

J O S H U A   B A R N E T T

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## Black Jack

**F**ive years later I still stare at the blank white wall. All I see is your face except your face always has more red and less face. I scream for Doc Fagan in my sleep. Steph wakes up asking if I'm okay. I lie, kiss her cheek, tell her not to worry. Then I think about that time we sat on the roof all night drinking Black Jack whiskey we bought from the Iraqi Police, smoking French cigarettes that were five dollars a carton and we watched the Kiowas fly over Mosul with their lights off. We swore that we were done with this grunt life, we would fly one day, wouldn't have to worry about getting our faces blown off by some lucky Haji with a Kalashnikov and Allah. We got so drunk we couldn't walk and watched our bootleg copy of Inglorious Basterds that we bought for one dollar from the Turk with the slicked back hair, we smoked a joint that that kid in supply had gotten sent to him in a medicine bottle.

You said you didn't feel anything and I called you a liar when you tried to drink some more whiskey and poured it all over yourself.

I try to go back to sleep but can't stop thinking about how the tornado siren sounds just like the incoming alert. How we threw on our helmets and body armor, grabbed our rifles. We were just in gym shorts and flip flops and we fell in the bunker where Staff Sergeant asked us if we were drunk. We tried to maintain a straight face but we started giggling, we were so high, and when the rockets started exploding right next to the bunker it seemed like the perfect time to laugh.

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