

first
base



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There is some kiss we want with our whole lives.

—Rumi

part one



Never is Lowan up this late. He's on the couch, eyes still sizzling from the garlic bread he made for supper. The bulb was hard and dense with purple skin. He chopped it up and loaded it onto a heel of rye using a spatula. When the crust caught fire he took it out of the toaster oven. The garlic was barely warm, sweating slightly, still crunchy and juicy. One bite and he could hear his retinas detach. It sounded like power lines snapping. Over the past six hours, the green static dominating his vision has thickened. He can tell there's a movie on. Someone is singing a song about what must be remembered. *A kiss is just a kiss* is all Lowan needs to hear. He throws the ashtray, five pounds of amber-colored glass with grooves for cigars to rest during poker games. It came with the apartment, unlike the television set in its trajectory. That would belong to Lowan.



Lowan careens through the zoo in a stroller. He'd gotten a running start and hopped in. A nursery rhyme plays over the loudspeakers, something about Lowan sitting in a tree, k-i-s-s-i-n-g, first comes love, then comes marriage, then comes Lowan in a baby carriage! It doesn't make sense. How could the husband also be the baby? The chimps watch him rattle past. Their ancestors chewed food and fed their young mouth-to-mouth with puckered lips. That's how kissing started.



This is the moment Lowan's been waiting for. The prince is opening the casket. Just as he leans over to kiss Snow White, the child who's been kicking the back of Lowan's seat for the past hour and 23 minutes thrusts with both feet, sending Lowan into hyperneurogenic shock. Next thing he knows an usher is shaking him by the shoulder. They need to prepare the auditorium for the evening performance. Lowan is reminded to grab a complimentary apple on his way out. They're in an enormous bird bath he fails to tip over.



Lowan's attempt at a citizen's arrest isn't going smoothly. The offender is a former naval officer who was photographed kissing a stranger in Times Square to celebrate the end of World War II. The man was so drunk, he had no recollection of pressing his lips to hers and bending her backwards, even after he saw it on the cover of *Life* magazine. Neither he nor his wife nor anyone else at the VA assisted living facility are getting Lowan's joke. That's because it's not a joke. You can't go kissing someone and not remember.