

## Kitchen

The table is sticky. “Butcher Block”—a new concept for the era. You need to oil it every couple of months to keep it fresh. There’s a fine sediment, a film, that never comes off. If you keep your elbows on it too long you make a slow noise when you tear away.

The clock stares from above the door. It ticks; the refrigerator makes a warm hum. The mother fills the refrigerator and the daughter empties it, basically. The daughter enters the kitchen and, nine times out of ten, opens the refrigerator, looks in, maybe gets something, closes the door, and turns away. It’s as if she’s checking on incubating eggs. She doesn’t have to be hungry.

Out the window in front of the kitchen sink you can see the garden and part of the yard. Sometimes you can see the dog rolling around in the grass, or one of the family cats walking one of the railroad ties that separates the strawberries from the herbs from the cucumbers, or sitting, head bent, waiting to pounce on something.

The kitchen is all orange. It’s got brick orange floors and bright *bright* orange linoleum counters. Everyone in the family knows the map of the cabinets, knows where the raisins are, the teaspoon, the pudding, the matches.

Even when the daughter is relentlessly interested in everything else in the world, the smell of her mother’s brown rice or her mother’s broccoli or ratatouille or her mother’s pesto fills her like no other food, no other smell. Right now there’s something boiling, and the daughter is sitting at the table, elbows glued to the wood, and she is staring at the clock aimlessly and telling her mother about the guy she likes, Dan.

The daughter is fifteen and the mother is thirty-seven. The mother loves love stories.

It's a lost, delicious feeling, knowing you have a lot of time. Besides the radical joy of her feelings about Dan, there is the additional joy of telling the story of Dan to another, to her mother, and thus to make it more real... to make it tick like the clock.

Now there is no trace of Dan, but the kitchen remembers the conversation, the color orange, murmurs strong and regular against the clink of the metal bowl and the hush of the tap water and the chop, chop, chop of tomatoes for dinner.