

Remembering (296 words)

He nicknamed her 'Tizer' because of her tangy red-hair. They'd met at a gig. Some dirty Irish troubadour that the Guardian had stamped with four stars. She was working behind the bar, so he got drunk. He loved her freckles.

Now they are here, doing fine. A nest built out of mementos. His amateur photography on the wall. Her homemade coasters. Tizer and Thumper. He looked like a cartoon rabbit when he smiled, she said. Thumper. Friends with Bambi.

Moving in. Adopt a cat. It died after three years. Thumper took Tizer to Naples to forget the cat. Drown it with wine, beaches and sun-dried tomatoes.

Six years. No itch. More a scratch. Occasional carpet burn. The weddings of friends, followed by gentle interrogations. "When will it be you two?" Promotions. That petulant fight at the barbecue. Car engine failure. New fridge. Their flirty messages ended with their phone contracts.

New cat after the bad news from the family clinic. Tears plopping in the bathroom sink, panda eyes in the mirror. His comforting arms, and corduroy smell. Six months in, Tizer would give Thumper's bum a cheeky pinch that promised dirty bedsheets. Now he has tablets for depression. The sad rabbit, missing Bambi's mum, Tizer said. Redundancy and 'This Morning'. Bills. Resentment. Savings like wet sand castles.

Inched up skirts, happy bed hangovers, smelly breath kisses. Tizer's tricky bras, joking he'd cracked the enigma code, every time Thumper fiddled it free. He thought she hated that joke but he repeated it anyway. She loved it. The joke was a string through the maze to when they first began. Remembering made things worse. He missed the wonder of her freckles.