

Sleep Furiously

Rich Larson

“So what is your room number?” she asks, sipping dregs of acidic green slush. Salt crystals catch and glitter in her lip gloss. Jack has to think for a moment, and then he tells her: 211.

Not 214, the Mayfair in Seattle. A former tennis player who said no names, who showered before sex and after, and after that cursed her husband in a long steady stream while Jack rechecked the fingers gabled in her bottle-blond hair. She was sure her husband had cheated first, and in the end she did tell Jack her name, but he’d already forgotten it.

“Close to mine,” she says, legs moving against each other. Slit skirt, ruthless heels.

Flip that: 412, a Ramada. Santa Barbara, oily summer heat. Kalyna, who wore a backless dress and blacked her eyes and said she was a model, by which she meant prostitute. She regressed to Ukrainian while they fucked, spilling harsh syllables and mashing them into his lips. She’d dug gullies in his back that he could still imagine in the mirror.

“Is it nice?” she asks, with something suddenly cautious in her voice, a slight trepidation. Jack knows the cut of his suit is impeccable, but his cheeks are coarse.

Room 112, a sagging motel twenty minutes from his house. Her name was Catherine; it was quick, drunk and miserable. Afterwards she slept in freefall, limbs splayed across his body like she could pinion him there come morning, but when the blinds shredded sunlight onto their skin all she wanted was instant coffee, shuttle service to the airport.

Then Jack had called his wife, called and called, and when his daughter's voice bubbled syrup through the phone he'd hung up so fast the hook snapped.

"It's exactly like all the other rooms," he says, smiling so suave, and stands up with her hand clutched too tightly in his.