

Eighteen, Both of Us

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And still unknissed. Blame it on our strict Christian homes, the rules at the Bible school we were attending, guilt, or just plain old nerves. I sat on the edge of dryer #2 while he stood in front of me. The Laundromat was empty—only the swish of two washers and the lingering smell of Tide to distract us from our voracious staring at each other, full in the face, eye to eye.

We'd recently begun tiny kisses on the cheek, forehead, even the neck, which was arguably more sensual than the lips. We rationalized that only the lips counted. As long as lips were saved for the wedding day, I'd be fine, having followed the letter of the law. He didn't share my extreme notion of purity but went along with it, as he'd eventually do many times, giving in to my wishes for our shared life. He delivered a cheek kiss now, a prickly one. The school dress code required daily shaving, but it grew back so quickly. Later he'd wear a full beard—soft relief for me.

Not today, though. Today, I accepted his cheek kiss and delivered my own, right to the almost-edge of his lips. I had a quick and deep impulse that all would be okay, and I believed it. Without lifting my lips, I slid them onto his soft surprised ones. Across the room, washer #5 made a screeching adjustment, ending one cycle and beginning the next.

(252 words)