

are dating a girl you met at work. You have had girlfriends before—good Korean girls, who wore dishwashing gloves when they made kimchi and got embarrassed holding hands.

This girlfriend has curly hair and blue eyes. She kisses you in public and wants to be a writer. She gets the flu and you make her some soup. You have never cooked for a girl before, ever. When she gets better, she makes you soup in return. It's horrible. When you tell her it's good, she laughs and calls you a liar.

When you've been together for a year, she takes you to meet her family. Your girlfriend is your height, but her father towers over you. He shakes your hand very seriously and asks you what you're planning to do with your life. You tell him you're studying for the MCAT and he nods. His eyes are cornflower blue, just like his daughter's. During dinner, he grills you. Who did you vote for in the last election? What did you want to be when you were a kid? Tell me about your family. You say that your father is a doctor. You tell him about how you all immigrated to the US when you were barely young enough to remember it, how your father put himself through medical school again while still managing to keep a roof over your heads. You tell him how grateful you are for your parents' sacrifices. Your girlfriend's father doesn't smile, not once.

After dinner, you do the dishes together. Your girlfriend's father washes and you dry. He tells you he just wanted to make sure you were good enough for his daughter. He approves of you. He claps you on the shoulder, and you manage not to jump.

You start spending Christmas with your girlfriend's family. Your girlfriend's father is in banking, and he tells you more about it. He thinks you would do well—you would make a lot of money, just as much as if you became a doctor. He never gets called in the middle of the night. He has no photo books of broken bones. He thinks you would do well in business, but he has friends in every field that he can connect you with. Becoming a doctor is a long, hard path, he tells you. "You're very sharp, son," he says.