I was in the second floor bathroom at the pre-renovated Gay Community Center, and the window next to the sink was wide open. I washed my hands and leaned out to watch her arrival. I could hear her coming down 13th Street. It was Father’s Day, the day of our first official date. I’d been gone on a weeklong writing retreat in Connecticut and had called her to see when we could hook up.

I’d just peed three times in half an hour.

The whole time I was away I’d been in fantasy sex world—I tumbled there after Mars asked me out and I said yes. I saw wild turkeys running around the forest and thought of sex. I wrote a poem about light on oak bark and thought of sex. I stayed up at night, secretly afraid out there in the woods by myself, and slept during the day, dreaming about sex. I’d become obsessed with the flummery Mars had thrown at me during our West Side Story fling-ting and sing-a-long.
But I was cool.

She had her posse of butches with her when we finally faced off on the sidewalk, not looking at each other, grinning stupidly. She introduced me to her friends, and they appraised me and voiced their approval. They said things like: *Nice work, Mars,* and that string of *mmm* black people do best: 

*mmm mmm mmm mmm mmm,* emphasis on the first *mmm,* nice and long, and then four notes in staccato, 6/8 time. Mars was the King of the Butches. She glowed among them like the most handsome creature ever conceived to love women on this earth. I was amused at everyone’s bold lack of political correctness, especially my own. I was clearly besotted, and I hadn’t touched a drop of *booze* in eleven years.

We broke off from the group and decided to retrieve my car from its parking spot on 7th Avenue and drive it up to Harlem. As we walked we passed a church where a bedraggled middle-aged man sprawled on the steps drinking from a bag.

*Hey, man,* Mars said.

She went up to him and stood there for a second or two until he looked up.

*Hey, man,* she said, holding out her hand and shaking his with respect—

*Happy Father’s Day.*