the breeze.

“He’s more interesting, don’t you think? He used to hunt down Christ’s followers.”

“Peter was a fisherman, a man of the people. He had a more glorious death. Founded the universal church.”

“Maybe we should analyze them as historical figures?” she asked. “I should do that for my theology class.”

I turned and reached into the back seat, looking for a candy bar but finding only Jess’s weathered philosophy textbook. I picked it up and fanned the pages, stopping at a dog-eared page.

“What’s materialism?” I asked.

“You want to move on from the saints already?”

“*Physical matter is the only fundamental reality . . . the fuck’s that mean?*”

“We covered it in class last week. It’s a philosophical concept that says that all that ever has and will exist, including our own bodies and everything we think and perceive, is the result of the interaction of matter.” She rolled her window down, let the wind push her fingers back. “It’s kind of what I was talking about earlier, at the shop.”

“Well . . . so what? What’s the purpose of studying it?”

“If it’s true, then religion can’t exist, because if matter is all everything is composed of, then there’s no mystery in the world. There can’t be anything spiritual, so God can’t exist. Or an afterlife.”

I shook my head. “That’s bleak.”

“It is.” She took a sip of coffee. “But it’s probably true.”

I stared at our reflections in the rearview mirror: shaggy hair we cut ourselves to save money for furniture and cheap sunglasses from a gas station in Trenton, bought after a day of thrifting for appliances Downriver.

I held her hand. “That’s a good one, actually.”

“What is?”

“Would you rather believe something you know isn’t true but helps you get through day-to-day life or believe something you know to be true but makes you feel like shit?”

“Fuck,” she said. “That *is* a good one.”

The cottage was clean save a few trash bags filled with empty beer cans sitting in the screened-in porch. I dragged them to the garage while Jess unpacked, flipping through our itinerary and laying out sunscreen and beach towels. After putting the champagne and chocolate in the fridge, I looked out the kitchen’s solitary window at the gravel road winding through the pine trees that opened up on the hard, blue canvas of Lake Huron.

We grabbed two beers from the fridge, jumped back in the car, and drove to East Tawas for a late lunch. We rolled down the windows and drove eighty up US-23 yelling every chorus from Neil Young’s *Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere*, which blared distorted from the tape deck. We locked eyes as we traded verses, turned away when the choruses returned to scream them out our respective windows that pummeled us with drafts heavy with the musk of newly fallen leaves. And it hit me, then and for the first time, how good this all felt after months and months of work.

I didn’t know what I wanted after I graduated from high school. I just knew what I didn’t: a windowless cubicle in some airless suburban office park, wearing a tie every day; I didn’t want to go to college either, paying money I didn’t have to sit through crowded lectures about things I’d never care about. My high school counselors told me a bachelor’s degree was the new diploma—that if I ever wanted a real job in the economy that was coming, I had to suck it up and get one. At the insistence of my parents, I took some classes at Oakland Community College, clearing out prereqs until I got my associate’s degree while doing roofing part-time with my dad until his jobs started drying up (*Shouldn’t be this slow during spring*, I remember him saying) and I became unnecessary. After a summer on the couch, my dad

called around and landed me an interview at Dynamic. Jess handled my paperwork.

Dynamic was hard—both on Jess and on me. Five thirty in the morning until four in the afternoon, with a half day every other Saturday. The work could get monotonous—Jess’s endless trips from her desk to the filing cabinets matching the same balletic motion of my hands turning a jagged piece of metal around a belt sander—but if you had half a mind, you could zone out for the hours between breakfast, lunch, and close. When I started, I tried to conjure some ambition for myself or run through the forward lines of the Red Wings’ Stanley Cup teams from the late ’90s. When Jess and I started dating, I just thought about her. In October, it would be my one-year anniversary there, and I’d be moved (or so I was promised) out of deburring and into the press room. That meant another raise, which meant that, after a few months of cooking dinner and staying in on Friday nights, I could buy a ring.

In the car, Jess grabbed my hand as the dueling guitars of “Down by the River” poured out of the open windows. I pulled her hand to my mouth, kissed her ring finger.

Jess slowed the car to a crawl, and we slid into East Tawas, the afternoon light turning the windows of the Newman Street storefronts into mirrors. We parked and admired the essentials of a northern Michigan downtown: the chocolatier, the second-run movie theater, the used bookstore with its display of beach reads. Jess took my hand and we walked to Barnacle Bill’s, her favorite restaurant. We put our feet on the brass rails and eased into the torn leather seats at the bar and ordered the endless fried smelt, chasing them down with pitcher after pitcher of cold, cheap beer. We traded gossip from the office and the floor, who was pissed at who and for what reason, made off-color jokes about the fielding and pitching abilities of the company softball team (*We would’ve won more if they let me pitch every game*, Jess said). We ate and drank and talked and laughed until the Tigers game started on the TV behind the bar.

“Fuck,” said Jess, “we’ve been here for three hours?”

“Time flies,” I said, reaching for the check.

Jess snatched it from my hands. “You can get dessert.”

We stumbled into the twilight, walked to the ice cream parlor by the beach, and bought waffle cones filled with cherry chocolate chip ice cream and rainbow sprinkles. We took off our shoes and walked down the pier licking our sticky hands and nudging each other into the paths of noisy seagulls.

When we reached the lighthouse, we put our feet through the railing and bit off the soggy edges of our cones as the sunset splashed shades of orange on the lake.

“Remember our conversation on the drive here?” Jess asked.

“Maybe,” I said, putting my arm around her shoulders.

“About believing something you know isn’t true?”

“Oh yeah. That.”

“You answer first.”

I finished my cone, brushed caked sand from my feet. “I don’t know if it matters.”

“Of course it does,” she said. “It shapes everything you want.”

“Elaborate.”

“Most of my family doesn’t think this life is the *real* life, you know? They think it’s a trial, a test to get into the real life when they die.”

“I never thought of it that way.” That was true—I was happy listening to the serrated harmonies of crickets and train whistles on the back porch while Jess filled the margins of her textbooks with notes.

“But I’ve never believed that,” she said. “I think this is it.”

“What’s wrong with that?”

“I dunno . . . if you have the materials to create your own meaning in the absence of God, you’re free. But if you don’t, you have to work to acquire them, like we have to, and if you can’t work . . .”

She looked away, faced the vacant beach.

“I don’t know if you remember, but the night we met, you said that, at some point, everything comes down to making money. I guess I’m worried about how I’m going to pay for it all—pay for the life I want.”

I reached for her hand. “How *we’re* gonna pay for it all.”

When the sun dipped below the horizon, we stood up and walked back to the car.

When we parked backed at the cottage, Jess bolted from the passenger seat and ran toward the lake. I stopped in the house and grabbed the bottle of Cook’s before following her, the gravel from the road denting my soles. When I reached the lake, Jess had waded in up to her knees, the moonlight turning her hair a silken gray. I walked out to meet her.

“Where’s your suit?” she asked. The water was still warm.

“Where’s yours?”

We took off our clothes, rolled them into soggy balls, and tossed them on the shore. We slipped beneath the surface, and I uncorked the champagne and we passed it back and forth in the shallows.

“You know what the guys told me to sing at Kady’s last night?” I asked as constellations blanketed the darkening sky.

“How would I know?”

“‘Beast of Burden.’”

“Oh my God,” she said. “I love that song.”

She backstroked out toward the slivered moon, singing the first verse between submersions.

I sat on the rocks in the shallows, shouting back the chorus.

When we finished the song, she floated back to me. “Last question for the day.”

I swam to meet her. We put our hands on each other’s bare legs for balance, feeling the goose bumps bubble to the surface. “Better make it a good one,” I said.

“OK . . . everything I’ve been talking about today . . .” She took a pull from the bottle, looked at the stars. “Would you rather . . . no, *do* you believe it, or not?”

I pulled her close, resting my chin on her shoulder. “Believe what?” I stared out across the water, drank in the moonlight as it spilled unevenly across the gentle tides made by our bodies.

She turned her head until our eyes met. “Look up at the stars.”

I did, then looked back into her eyes.

“You think we’re made of them?”

“And nothing else?”

“And nothing else.”

“Let’s not think about it.” We kissed, tasting the accumulation of the day on each other’s tongues. “Not tonight.”

“OK.” She ran her hands through my hair, smoothing out the knots. “Not tonight.”

We kissed again before going under, together.

That’s the last memory I want to have of her—of us . . . of myself. I’ve done my best to forget, but here’s what I remember: when I checked my voicemail as we drove south of Flint on I-75 Sunday night, sunburned after a long day at the beach, I heard the floor manager telling me to sleep in and come in at nine the next morning.

When I did, the CNC machines were turned off, the air hoses silent. They had the folding chairs and coffee out like they usually did for safety videos, but they’d wheeled the TV into the office.

The boss came down from upstairs, hands in his pockets. Some investment bank in New York, he said, wasn’t bailed out by the government, by me or Jess, Ken or Ryan, Billy or Matt, or Brad or Dennis. We sat stone-faced in a semicircle as he said something about mortgage securities, the credit markets tightening, that our last contract hadn’t been renewed, that there was enough work left for two months, maybe three. This wasn’t just affecting us—he said he’d talked to his auto industry friends, who told him they were almost out of cash.

“If any of you are religious,” he said before letting us go for the day, “now would be the time to pray.”

Over the next year, everything in the neighborhood seemed to follow Dynamic out of business. Every day I drove résumés to the handful of shops still open all over the east side: to Hazel Park, Warren, Roseville, Fraser. When that didn’t work, I spent every morning in the queue at the temp agency before they waved us away. Jess floated us on her student loans, using them

to pay for groceries, gas, the mortgage, but after a year she dropped out and took up waitressing until the local Coney Islands and sports bars closed, too.

After cancelling our internet, we spent our mornings at the library perusing Craigslist for gigs, only finding day-long landscaping jobs for twenty dollars that were filled by nine in the morning, and our nights at the kitchen table sorting through past-due notices.

Our friends from high school whose parents bought them a way out came back from the coasts for Thanksgiving, telling us about college life, internships—how exciting it was to live in vibrant places, the possibilities they held. We went home and heated canned food and pulled further apart, away from each other, into ourselves.

After a while, we were fighting every day, taking our frustrations out on each other, the would-you-rathers mutating into did-you-remembers, have-you-checked, where-have-you-beens. It would have been easier if we had some distance to ease the pressure, but there was nowhere else to go.

We tried watching love-conquers-all movies, couples fighting against the odds in dire straits: *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, *The Gift of the Magi*, *Brassed Off*. While watching *It's a Wonderful Life* on Christmas, sitting on opposite ends of the carpeted space that once held our couch, I began to realize that love has a price, or it exacts one, and that love needs materials to sustain itself. Just as we wanted to work, but couldn't, we were willing something we both wanted but couldn't save. I began to think that if you didn't work—or couldn't—then you didn't need to exist.

On Memorial Day, two years after our first date, I gathered all the beer cans festering in the basement and fed them through the recycling machine at the liquor store. I ironed my blue Dynamic work shirt and shaved off my beard. When Jess came home that night, I pulled the \$10 bill from my front pocket and asked if she wanted to go to the carnival. She sat down on the floor, pulled her hair behind her ears, shook her head.

She didn't have to say anything—we were too exhausted to fight each other. I watched her pack her bags—the same ones she once stuffed with quilted blankets and Coppertone and cheap champagne. As she slept in our bed for one last time, I leaned against the walls of our empty living

room, trying to think of one last thing to say, one last thing to remind her of what we had. I tried to stay awake until morning, but when the slant of the afternoon sun roused me the next day, I opened the blinds and her car was gone.

When the interest rates on my mortgage kicked in that fall, I lost the house, too, and moved back in with my parents.

I never called the guys from Dynamic—none of us tried to stay in touch. Every time we saw each other at the Kroger or the liquor store or wandering the parks aimlessly in the middle of our empty days, we were bereaved again, kept distant by the collective silence of our own inadequacy.

Besides, after a while I didn't drink to celebrate anymore. I drank to hide. I fucked near-strangers on Friday nights just to escape, for a few minutes, the gnawing banality of my life. I missed Jess, but what I missed more was not feeling claustrophobic—like I couldn't get out. Like I was trapped.

I did see her again, on my twenty-fourth birthday. I didn't want to be alone, so I walked down Nine Mile to Kady's Bar, sat on a stool, looked for familiar faces, sipped some cat-piss beer. It was the first time I'd been there since we split up because Kady's was Jess's place, and because we didn't have physical assets, I thought I'd cede it to her.

I was making small talk with the bartender when she walked in with someone else. I waited for my gut to sink, and when it didn't, I longed to feel something other than indifference. As I watched them pick out a table and stare blankly at each other, I thought about our car ride to Lake Huron, about Jess explaining materialism, and I thought I could see my life never moving from my barstool, just fading into nothing.

We made eye contact and I lifted my glass. She excused herself from her table and walked over, eyes on the sticky floor. We made small talk, Jess looking just below my eye line, as if she were staring into the guilty stubble of my cheeks, and I kept thinking: This is it now? After we've laughed and wept and screamed . . . after we've consumed each other?

“You look good.” Jess, lying, always trying to cheer me up.

The bartender came over to take our order.

“You have any specials?” I asked.

Jess put her hand through my hair, smoothed the greasy knots.

“Would you rather have a shot or beer?” he asked us.

“So,” I said to Jess, “what’ll it be?”