

I had a crush on you when I was nineteen. I was in a class you taught on Tuesday afternoons, but I thought about you every day. You were the first woman I felt this way about—at least, the first I was conscious of wanting to slide up against. I had recurring thoughts about sliding up against you. I imagined you stretched across a big white comforter, rubbing your temples with your fingers at the end of a long day, a gray woven blanket draped over the foot of the bed.

I imagined that sometimes we would go to my place after drinks with a group of friends. Our conversation would overwhelm the evening; suddenly it was two, three a.m. You'd say, *Let's go to your place. I'm tired of my interiority.* You said this very matter-of-factly. As you took off your shoes, you smiled darkly at the faded carpets in my apartment.

Crossing the room, you took off your shirt as if in slow motion, revealing nothing. Like you were wearing five shirts, I'd never get to your chest.

In the morning you were awake and showered, about to leave just as I was getting up. I always woke up early, so there was an element of competition: who would get the first part of the morning to themselves?

You always won. You used to smoke in the classroom. You were so provocative, running at the mouth a mile a minute and stabbing your cigarette butt into the ashtray. I thought about your cigarette butts, I wondered how often you emptied the ashtrays in your living room. Did you have someone come and clean for you? The thought embarrassed me. Once while I was considering this, the word "Jewess" popped into my mind, and that embarrassed me more.

Like "woman," but worse.