A lot of people who kill themselves get drunk first. They call this liquid courage. When someone we know in AA kills him- or herself, somebody will almost always ask, Did s/he pick up (a drink or a drug)? Nine times out of ten, the answer is yes. Jamie was among the nine out of ten, according to the person who found him.

I’ve always wondered what Jamie drank before he killed himself. Since I never knew him drinking, I can’t imagine what it might have been. It’s kind of odd that, in five years, we never discussed what he used to drink, but I don’t remember him saying whether he liked beer best, for instance, or tequila, although I’m pretty sure he knew I used to be a wino. Maybe his last drink was hard liquor, something straight and quick.

I do know why he killed himself, though. We’d talked about that a lot. He often hated being alive. And he thoroughly hated being alive in the summer. Since he’d never sincerely not considered suicide
as an option, it seemed only natural that he would want to get out of summer if he could. He found the heat unbearable, pure and simple. This is my theory.

After Jamie died my shrink told me that I might have been somewhat instrumental in keeping Jamie alive for a few extra years. It didn’t help too much to hear this because I felt I might have been guilty of interfering with Jamie’s true life’s work, which might have been suicide—that, keeping him alive, I only made his time on earth longer and more miserable. I’d abandoned him at the end, after all. How Clara Barton was that?

Jamie’s depression was generous. One time he offered to kill us both, and I jumped out of bed and started dancing around so he could see how happy I was. His depression was hungry. When I was finally sure I was a lesbian, his body began to shape itself into planes and edges. His face became pointy, an isosceles triangle. People who knew us both begged me to feed him, but it wasn’t really food he wanted. People said, *Have sex with him, what harm could it do?*

His depression was too kinky and magnanimous for me. It liked to act out in groups of four or more, having sex in ambitious ways. I was an almost ex-nun, for one thing. I had special powers, for another, and the imposed integrity that goes along with them. Lastly, I was as possessive as a pit bull.

I consulted a psychic a few years after Jamie died. He had trouble locating my troubled ex on the alternate plane at first. (Jamie always kept a low profile.) When he finally found him he said Jamie was still on the depressed side but was learning that life could be lighter, that by the time Jamie reincarnated he would be ready to embrace joy. I wondered how this fit in with my understanding that depression is mainly physiological, but I was glad that Jamie didn’t seem to hold anything against me at least. I missed him, but I missed him when he was alive too. We’d lie beside each other after the deepest orgasms either of us was capable of, and I’d miss him. Or I’d miss someone. I thought at the time it must be him.