



Judith Masur: “Love and Tsuris” Digital Story Transcript

We only found each other ‘cause we weren’t looking.

When Jess and I first got together in 1981, she already knew she wanted to be able to kill herself if necessary. Her mother and father had both died lingering deaths. That would not be her story. She had started collecting pills. As long as life was bearable, she would live it. If not, she wanted to be able to get out.

Why did you *stay* with her? someone asked. She made me laugh. We fought fair. We were equals: feisty Jewish dykes, both a handful, equally smart. Not a couple, but a pair.

Our commitment was for forty years, or until Death did us part. We had five good years to start with, full of friends and fun, learning to fit our great big selves into a life together.

In the sixth year she collapsed with CFIDS and EI. She was suffering. I was suffering. Friends left. Our lives shrank, filled with doctors, pills, oxygen, fear, rules. The illness became a third partner in our relationship.

I became the front man for the operation, explaining, cajoling, fighting the toxic, unbelieving world.

I went to bed one night thinking I couldn’t do this anymore. I woke with the thought: well, what if we moved? We lived in six different houses, across three states.

So why didn’t you leave her?

I could tell you I loved her, that she loved me. We both had learned early how to stick with someone. We didn’t want the illness to win.

In the end, Jess had finally had enough. *She left me.* Death *did* us part.

Eighteen years together. Why did I stay? She was worth it.