

Life Story

by Joseph Scapellato

A man lives with a woman he loves enough to live with, but not enough to marry and not enough for kids. He knows he could love others enough to marry, enough for kids, but he's not the kind of man to find those women when he's with this woman.

Sometimes "love" doesn't fit what he feels. It's too pocket-sized. Or maybe too monumental.

Sometimes "enough" fits. He says to himself, "I don't enough her enough."

"I won't enough her enough."

The woman loves the man enough to live with, enough to marry, enough for kids, but loves him too much to make him into what he won't be. She knows she could find others who love her enough to marry, enough for kids. So what.

Sometimes "love" is too blunt. "Timing" is more textured. "He doesn't timing me yet."

"He won't ever timing me."

The man is skinny with a robust beard and when he walks he keeps his eyes fixed straight ahead. The woman is full-bodied with a bouncy gait and when she's alone she sings opera songs. They're not traditional in the way their parents are but they're Midwestern enough to want marriage and kids, they can't help it, it's in the lives they imagine.

He stays, and stays, and stays. She knows.

They love living with each other. They get a dog, they play cards, they cook and bake and slap each others' butts. They share friends, some who marry, some who move away. They both have OK jobs that get better.

They continue loving living with each other except for when they think or talk about marrying and having kids. When they talk about it there is only the restating of statements. They enter their thirties, a tiny banquet hall with no tables or chairs or carpeting.

Years stack up before the both of them, a tower, one they'll pass.

The woman thinks, Maybe *I* won't timing him ever, and when she sings she feels like biting her wrists, or hugging their dog, or resolving to one day tell herself that she will not feel good when he stays forever.

The man thinks, Maybe *I* don't fit enough, and when he touches his beard concludes, continuously, that it doesn't seem possible that such a thing could be pushing out of his face.

