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Names You Gave Me

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NAMES YOU GAVE ME

Carlynn Sharpe

I am still fond of the smell of whiskey,
Though the smell of your breath is what I remember most;
Better to focus on the smell of Jack or Jim.
I could have chosen to lock my mind on your sister
Sleeping on the other side of the room.
Nothing more between us than ten feet of hardwood floor,
And her brother's naked body.

I could have thought of her brown eyes.
Or our five years of friendship.
Friction of the mismatched sheets underneath me,
Knotted up uncomfortably where you had tossed them off.
The stubble on your face cutting into my skin.
Those animal sounds escaping your mouth.
The rolls on my stomach smooshed all together.

The names you had given me could have resounded:
Slut, n***** lover, fat bitch, beautiful, race traitor.
Baby.
I could have been reciting them, so as not to forget what I am.
But I did forget what I am.
It was hard to remember.
It always is.

I did not fight like I thought I would.
I did not push you off of me like I thought I would.
I did nothing.
I was busy being quiet.

I was busy being still.

I just thought about the smell of whiskey.

I did not estimate the number of drinks you'd had.

I did not try to remember the way I had always pictured my first time.

I did not count how many times you had promised me we would wait.

I was busy being quiet.

I was busy being still.

I just focused on the smell of that whiskey.

Jack or Jim.

It was easy to forget.

I forgot how much you loved me.

I forgot all you had given me.

I forgot who you were to me completely.

I forgot your name.

I forgot to fight.

I forgot what I am.

It was easy to remember how much I love the smell of whiskey.

It wasn't easy to be raped.