

LYDIA

## THE LOVE THING

Lydia and Anita are at lunch. Lydia's talking about Austin. She's already gone over the whole *condom* thing and the whole *disease* thing. Now she's on the love thing.

—So we've been going out for a year, Lydia says. —Almost. A year this February.

—Uh huh, Anita says. She's finished her meal and is putting on lipstick, checking herself in her compact mirror.

—And he's never told me that he loves me. Does that seem weird to you?

—A year is a long time, Anita says. She presses her lips against one another.

—A year *is* a long time, Lydia confirms. —Oh, God.

—Have you said it to him?

—*God*, no, says Lydia.

Anita snaps the compact shut and returns it to her purse. —But you *do* love him?

—What? Lydia says. —Oh, uh, yeah. Yeah, of course. She shoots Anita a look.

Anita shrugs. —Sometimes it's hard to be sure.

—Yeah, no, I get that. But no. I mean, I *do* love him— (it feels strange, to hear the words, to have them come out of her mouth) —but I don't want to, you know, *scare him off*. You know how guys are—

—Boy *do* I.

—But, I don't know. I actually don't think he's *scared* of commitment. It *has* been a year. And he seems pretty committed—

Anita makes a puzzled face. —Well, yeah, weren't— remind me —weren't the two of you thinking about moving in together at one point?

Lydia sighs. —Austin and his roommate just renewed their lease. But the roommate is getting married in April, so he's out. *My* lease runs out at the end of May, and, I don't know, we've talked—kind of?—about having me come in then, take over the roommate's half of the lease. But he always says *either that or I'll just break the lease and move into a place by myself*.

—So he's . . . noncommittal.

—Well, yeah. But he didn't run screaming for the hills when I mentioned the *idea* of us living together. That's *something*.

—No, Anita says, you're right.

Lydia sticks a fork into her salad and listlessly moves romaine leaves around. —I don't know, she says. —I just wish he would give me a *sign* or something.

—You said he was a musician? Anita says.

—Yeah, Lydia says. She drops her head in her hands. —Don't remind me.