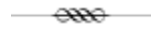


Starting Over

Elizabeth Thorpe



She looks at his plate. She waits. He's talking about his job again, the job where he works with people she's not close enough to know. *Yet*, she should think, not close enough yet. Maybe someday she will know all his friends. She will go to his sisters' baby showers and cut his grandparents' obituaries from the newspaper.

They will drive somewhere far, late at night, and she will help him stay awake. They will sing along to the radio station and will make up new words for the songs. They will remember those words as if they are the real ones.

He will ask her where something is—the cooler, the screwdriver, the Fix-a-Flat for a punctured tire. And she will know. She will yell directions from a different room.

He will know her favorite kind of Ben and Jerry's. He will pick it up at the store when he gets his favorite. They will sit on the couch with their pints and spoons, and she will make sure her foot is close enough to feel his leg through his jeans.

She will know that he likes to sit through the credits at the end of a movie, or wait until the crowd clears at a baseball game. Someday, some of the things he likes will become things she likes, and she will forget why.

Someday, they will be like saplings winding their branches together. They will be a tongue and a groove. They will be salt and pepper.

Someday, she'll take the pickles off his plate as soon as the food comes, before the pickle juice soaks into the chips. But for now, she just waits.

