Those first days, Jamie would drive his Z up to Ossining, park the car facing downhill toward the river, then park himself on my floor and request to hear one of my poems. I obliged and then he’d read to me: Eliot, Miller, Kerouac. The Boys, I called them, good-natured disdain apparent, the way the Sisters of the Sacred Heart had taught us girls to indicate superiority. I stretched out on my futon and waited for Jamie to haul his butt across the floor.

It took two weeks, fourteen literati-packed days: Hemingway, Ginsberg, Melville. My kids found Jamie easy, basically unoffendable. Sitting on the floor made him a patient toy or warm-blooded playground equipment for Sophie, who liked to tie and untie his high tops and braid his hippie hair while he read Moby-Dick. Alternate weekends the kids were off to Harper and Honor’s house, living their Rockwell life, and I had Jamie to myself.
I loved that sex didn’t happen right away. I loved listening to his accent, sweet Bronx, his tenor inflection, the way he acted as if sex were epilogue. How blasé can blasé look, I thought, as he sat against the World War II hydrangea walls. Jamie was the Chef of Blasé, an Eagle Scout on my braided rug with lust so far away it seemed buried in the desert, rumbling way out there in White Sands, the beginnings of a nuclear detonation whose idea hadn’t yet reached the East Coast. I thought at first he might be waiting for me to make a move. After all, I’d symbolically clubbed him twice at the dance not that long before. Our courtship felt so deliberate, fragile.

On the fourteenth night he finished reading Melville and looked at me propped up on an elbow, floor of peeling turquoise linoleum between us. Then he bit his lower lip in an astounding flash of insecurity and carried that tentative mouth across the ocean to kiss me.