

This was written in response to a livejournal post asking for people to “write a false memory of me” – so this is my false memory of her.

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I found you sitting at the bar that morning, alone, a row of drained shot glasses in front of you. The lunch rush hadn't started yet, and the bartender was in the kitchen, helping prep the food. Drunk Tom had inhabited his habitual table by the door and tried to engage my attention, but I ignored him as thoroughly this time as you always did, and his enthusiasm died as he drifted back into the solitary melancholy of his pitcher of Coors Lite. You looked at me when I perched on the barstool next to you, then looked away without saying a word.

We sat that way for a while.

Susan, attracted by the jingle of the door, by the sound of the barstool being dragged across the worn wood floor in the empty room, brought me a shot of Cuervo. I sipped the sharp, sweet liquid, relishing the burn.

“Since when do you drink whiskey?” I asked. I knew the answer, even though you didn't reply, just downed your fifth shot and arranged the glass clumsily in line with the others.

“It's not fair,” you said.

“I know.” I had no words of comfort for you. They don't exist. I was going to put my arm around your shoulders, to hold you and tell you that everything would be ok, but every muscle in your body was tense, like cords of iron, too stiff to accept that level of intimacy. And we both knew that it wasn't ok, it wouldn't be ok, that nothing would ever be ok again. Instead, I put my hand on yours, and we sat that way, in silence, until the overwhelming cheeriness of the lunch crowd became unbearable.

It was time to talk to the police.