

ciate how others will greet their relational truths. Sonia and Lauren, who begin to cover their thoughts and feelings, seem to emerge as resisters at eleven, in a responsive relationship with a woman who resonates with their liveliness and outspokenness and is willing to play with them within the interview session. But Jessie in speaking with her interviewer seems to move further out of relationship with herself, with what she sees and hears, feels and thinks. At eleven, Jessie no longer calls attention to the moles' discomfort or pain, no longer blows the whistle on the porcupine's intransigence and cruelty. We cannot help but connect this change over time—from Jessie's willingness to speak about the moles' feelings and the porcupine's abuse to her silence about both in the name of "cooperation" or nice relationship—with the tendency of some women to stay in emotionally or physically abusive situations. What Jessie is learning at ten and eleven, it seems to us, is a justification for staying in such relationships, a lesson she may carry with her into adulthood.

All three girls voice their psychologically astute understanding of relationships and point to the places where a world they know seems in danger of disappearing; all three learn to anticipate what others will say or think if they express their strong feelings; all three know the tyranny of nice and kind, the power of the perfect (white, middle-class) girl. Jessie, Sonia, and Lauren take in the relational world around them—messages about holding in their feelings and thoughts in order to be seen as good girls, as well as pleasurable experiences of being with women who really want to know them, who enjoy being with them, and who stay with them even when they are disruptive. The pressure to integrate their rich emotional lives with narrowing visions of nice and kind women leaves these girls struggling with the difference between true and false relationships. As we listen to these girls at eleven, and recall their eight-year-old voices and the voices of their classmates at that time, we begin to wonder what is happening at the edge of adolescence to call forth such resistance, and what will sustain it.

4

Approaching the Wall: Three Guides into Adolescence

Susan is eleven and in the fifth grade. I go to her classroom to tell her I am ready because my previous interview ran a bit over the scheduled time. As we move down the hall I notice she is walking on the backs of her top-siders, crunching them into something like slippers. I ask her how she's doing and how she likes school, and she responds softly in a word or two. Though she was interviewed last year, this is the first time we have met. I soon learn that much is different for her this year. As a fifth grader, she has entered the Middle School world of changing classes, tougher subjects, higher expectations. School has become more serious. But, she tells me, she and her classmates have weathered these changes; relationships have survived.

Guided to fifth grade by Jessie, Sonia, and Lauren, we now meet Susan and her classmates who, according to their teachers, are an unusually bright and sensitive, close-knit group. It is easy to understand this portrayal as we watch them engage in lively discussions, hover over science projects, read stories they have written aloud to each other, laugh heartily or glance knowingly at their best friends across the room.

In our interviews, it becomes clear to us how much these ten- and eleven-year-old girls know about people and relationships and how deeply they feel relational conflicts. Their curiosity about the human world they live in is palpable; they seem always to be listening in or keeping track of what is happening between people. Open to relationships, they talk unabashedly about vulnerability—

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their pleasure in the intimacy and fun of human connection, and also the potential in relationships of being wounded. Experiencing the changing weather of relationships, they speak about the subtle nuances of relational conflict and the politics of relational experiences—highlighting especially the painful consequences of the formation of cliques, the social order so common among girls of this age. Noura, for example, ponders the consequences of speaking up to her friends about their treatment of other people:

I'm afraid that sometimes the friends that were talking about people—sometimes they might just go on talking, and then later they'd talk about me . . . and spread it around and then no one would like me, or the other person that was being talked about would not like me, or sometimes they'd think, "Well, you did the right thing, but I don't like you," like, "I like you," but they're not going to be my best friend or something, and so I don't know what to do . . . 'cause then the other friends wouldn't like me as much or something.

From this situation, in which she could do the "right thing" and not be liked, Noura learns "how I would feel . . . I learned that it's not nice [to talk about people] and I learned what it feels like to be—to be the person that everyone doesn't like." "How did you learn that?" the interviewer wonders. "Well," Noura explains, "you learn that by just your feeling, what you feel was right or wrong . . . and your reactions to everyone talking about them or something, and you learn because you know that you wouldn't like that to be happening to you. So you know, then you kind of learn how to solve things and work things out with people."

Noura, who knows what she feels, who "learns from" her feelings, nonetheless struggles to say what she knows. She knows through her own experience that speaking up will not necessarily change her friends' behavior. In fact, it may make things worse—"the friends," who aren't really friends, "might just go on talking, and then later talk about me." Even the girl she defends may not like her if she says what she feels. And yet by staying with her feelings and paying attention to her own "reactions" Noura also knows how

it would feel to be ostracized—"to be the person that everyone doesn't like." Knowing all this, she anticipates, like Lauren, the consequences of her actions. Feelings and knowing, intimately entwined, lead Noura to an awareness of the complexity of the relational world. But by not saying what she feels, Noura risks losing touch with what she knows from experience.

These ten- and eleven-year-old girls, who experience the depth of feelings and the complexity of relationships, actively resist a growing pressure not to speak what they know from experience and struggle to hold onto what the evidence of their senses tells them is happening. Yet as they respond to subtle and overt pressures to cover strong feelings with "calm" and "quiet" behavior, words like "friend" and "love" and "relationship" become slippery and begin to lose their meaning. When it is wrong to know what is happening or to express strong feelings, and when, conversely, everyone is called a friend and everyone is said to care, girls struggle to stay in touch with what they are experiencing so that they can tell the difference between genuine and false or idealized relationships.

Common prohibitions against girls' speaking what they feel and think—especially given the acuity of their perceptions—renders the relational world complex and difficult to read. Moral language can add another layer of confusion over their actions as these girls learn to separate what they know from what good girls should know, what they do from what girls should do, what they feel and think from what nice girls should feel and think. As girls attempt to connect to the world of adult shoulds, they join in reinterpreting their actions; their experiences take on double meanings, they begin to see double. Gail, for example, reflects on her life over the past year with satisfaction, as a time when "I think I've gotten along better with people . . . I don't disagree as much . . . and I don't get into fights as much. Like arguments with my friends." "How come you think that has happened?" her interviewer asks. "Maybe because I can understand how they think now and accept them . . . accept what they think, instead of being just one-way minded," Gail replies. "So I can think, I can understand how they think, as well

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as what I think." In the past, Gail continues, "I had more fights or arguments. Then I realized that I went along with that and I realized I was experienced I guess, because I realized that I *should* understand what they think also" (emphasis added). In this way, Gail says, she came to understand "that I'm not always right, they could have been just as right and they have their *thoughts* too."

The changes in herself that Gail describes would seem like clear evidence of her maturing capacity to embrace the fact of difference and to listen to other people. To insist on her thoughts and disagree a lot with her friends, as she did in the past, Gail says, was "one-way minded" and led to unnecessary fights. Now that she understands her friends and accepts them, she is *open-minded* because she can "understand how they think as well as what I think." This move to accept and understand frees her mind to "do something constructive" and reduces the amount of "worthless" arguing. But to make this move Gail has to suspend what she really feels, something she is now more capable of doing as an eleven-year-old but which, in effect, removes her from genuine relationship. "Do you think fighting or arguing is worthless?" her interviewer asks. In a confusing statement which seems to lead one way, but then turns another, Gail says essentially yes—that fighting is worthless and *since* she's stopped fighting she doesn't "have to think":

It is [worthless] . . . if it's over something that's of no importance, like little things, like something . . . that [a friend] did that you didn't think was right. If she lost something and you got really mad at her for doing that, that's sort of worthless . . . because you can just get on with it and that won't matter in what you do. And you said since [you stopped arguing] you have a lot less on your mind?

Yah, because you don't have to think, you don't have to try to avoid that person, and you don't have to think more about, if you regret what you did, then you don't have to think about it that much.

Did you find that before, you were regretting?

Yah, because . . . you could lose a friendship if you did that.

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Gail's response to her interviewer's questions about arguing exemplifies the intricate and subtle relationship between Gail's developing capacity to understand and appreciate and take in viewpoints different from her own and the fear that by continuing to speak in the presence of difference she will lose her relationship with her friends. Gail's preoccupation with what is a worthy and what is a "worthless" argument is overridden by the associations she makes between arguing and feeling "regret"—feelings which then interfere with her ability to do other, more "constructive" things. Linking arguing with losing relationships, Gail joins "thinking" and "understanding" with "accepting" what others say, suggesting that, as Gail becomes more discerning of others' ways of seeing and thinking she also becomes less able to say what she thinks and feels. Clear evidence of developmental gains go hand-in-hand with a sense of genuine loss. In this reformulation of thinking and this willing suspension of feelings, Gail "accepts" others' views and doesn't "have to think" or deal with the difficult feelings arguing may create—the wish to avoid people, the sense of having to think more about things, the lingering specter of regret. Agreement is easier and neater, but it comes at the expense of genuine relationship—that is, relationships in which Gail can say what she thinks is right, in which conflict and disagreement and strong feelings can occur. Thus, by associating arguing with disconnection and regret, and relationship with "getting along better with people," Gail reveals the fine line between genuine relationship in which she speaks and also listens to others and learns from them and false relationships in which she silences herself because she is afraid of what will happen, and also how she will feel, if she expresses what she really thinks.

As we listen to these ten- and eleven-year-old girls' struggle to know what they know and say what they feel, we begin to trace their puzzlement at the discrepancy between what they see and hear, what they know about relationships and feelings through experience, and how the relational world and the world of feelings is supposed to be known and seen. As these girls become more psy-

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chologically astute, this discrepancy between their experiences and what they hear adults saying, see adults doing, captures their attention, fascinates and frustrates them. They begin to watch and listen intently, paying close attention to how others—particularly the adult women in their lives, the people they have most closely relied on for help and guidance in navigating the relational world—feel and think, how they express their feelings and thoughts, how they name relationships, and why they act like they do. And with stunning perceptiveness, these ten- and eleven-year-olds describe what they see and hear.

Allison describes her frustration with her great-aunt who babysits for her and her sister when her mother is out of town. This aunt "writes down things and tells my mom everything that happens" and "sometimes she explains things differently," Allison explains. "Sometimes in her head it's different than it really happened. I mean, it happened the way she's telling it, but not in her thinking, it processes different than in our thinking . . . she doesn't think like we do." The problem for Allison is that her mother listens to her aunt's side, rather than to "both sides." "It might not help [if she would listen to both sides]," reflects Allison, "but at least she would understand . . . We don't want her to not listen to our great-aunt, but to listen to us too."

Allison is clear that the story her aunt tells her mother is different from what she and her sister experience, from how they "process" what happened. Though Allison knows there are two sides to the story, at least two different interpretations or ways of thinking, like Noura, she stays with what she knows from experience—what is, to her, reality. Allison wants to solve the problem not by covering over or ignoring her aunt's version of the story but by including her own. This way her mother can "get a better feel of what happened." Yet Allison and her sister don't explain this to their mother because their mother doesn't listen, she already "sort of knows":

Well . . . she doesn't really care. She cares what we do, but she doesn't really get angry or upset . . . as long as she doesn't get angry at us, it doesn't really matter if she doesn't listen to our

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side. We get upset, but it doesn't really matter. But if she gets upset . . . It doesn't matter as long as she—she sort of knows—in her—she doesn't listen to us because she knows what's in her head . . . in her head, she's thinking that she knows what we would think, because she knows us, so she doesn't have to listen to what we say 'cause she sort of has a feeling.

Her mother, Allison explains, thinks she knows what her daughters would think, has "a feeling." Yet, Allison observes, her mother does not listen and though this means she doesn't get angry, it also means that her "feeling" for the situation is "in her head" and does not reflect Allison's reality. And so Allison has two experiences—she is upset because she is not listened to, and yet "it doesn't really matter" that she gets upset or that her mother "doesn't listen to our side" as long as her mother does not get upset or angry. Watching this strange interplay between love (the mother cares but "doesn't really care") and authority (she knows though "she doesn't listen"), Allison openly wonders what her mother is up to. What Allison describes echoes other girls' astute observations of what is really happening in relationships, and also their propensity, at least on the surface, to give up or give over their version of reality to those who have the power to name or reconfigure their experience.

Like Noura, Allison struggles with discrepancies between what she feels and thinks, what she knows from experience, and what she observes others—in this case her mother—doing and valuing. For Allison, a mother who knows by "feeling" but yet knows "in her head" without listening is confusing and leaves her speechless, feeling ineffective. "I don't say, 'It's unfair,'" Allison explains when her mother takes her sister's side in arguments, "because then my mother always says . . . 'Life is unfair' . . . I can't help it if my parents think what they really think, and even if it's not right, you can't really do anything about it, but tell them, and if they don't agree with you, there's no sense arguing."

Gail describes a similar feeling of helplessness at not being heard or listened to when her older sister is allowed to go off on her own at the mall and she is not. When Gail protests her sister's privilege,

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her mother, too, says, "Life is always unfair." "What did you think of that?" her interviewer wonders. "It's probably true that life is not always fair," Gail responds:

[My mother's] probably right and I probably suggested it because she was doing it. I probably wanted to do it. I was probably jealous or something, so that's why. At that time I probably thought that's unfair and then I realized that it wasn't really unfair because she didn't want me to get lost, and I didn't really want to get lost anyway.

Do you wish you had spoken up or are you glad you didn't?

Well, I'm glad I didn't, because it might have caused a ruckus over something and I probably would have another chance.

Gail's repeated use of the word "probably" suggests that her agreement with her mother is not as complete as she implies. What she initially called unfair she now describes as her problem—"I was probably jealous." Gail lets go of her feelings about the situation as she takes her mother's concern into herself—"I didn't really want to get lost anyway." Speaking up, she reflects, "might have caused a ruckus," and, like Allison, Gail feels the powerful edge of adults' disapproval and admonishments and concludes that her anger and strong feelings are not only ineffective but upsetting and unwelcomed.

While Allison, in frustration, decides "there's no sense arguing" with her parents since "you can't really do anything about it," and Gail, rather than "cause a ruckus," takes in her mother's view, Edie describes the impasse between her feelings of anger at what she experiences as unfairness and her mother's goodness. What Edie first describes as an unfair use of power, she recasts as an example of her mother's care, her selfless love.

Can you tell me about a time when something happened to you that was unfair?

Unfair? Okay, this is like, I think it's unfair, maybe it isn't. It's unfair, sort of, it's unfair to me.

If you thought it was unfair to you, that's what I want to know about.

Well, sometimes when I want to go to a party, a sleep-over, maybe, and my mom would say no, because she maybe doesn't trust the

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people or something. And then I think it's unfair. But then I know that she's caring and, you know, she's like loving and she's caring about me and she's making it so I don't get hurt or anything, she's doing it for my own good, then I know that after, but then at the time I got mad, but just for a while. Especially when everybody else is going.

What would have been the fair thing to do?

I don't know, maybe like she said, well, I think it was sort of fair now that I think about it, you know, that she was right in doing that, she did the right thing.

Edie gets mad, she says, "but just for a while." In quick succession what she calls "unfair to me" becomes "sort of fair" and then "the right thing," as Edie comes to "know" that what felt unfair to her was really her mother's love and care, her mother "making it so I don't get hurt . . . doing it for my own good." Edie's struggle to name unfairness and to stay with her feelings and thoughts about being overruled by her mother is overshadowed by her mother's seemingly selfless love and concern. In the end, this reconfiguration leaves both Edie and her mother voiceless and out of relationship.

Allison, Gail, and Edie reveal girls' intricate knowledge of relationships, their awareness of what is happening between people, and also their thinly veiled attempts to cover over their thoughts and feelings as they portray others', in this case their mothers', reactions to what they really feel and think and want. Desiring connection with the world around them—with the world of their mothers—they speak of taking their feelings and thoughts out of relationship for the sake of what is being called relationship. Over and over in their interviews we hear these girls struggle as their strong feelings come up against a relational impasse that shuts out their experience or shuts down their loud voices, a wall of shoulds in which approval is associated with their silence, love with selflessness, relationship with lack of conflict. Here their anger and strong feelings are associated with danger and disruption. Our interviews suggest girls are conscious and aware of this relational impasse, this move toward false or idealized relationships—at least at age ten and eleven.

Desiring connection and approval, girls thus begin to idealize

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their actions and their relationships with other girls by denying what they know through experience about conflict, about meanness or unkindness, since to know about such behavior implicates them, especially perhaps in the eyes of the women who interview them. Suzanna, for example, proudly announces that there is no meanness at all in her class. When her interviewer, surprised at this remark, having listened to other girls' stories, asks her to elaborate, Suzanna responds, "Well, we all do things together and nobody's left out." Suzanna's statement flies in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, since so many other girls in her class describe in rich detail those times when others have whispered about them, excluded them, said mean things about them, or left them out. Suzanna, it seems, is either out of relationship with what is happening around her or she simply chooses not to speak what she knows is happening to the woman interviewing her, chooses not to speak what is quickly becoming for her and her classmates unspeakable.

Other girls cover their experiences of being left out or talked about with such a thin whitewash of nice and kind that the grain of their real thoughts and feelings shows through. When Madeline, for example, tells of her experience with the cliques and "clubs" that exist in her class, she dilutes her feelings with the almost unbelievable power of polite behavior to cover over, to bury, the meanest remarks:

Last year people didn't think I was, like they didn't like me very much, and they would make clubs against me, they would say, "Let's make up this club against her, because we don't like her," or something, but then I found out about it, so they would say, "I'm sorry," and so it turned out okay.
Was that at this school that they did that?
 Yeah, but only the first month maybe and then everybody got to be good friends and everything, so it turned out very well.
How did it work itself out?
 I don't know, like I would find out about it somehow and I'd ask the person why they did that, like I'd say very nicely, not "Why

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did you do that?" I would just say, "Why were you making up a club yesterday?" and they'd tell me why and say, "I'm sorry," and then everything would get back together.

The key to "getting everything back together," Madeline reveals, is polite but indirect confrontation. Though she says she would speak up to the people who have made a club against her, she knows that how she does so is important. Thus Madeline qualifies her question—"Like, I'd say very nicely, not 'Why did you do that?' I would just say, 'Why were you making up a club yesterday?'" Her question, asked "nicely," apparently passes the scrutiny of those in the club and "so it turned out well." Yet this happy ending hardly covers Madeline's hurt feelings when she hears about the club made against her, and it does not seem adequate to explain how such ardent dislike and exclusion on the part of the other girls could change so easily into genuine friendship. And we wonder why, if things ended so well, this experience of exclusion stays with Madeline so vividly a year later.

Like Madeline, other girls speak as though "I'm sorry" or other simple expressions of apology have the power to cover cruel or mean behavior or resolve ardent disagreements. Stories in which an apology is given have almost fairy-tale-like happy endings, so that strong feelings of pain or indignation end abruptly with this final act of attrition. Since these girls are talking to adult women, we wonder whether they believe what they say or whether they are saying what they believe the women who sit with them want to hear or will approve of. Perhaps ending their stories so "nicely" allows the girls to speak also of the cruelty and anger and sadness they've experienced, to speak what otherwise might cause women to turn away.

Like Jessie who says she "pretends" to be nice, and Sonia who knows people can "act nice to listen," these ten- and eleven-year-olds recognize, even talk about, whitewashing the relational world. Able to hold on to their own experiences and also to act in ways they have come to see others will approve of and respond to, they know the benefits of being the perfect, happy girl, at least on the

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surface. But what is, at first, a thin disguise can become all too real. While some girls wonder how a perfect girl could be possible, much less desirable, and how adults and other girls could fall for what they see as clearly fraudulent, other girls seem transfixed by the idea of her. Poised at the edge and suspecting that people prefer the "perfect" girl to the real one, these girls experiment with her image and the protection and security and happiness she promises.

As the perfectly nice girl seems to gain popularity with adults, and also with other girls, and as many girls strive to become her, jealousies and rivalries break out. The cliques and clubs so prevalent at this age thus seem to be a response to this struggle—a way for those girls who accept and best approximate perfection to group with one another or around a girl who seems perfect, and also a way for girls who are clearly not perfect to support each other emotionally. "I think friendship is very important," writes Victoria, a less than perfect girl, in English class:

Some girls that were unpopular like me made a club. Ever since then I know that when I'm sad or depressed I can count on those three girls. Before that I didn't know what was going to happen Though we are Leftovers in the Laurel School Cafeteria, I know I'm liked. That feels great.

Sincerely,
A Leftover.

Watching a treacherous relational scene, garnering evidence of the hazards of being too different or of not fitting in, leads Madeline to vehemently protest her distinctiveness: "I was kind of mad because they thought I was a different person, but I'm really not!"

But trying too hard to fit in can also backfire—Noura explains that her friends talk about other girls in her class who "just follow them around Sometimes they just push it too hard and they just follow you around and try to do everything with you and then you never have a chance to be with your other friends. A lot of people are just like that, they just follow people around." Such girls don't know how to create the right impression, can't read the

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unspoken social codes about what not to say and do; they just say what they want and feel; as Noura says, they just "spill their guts."

A sense of relational treachery is everywhere at this age. Divisions and cliques are visible reminders of the potential hazard of being too different, not pretty enough, not nice enough, subtle enough, smart enough. The most "popular" girls in the class move about boldly, however, comfortable with the authority invested in them and the image they portray. Often the most outspoken among the girls—though not necessarily with adults—they have the power to gather some girls around them and to exclude others. As we might guess, then, such girls become the focus of much attention and much criticism and jealousy. Madeline explains:

OK. There is a girl here . . . and she has this group, and she thinks, "I am so pretty, everybody should like me, and I am really popular and I am going to make everyone like me." So she has this group of all the people that she thinks are pretty and nice and very smart, and she takes them into her group and teaches them not to like certain people, and then she uses other people to get information out of some people, but the—that's what some people think, that is what we think she does, that is what some people think that don't like her—and so, she's just mean, she thinks, "I'm so pretty and she's ugly, why should I like her?" So that's what she says. She just doesn't like to be around other people. But she can be nice, but she's just like, "I'm so pretty," and she just sits like fluffing her hair back and everything.

Understandably, popular girls are outwardly doted on at the same time that they are privately envied or despised. Sometimes there are attempts to police these girls, to bring them back into the group; as Edie notes, "Sometimes people get mad at people that are too popular and stuff, and then we get in fights and stuff." Other girls watch the popular girl closely since she has the potential to "use" or hurt people and also to elevate them in the eyes of adults. Girls wonder who she is aligning with and why—is she showing off, looking for the approval of adults, or is she in relationship with other girls, a collaborator behind the scenes?

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Knowing very well that people can think one thing and say another—since this is something they describe themselves doing—these ten- and eleven-year-old girls observe others closely; they wonder who is genuine, whose motives are honest. They distinguish between “real, real good” friends, those they can trust will not whisper or talk about them behind their backs, and “just” friends. They point out chameleon-like people who engage in fraudulent relationships and people who really care, who are really nice—they know the difference between people who fake it and people who mean it.

Although friendships can be a place for girls to experiment with strong feelings and disagreements, a place to feel painful feelings and to test truth and falsity without too great a personal risk, these girls describe how adult women—mothers and teachers—appear at times of relational conflict to mediate girls’ disagreements, to protect girls’ feelings. Sounding a lot like Sonia, Margaret tells her interviewer about the difficulty of choosing a partner in gym class. “If I pick the wrong girl, then the other one wouldn’t necessarily get mad at me, but would sort of be upset,” Margaret explains, “and if I did it the other way, the other girl may be upset.”

As Margaret tells it, before she can deal with this dilemma she is rescued by her teacher. After noting that “all year . . . everybody was picking their best friends and they weren’t going with other friends” and that “it was happening to a lot of people, it wasn’t happening with just me,” her teacher, she says, decided “who would go where.” Though Margaret is “in a way . . . glad that the teacher decided” for her, she tells her interviewer that, given the chance to work things out for herself, she would have been more deliberate in her choice—not “ending up” with a group the teacher randomly chose but choosing “another group that hadn’t asked me or they weren’t asking, like the other groups had been.” Though “it’s hard for a person to decide,” Margaret explains, next time “if a person doesn’t have a partner, I will probably go to them.”

According to Margaret, her teacher uses her authority to put a halt to what has been an ongoing occurrence—exclusive cliques that have hurt and upset people in the class. Although Margaret is

rescued from her discomfort, she is unable to end her own story in the way she imagines—enacting a solution that is not only thoughtful but psychologically astute. If it were up to her, knowing “it is hard” and risky, Margaret would nonetheless face into the difficulty and choose.

Like Margaret, Allison also finds herself in a difficult situation when her “class took to two groups,” and “some people went with their friends on one side and the other group went with their friends on the other side.” Telling her story, Allison points to the considerable apprehension she felt about really being “a part” of the conflict: “I forget what the issue was,” she explains, “but [one person] had a lot of friends, and another person had a lot of friends, and another girl was sort of—she kind of went from group to group, and so she would go to one group and listen and then go to the other group and tell.” “And tell?” her interviewer asks.

Yes . . . and see, I didn’t want to be a part of anything, because then you lose a lot of friends, and gain them, but if you just have them all, and don’t take a side, then you keep all your friends.

So what did you do?

Well, I just sort of stayed out of it—some people asked me, but I just said, “I’d rather stay out of it.”

Do you think your decision was the right thing to do?

Yes . . . Just to stay out of it . . . If you get into it, then other people have hurt feelings, and then they could get angry with you, and then you would . . . then, if they thought, they wouldn’t be your real good friend anymore . . . because you would get in an argument, and you would lose your friends, so it’s better just to keep all your friends and not have them angry with you . . . But, on the other hand, it’s better to stay out of it, because if you get yourself trapped between them, and when it’s over, you don’t know if some people will still dislike you.

The cause of the fight long forgotten, Allison remembers the relational drama in detail. She decided, she says, to remain “neutral”; in her cost-benefit analysis of losing and gaining friends, it does not seem worth it to get involved. But Allison, revealing the intricacies of eleven-year-old girls’ relational knowledge, fears some-

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thing worse. If she were to get involved and choose sides, she could end up "trapped between" friends, unsure when the fight is over who is a "real friend" and who isn't. And yet choosing sides, unprofitable and dangerous as it might be, would at least be authentic. The girls who took sides at least escape fraudulence, unlike the disingenuous chameleon who "would go to one group and listen and then go to the other group and tell."

As Allison continues her story, again we hear how girls portray adult women in their lives at such moments—as coming in to protect girls from feeling painful feelings by removing them from conflict:

After a while, the teachers made us walk in a straight line, and they would walk with us, so there were no hurt feelings . . . so no one would hurt another person's feelings, and then it stopped . . . *I don't understand.*

See, by walking a straight line, the teachers would walk you to different classes, it would eliminate like any talking and hurting of feelings of other people, 'cause if you were in a straight line, you couldn't like group together with people.

What made this conflict hard, Allison says, was that "I like both of the friends on both sides, 'cause I like everybody in the class":

And my mother always told me not to have a best friend, because it gets you into problems with other people. So, other people had a best friend, so they wanted just to . . . even if they didn't think what their friend thought, they wanted to stick together, and they told themselves that they thought that . . . and it was hard because you liked everybody, and if you went on one side, the other side would get angry; if you went on the other side, the other side would get angry, so it was difficult.

Allison portrays her teachers and her mother as intervening in ways that encourage Allison not to choose groups. The teachers, obviously witnessing the troublesome division of the class, attempt to eliminate the talking and physical grouping that sustain such divisions. They require the girls to walk everywhere in a straight line, accompanied by a teacher—a visible reminder of their unac-

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ceptable behavior. The teachers, in this way, justify Allison's decision to remain uninvolved—for now each girl must walk alone and no girl is jeopardized or hurt by being left out. In addition, Allison recalls her mother's advice "not to have a best friend, because it gets you into problems with other people."

But Allison has a problem whether she has a best friend or not; she is a part of this conflict whether she chooses sides or not. The teachers, while effectively preventing the girls from public fighting, may have simply moved the conflict underground. And while her mother's solution may allow Allison to avoid some problems, it seems to create others. Allison knows that by choosing to stay out of things, she risks being called disloyal, dishonest, or, worse, a spy. Allison's friends—who want her to choose, and choose them—do warn her of these risks: "Some people thought that I should just join—go with a group—because otherwise I might be like just pretending I didn't want to go in a group and really be in the group and just know what other people are saying."

Allison's resistance seems courageous in a relational climate where people tell themselves they think what their friends think, where words can cause psychological violation and pain, and cliques or groups or "sides" threaten to silence girls' voices. But solutions designed to protect girls' feelings by ending public conflict simply push strong feelings underground and leave the simmering residue of disagreement, anger, and sadness unspoken and out of relationship. What remains visible, then, are the nice feelings, the polite conversations. As a result, girls find it more and more difficult to tell the difference between genuine pleasure and love in relationship and the pretense of pleasure and love.

More mature than the eight-year-old whistle-blowers, involved in more complex friendships and able to take different viewpoints, Margaret, Allison, and their classmates describe the difference between what they know from experience and what others say is or should be happening. Their strong desire to remain connected to those around them leads them, at times, to cover over, to whitewash their own experiences in order to be accepted, to be seen as acceptable. We hear them narrate their disconnection from them-

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selves as they suspend their strong feelings so they might stay in relationship with other people.

And yet while some girls pick their disagreements carefully and thoughtfully, determining when it is okay to "cause a ruckus," others speak openly, revealing the complexity and depth of their concerns in a genuine attempt to name relationships honestly, to work through the surface layers and get to what is really happening between people. These girls seem caught, then, between speaking about what they know about relationships—a sophisticated knowledge of thoughts and feelings—and pressures to negate or abandon their knowledge for an idealized view of themselves and their relationships. When women enter girls' stories as protectors—escorting them from the potential dangers of open conflict—or as idealized models of selfless love and perfect kindness, girls voice their growing suspicion that if they speak openly or have bad feelings, women will not want to be with them.

This time in girls' lives when the real and ideal divide seems critical. The move to the ideal leaves girls in danger of losing their relational reality, a reality that is crucial for them to hold onto, since once girls lose their ability to name relational violations they become, in new ways, vulnerable to abuse—both psychological and physical. Listening to these girls name what feels to them like a relational impasse, listening to them narrate their disconnection from their feelings—taking themselves out of relationship for the sake of relationship—we begin to wonder if we are witnessing the beginning of psychological splits and relational struggles well documented in the psychology of women.

Having listened to the variety of voices that populate the fifth grade, we now attend more closely and intently to the stories of three girls, three informants, who will be our guides through the late years of childhood, through the changes of puberty, and into early adolescence. Noura, Judy, and Victoria each describe a struggle to stay connected with themselves, with their thoughts and feelings, in the face of a relational impasse. Noura, who is Syrian and middle-class, brings her strong feelings and loud voice into the world of her relationships. Childhood has been an awakening of new thoughts

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and feelings, and she has learned from her family that she can express herself, that she can make the space and take the time to work through difficult relational problems. But as Noura comes up against the wall of good girls and perfect grades, she overrides what she has learned through experiencing the difficulties and the pressures of her relationships and moves into an exhaustive cycle of good feeling and perfect relationships. Even as she describes the hypocrisy of double standards, where others can speak and she cannot, and voices her longing for genuine relationships, Noura becomes so frightened of what she might feel and think and say in relationships that she dissociates from her feelings and cannot speak clearly.

Judy is European-American and middle-class. Over the years of the study she narrates the gradual split she experiences between what she feels deeply in her body, what she feels with her mind, and what is being shoved into her brain. Sensing the dangers that befall girls who remain embodied, who express their strong feelings, Judy nevertheless struggles to stay with herself and her feelings. Her parents' divorce brings Judy into a different kind of relational crisis where conflict and difference are laced with the reality of loss and the threat of further separation. Unable to say what she is really feeling, Judy protects herself and shelters others from her feelings in the name of relationship. Theorizing how people lose their minds, by which she means their bodily knowing, Judy poignantly describes the losses she herself feels so deeply.

Victoria, also European-American and middle-class, describes the painful feelings of growing up in an angry and violent household, where her protests "fall on deaf ears." For a time she struggles openly to express her feelings of anger and sadness, to name and to condemn what is happening to her and around her. But Victoria cannot seem to hold on or hold out in a world of unreliable and untrustworthy relationships, and so, in an attempt to stay with her own voice, she moves out of relationship with others. Claiming her radical independence from everyone, Victoria wavers between feeling "crazy" in the intensity of her anger and disconnecting from her feelings to find solace in the ideals of romance.

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Three guides, three different stories of girls' struggle for voice in the face of pressure to not know and not speak.

Noura: Knowing and Not Knowing

Nine-year-old Noura leans over the white construction paper and points to each figure in the family picture she has drawn; her straight, shoulder-length black hair falls forward and brushes the paper as she looks intently at the people and animals she has painted in primary colors: "That's my brother, and he likes animals," she begins. "A cat and a dog and a bird and a fish?" her interviewer observes. "Yeah," Noura responds, "and my dad's a doctor, and my mom and I like to paint a lot. My mom used to be an art teacher, and so I guess she still likes doing it. And, I don't know, I guess I take after her because I like art too. And that's a picture of my sister in her prom dress . . . she looked pretty in it." "Could you tell me a story about the people in your drawing?" her interviewer asks. "Just any story?" Noura replies. "Yeah, just any story," her interviewer says. Noura tells the following:

One day my brother went out on a field trip, and they were going in the woods, and he saw a dog, and he was injured kind of, and some other animals too. So he didn't follow the rest of his group, and he just went off to go and help them. And then after he found something to bandage them up with, he forgot about the field trip, and everyone started noticing he was gone. And then he just started walking and trying to find a way out, and then he found a way to get out and there was a restaurant there, and it just happened to be the one, McDonald's, that they were going to eat at . . . But he arrived a little bit earlier, and so he waited and decided to order some food because he was hungry, and then they met there again, and the rest of the day was normal.

Noura says that this story is "a fake one." But the image of her brother, two years her senior, making his way in the world, stopping to help injured animals, becoming separated from the crowd, finding his own "way out," feeling his hunger, ordering food, and then meeting up with the others and returning to a "normal" day evokes

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themes that will resonate throughout this time in girls' lives—themes of separation and relationship, injury and aid, hunger and satiation and concerns about what is normal and not normal. "You told a story about your brother. What is important to you about your brother?" her interviewer asks. "Well," Noura says, "we usually fight a lot, but he can be nice sometimes . . . We just like to tease each other." "A lot?" her interviewer asks. "Yeah," Noura says.

For nine-year-old Noura, relational life is filled with playing and fighting and teasing and niceness, and, as we might expect of life with an older brother and sister, filled with voices saying how to hold it all in check. "Since me and my brother fight a lot, people always tell us to be fair," she explains to her interviewer. Rules, she adds, "keep things equal," while strong feelings—like being "mad" or "upset" as well as being excited and happy—give Noura's life passion and meaning.

Noura is Syrian; her dark skin and black eyes set her apart from the sea of fair complexions in her fourth grade class. Yet according to Noura, "Everyone is different." "There are opinions and there are opinions," she says knowingly, and some people just "think differently." Fascinated by differences, Noura is also undaunted by disagreement; "I don't get along with some people," she says, which seems perfectly understandable to her since whether people get along "depends on what they think and how they like people to be." Noura, like other girls her age in this study, paints her relational life in the same primary colors she paints her pictures, in bold colors that emphasize borders and contrasts.

But like other nine-year-old girls, Noura also hears adult women encouraging her to be more measured in her response to differences, to consider more than what she sees and hears, feels and thinks. They are, Noura says, "always saying you should try and give someone a chance . . . And if you don't like them, fine, but try at least to get along with them."

Noura seems to have taken in this advice. A year later, the primary colors that so vividly represented her knowledge of herself and her relationships appear less distinct, more subtle. Talking about what has stood out for her this past year, ten-year-old Noura says

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with some pride, "I stopped fighting with my brother as much." "And how did that happen?" her interviewer wonders. "I don't know," Noura replies, "I guess because, just . . . we're becoming older and we don't always fight over the stupid little things and stuff." Now when her brother teases her, instead of teasing him back, Noura explains, "I try to ignore it, 'cause sometimes it just, I don't even think about it."

This change in Noura's relationship with her brother over the past year—from the lively exchanges, the mutual bantering and teasing, to her attempts "to ignore," to not know and not "think about" her brother's behavior—is accompanied by a shift in Noura's language. At ten, Noura sounds more tentative than she did at nine, less certain about what she feels and thinks, as she becomes more aware of how she is perceived by others. No longer wanting to "fight over the stupid little things" because her brother's teasing now "embarrasses" her, she is concerned with what should and "shouldn't be said." As moral language creeps into her interviewer's questions and into Noura's speech, so does Noura's uncertainty about the value and importance of what she has to say: When her interviewer asks her to describe a time when she didn't know what she should do, Noura responds, "I don't know, it doesn't really matter . . . I guess we could talk about . . . I don't know, not like anything big or anything . . . I don't know . . . Well, I don't know, see 'cause sometimes, I don't know, 'cause I just can't really . . ." As her interviewer, like other women in Noura's life, asks her to reflect on how she should behave rather than to describe what she thinks and feels, Noura begins the difficult process of deciphering what she can or should know from what she knows; Noura is beginning, it seems, to disconnect from her feelings and knowledge in an attempt to connect to what others want.

Noura's increased sensitivity to social cues, to what should and shouldn't be known or said, works to her advantage in her relationships with the girls in her class. Noura watches and listens as her friends tease and talk about the girls who want too much to be liked, who "just push it too hard and they just follow you around and try to do everything with you," even though she herself is

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irritated by these popular friends who are "really smart, or they're really good athletes" but who "act like they're the best," who "brag" or who "just laugh at other people's throws or their hits for tennis." Quietly resistant but also keenly aware of what it feels like to be teased and embarrassed, Noura struggles with what to do when these friends who talk about people tell her "not to like this person and stuff":

Well sometimes I just say [to them], "Yeah, but it doesn't really matter 'cause they didn't do anything wrong or anything," so sometimes I just say, "Yeah, and there's nothing wrong with somebody." And then sometimes I have to decide what to say . . . like if someone has a party that not everyone's invited to and they'll say like, "Well, somebody's so dumb, and she doesn't know anything and she never studies for her tests and she talks weird and she's ugly," and stuff like that . . . Sometimes I sort of go along with them, but sometimes I say, "I don't know," just to cover it up, 'cause I don't know what to say . . . but I usually think, "Well, it's not their fault if they can't do things good and stuff."

Is your problem deciding whether to speak up in front of your friends about this girl?

Yeah. And sometimes also, if you like the person, and you really think that that's not true, well, sometimes, I would say, "Well, that's not always true," but I wouldn't really just disagree with them totally—I would tell them, "Well, sometimes it's true, but not always" and if you look at the good side, you can see a lot of things that they don't do that other people do that bugs you and stuff.

What makes it a hard decision for you?

I don't know . . . I don't know . . . I guess just that—well, I like both of—I like my friends and well, they're all my friends, but I like also the other person that's being talked about, and sometimes you don't know. Like if you say, "Well, that's not true," then those friends might say, "Yes, it is, don't you know anything?" And then if someone else says, "Do you know what? I heard [that girl] talking about you," and then that person would get mad . . . and so sometimes I just don't know what to say, and it's hard to say something.

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If Noura says what she feels and disagrees with her friends, she risks being ridiculed, talked about, and rejected; if she holds back what she feels and thinks, she colludes in behavior she knows from experience will hurt people and is unreal or false. In the deepest sense this is a struggle about relationship and about knowing—what can Noura know and say and still be in connection with other people? What should she ignore or not know for the sake of “relationships”? When we listen again to the above exchange, paying closer attention to Noura’s language, we hear this struggle more clearly:

Well, somebody’s so dumb, and she doesn’t know anything . . . Sometimes I sort of go along with them, but sometimes I say, “I don’t know,” just to cover it up, ‘cause I don’t know what to say . . . I don’t know . . . I don’t know . . . and sometimes you don’t know . . . those friends might say, “Yes, it is, don’t you know anything?” And then if someone else says, “Do you know what? I heard [that girl] talking about you” . . . I just don’t know what to say.

The two worst things Noura’s friends can accuse her of, it seems, are either not knowing and saying the wrong things or knowing and saying the wrong things. If Noura speaks up on behalf of the girls being talked about, she reveals knowledge others want her to keep hidden, and she fears her friends will dislike or chastise her: “Sometimes I feel that my friends won’t like me or something, or they’ll say, ‘What’s the big deal?’” Moreover, Noura fears these “friends that were talking about people” might then “talk about me.” Noura avoids these risks by speaking in measured tones, sometimes qualifying her thoughts and feelings—“not disagreeing with them totally”—and sometimes hiding what she feels and thinks under the guise of not knowing—“Sometimes I say, ‘I don’t know,’ just to cover it up.” In this way, Noura finds she can protect herself by thinking one thing and saying another, by doubling her voice, being, in a sense, two people—one private and honest, one public and acceptable. But while Noura finally comes to a precarious compromise that allows her to stay with herself privately without jeopardizing herself in the eyes of her friends—“I would tell them,”

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she says, “sometimes it’s true, but not always”—“going along with” those friends brings Noura dangerously close to disconnecting from herself and what she really feels and thinks.

But what is so striking to us is how clearly ten-year-old Noura articulates this compromise, how aware she is of her feelings and the risks she takes in speaking them aloud, and how consciously she protects herself by covering over her thoughts with the phrase, “I don’t know.” Remembering her own feelings when she is teased or whispered about, Noura learns how other people feel in similar situations: “I learn by just . . . feeling what you feel . . . and your reactions to everyone talking about them.” And though she is compelled to qualify or cover over what she feels and thinks, Noura still wonders aloud in the privacy of her interview why people don’t just “go to that person [who brags] and hurts people and . . . say, ‘Why do you always do that?’” rather than talk about them behind their backs. “If I were that person,” Noura adds, “I . . . wouldn’t want people talking about me. I would want them to say, ‘Stop bragging,’ or ‘Why do you brag?’”

And so, although Noura feels what she feels and knows what she thinks, she also capitulates to the pressure from her friends not to know and not to speak. Wanting to “do the right thing,” to “not hurt” anyone, to “always help anyone who needs it,” Noura gives us the impression she is walking on eggshells as she gingerly makes her way among these girls who “are all my friends” but who police her thoughts and feelings by threatening to talk about her if she says what she feels, who ask her to separate “what I think” from what “I say,” to remove herself from relationship for the sake of relationship. Knowing how it feels “to be the person that everyone doesn’t like” keeps Noura from talking about people, but also from saying what she thinks and feels to her “friends” who do. Like with her brother, Noura finds it easier to pretend not to know what she knows when she is with her friends; certainly it is less dangerous, as Noura says, “just to keep things to yourself.”

Now eleven and in the sixth grade, Noura sounds, literally, more self-possessed. As though to protect herself from her friends’ judgments and expectations, this year Noura fortifies her opinions with

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the knowledge that "everyone can have their own feelings and you can't change that, what they are feeling, you can't say, 'Yes, you do, I know it,' because you don't really know what they are thinking." Doggedly staying with what she knows to be true from her experience, her relationships have changed. When her brother teases her to the point of exasperation, for example, Noura now exclaims, "Shut up! I don't care!" And when she gets in trouble, not only for what she says to him but for her loud voice, she complains bitterly to her mother, armed with her new-found defense—that she sees things differently, that her feelings aren't her brother's. Knowing that "there are always two whole different things that happened," and that any fair resolution to relational conflict depends on hearing "both sides of the story," Noura seems free to express her strong feelings and opinions. And so when she is asked to talk about a situation in which she had to make a decision and she was not sure what she should do, Noura launches, without pause or qualification, into a long and complicated story of relational conflict.

Well, I think it was last weekend when [my friend, China] was over to my house, we were talking to [Mia on the phone] . . . and then we heard that [Heather] was like on her three-way phone, and she was just listening. And they didn't tell us that she was on, and we got into this huge fight . . . And then like, first China started crying and then, I don't know why she started crying, but I guess I just felt like I had to, so I started crying and then we kept hanging up the phone on each other and calling them back . . . and China wanted to spill her guts to them, but I wouldn't let her . . . I didn't want her to yet, because I knew that they would hang up and never talk . . . First I was asking them all these questions because I wanted to know why they were doing it, that . . . and then in the end I said, "I've got an idea, why don't we just go around and start with Heather and she can say what bothers her the most about what China and I do," and then we went to Mia and then China and then me. And we just did that . . . and we decided that we would always be friends even if we got really mad.

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When China discovers Heather is on the line, she cries, perhaps because she has been caught talking about Heather behind her back. Noura then speaks on China's behalf:

And I was like [saying to Mia and Heather], "China is crying very hard . . . and she wants to talk to you." And they were like, "We are not going to feel sorry for her if that is what you want us to do." And I am like, I said, "I don't want you to feel sorry for her, I just want you to know that she is feeling bad." And then I guess we got disconnected again and I was like screaming on the phone even when they were off. I was like, "I don't care," you know. And then we were, like, laughing a little, too, and then we got upset again.

Noura and her three friends go through the gamut of emotions—yelling and screaming, crying and laughing, feeling bad, not feeling sorry or caring. But in the midst of all these feelings, as Noura describes it, "we really kept talking about like why we were mad." Calling and hanging up, but ultimately staying with the fight, the four girls gradually work their way through their relational conflict.

As we listen to eleven-year-old Noura describe her role in this drama, we are struck by her thoughtfulness, her carefreeness, her presence of mind, her ability to stay with her friends and her feelings in this emotionally charged situation. Noura, it seems, wants to cut through the performances—the secrets, the hanging up, the crying that might be "for attention"—and get down to the business of knowing what people really feel and think: "I decided," she explains, "that I wasn't going to get really mad about this. I was just going to talk . . . I just want to know . . . I just want to know, because out of curiosity, I just need to know and so, I don't know." Taking her cue from the way her parents organize family meetings and solve relational conflicts, Noura suggests that the girls say to each other "what really bothers us" and "what we didn't like about each other," so that everyone would "know how everyone else is feeling. So we just, no one would interrupt while they were talking."

The results of their conversation underscore what Noura suspects: that, indeed, "there are two sides to the story." Heather and Mia,

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Noura says, violated both her trust and her privacy by listening in: "It's like they don't trust me, and I didn't want them to always think I was going to be talking and then just get petrified and say, 'Oh well, then I have to listen,' or 'Tell me.' And also sometimes I just don't want anyone else to know unless they say, 'You can tell Heather, I don't care,' or something. So sort of like an invasion of privacy sort of." But Noura also recognizes and understands Heather's intense need to know, to listen in. Heather feels on the outside, Noura explains, and so she "is always afraid that we are going to talk about her," and she's "always just thinking, 'I'm afraid that she is going to talk about me, so let me hear on the phone.'" But Noura also discovers, to her surprise, that Mia had a motive for colluding with Heather. As boys have entered Noura's life, Mia has felt "ignored" and jealous: "Mia was saying that I was liking [one boy] more than her, and I was like, 'How could I like him more than you, I have known you since we were in third grade?' . . . I guess she was feeling left out."

In hindsight, Noura says, revealing her keen knowledge of relationships, this fight had been building: "I mean now that I look back on it, I think that it was something we needed to get out a while ago, because we were always having these little arguments." And it was important, she adds, that they worked their feelings out apart from adults who would only want to control their emotions and quiet them down. "We were home. No one else was there," Noura explains. "I'm glad . . . because that way I felt like we could make as much noise as we wanted and I could take a long time." If they hadn't had the time and space to work their problems out, Noura explains, "nothing would work out and somehow the whole class would end up knowing and our teacher would get into it and say well, how can we solve this and everything and . . . I just wanted it to be sort of between us."

Noura faces into this relational conflict with a clarity and a courage that are breathtaking, proposing a process that allows each of the girls, including herself, to voice her deepest feelings about the others and about the situation—to make as much noise as they wanted and to take the time they needed to work things through.

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Although Noura says, "I just wanted to stay calm . . . because that is what my mom is always saying, 'Don't make a big deal out of it . . . Everyone talks a lot [about people] even though they don't really mean it,'" this is not what she did. This relational problem with her friends really frightened and upset her—this fight "was big," she says; a lot was at stake. So much could have been prevented if she and her friends would just say what they really think and feel to each other directly, Noura explains as she resolves that "the next time," long before things build to this level, "I'm just going to say it."

Two years later, now thirteen and in the eighth grade, Noura's voice has changed dramatically. What strikes us most is how she has shifted from the intense, lively world of relationships and the astute understanding she revealed at eleven to a preoccupation with her own perfection that seems to engulf and exhaust her. "I always feel like I'm overworked," Noura now complains to her interviewer. "It's more like just little unimportant things that are piling up . . . it kind of makes me scared, but then I think, I've just got to learn to pace myself . . . I just wish I could get more sleep." The Noura who made loud noises with her friends, who took the time she needed for herself to work out conflicts with her friends, is no longer in evidence—at least on the surface.

This year Noura is trying to understand how to deal with the increasing pressure she feels to do everything well. "I'm so pressured," she explains, "and I am getting good grades and stuff and if I want to keep that up, I have to keep doing as much work as I've been doing." But, she adds, "I'm realizing that I can't do everything . . . because I am really tired all the time." As Noura details the hours she spends studying to her interviewer, the late nights and early mornings, a small voice inside her wonders if maybe "it's okay to sometimes fall behind and not be perfect about everything." As though even this possibility might be giving away too much, Noura quickly overrules this voice with another: "Just . . . as long as you catch up and stuff."

Indeed, this year Noura seems to overrule or override most of her feelings and thoughts, dutifully reining herself in, trapped in a

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vicious circle of expectations. If she could only try a little harder, just "get more organized—I mean it's hard because I'm as organized as I can be—or try to just limit myself," perhaps she could meet all the demands of school and sports and friends.

Yet, while Noura measures herself by "doing good in school" and by "being good at anything," she knows if she doesn't escape her compulsion to do everything well, "I'm going to kill myself. I'm not getting enough sleep." Still, she worries a lot, and when her brother notices and tells her she's paranoid, this year, rather than tell him to shut up, she says, "I agree with him".

I'm really, a lot of times I'm just so worried and nervous about anything in general and people are just like, "Why don't you just do it? Who cares?" . . . They're like, "Why are you so worried about that?" And then I feel like well . . . I can't go against what I'm thinking because that's not what I think, but then I don't want to sound like I'm some worried person . . . someone who's got to always be all perfect, they don't think that, but I just don't want it to sound, I don't know, in that situation I feel like they probably think I'm weird, I am almost too paranoid.

What Noura feels and thinks, what others think of her, and how she sounds begin to swirl together until it is no longer clear whose thoughts are whose and what Noura really wants. All the pressure for perfection, the feelings of paranoia, the worry and sleeplessness and exhaustion pile up for Noura. Though she feels trapped in her compulsion to meet the heavy expectations placed on her, Noura can't let herself express her fear of not being good enough or show her exhaustion. She does not want to "sound" worried and nervous or be seen as weird and paranoid or be judged as "all perfect." Although Noura strives for perfection, she does not want the emotional residues and relational consequences of being the perfect girl. While, before, Noura wanted her parents out of the house so she and her friends could make as much noise as they wanted, now she seems to have lost the capacity to imagine, let alone to create, this kind of space for herself and her friends.

As Noura talks about her exhaustion and unhappiness she begins

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to notice how out of relationship she really feels to this world of perfect grades, perfect relationships, and perfect people. "I think now I'm starting to learn more from experience," Noura says to her interviewer, "something might keep happening over and over again and you finally realize, well, there must be something wrong." Listening to herself, Noura again wonders if the pressure is too great and if the fight is worth it. Relationships can be either "perfect" or "depressing," she says. In perfect relationships people "never have any fights . . . and they are always together . . . too perfect . . . like never arguing, like, 'Oh, yeah, I totally agree with you.'" In depressing relationships someone is "really jealous and starts being really mean . . . where two really good friends break up." Somewhere between the extremes of perfection and depression, Noura imagines a place she once lived but no longer inhabits, a place where people give other people "a chance and that's all they can do"; where people struggle in the best way they know how to find a way that "sort of seems happy because . . . it's just sort of mutual I guess."

At thirteen, as Noura begins to question what goes on beneath the facade of perfection and invulnerability, she looks around for signs that others feel the way she feels and know what she knows—that others are also vulnerable, also want to be in genuine relationships, also conceal mistakes underneath the impenetrable veneer they show. Looking for signs of life, attuned to her own experience, Noura sees and hears hypocrisy everywhere: in the adults who "expect you to do everything, like be all polite and stuff" but who are not "polite to you"; and in her teacher who expects her to be a model student when "he does things that make people really mad too." When this teacher kicks her out of class for making a laughing noise, Noura describes her indignation and anger: "I was just really, really mad . . . I was like, this is so stupid . . . It's not like he's perfect . . . He just is so hypocritical . . . because he does things that make people really mad too." Observing cracks in the glossy exteriors people present gives Noura an opening to express her own vulnerability.

But Noura is having a difficult time staying with what she sees and hears, saying what she feels and thinks, tempted again and again

to judge herself and other people against standards of perfection—to call people and relationships either “perfect” or “horrible” and “depressing.” Though she is really mad at her teacher for what he has done, she struggles to stay with her feelings as she anticipates the repercussions of her anger:

I never have the guts to [say what I feel] because it'll probably just start another fight or another argument . . . and . . . then they could like say something really mean about me . . . I don't know. It could, it would just start another argument and I wouldn't want to get into it because I wouldn't want to waste my time and I also wouldn't want to get my feelings hurt . . . Just to be in a fight anyways, is bad, because you know, you get mad and obviously you don't want to get into fights, and so I kind of wish I could, just to show him that he doesn't rule the world . . . I just wanted to show him that I wouldn't let him just say anything . . . I wanted him to know that that was really unfair, and that I think he was really irrational, just like really unfair and stupid, like silly . . . But I know he would have just gotten . . . so mad, and I just stayed out of it . . . I didn't want to take any chances.

Feeling her anger and knowing what she thinks of her teacher's unfairness, Noura thinks that she cannot risk the consequences of speaking and having her teacher know how she feels. Unlike herself at ten, when she held in her feelings, consciously covering them with the phrase “I don't know,” or herself at eleven, when she created a way for herself and her friends to show each other how they really felt and what they really knew, Noura at thirteen sees no way to speak openly with her teacher. In the face of this relational impasse, Noura wavers between wanting and not wanting, knowing and not knowing, quickly becoming unsure of what she really thinks and feels about what her teacher has done and what she wants to happen:

He could have just tried to ignore [my laughter], because we have to ignore a lot of things that a lot of our teachers do . . . like when they are really mean . . . not necessarily mean, but like we think of it as unfair, but I guess it really is fair in a way . . . It's

his class and he can, or any teacher can just assign whatever they want, but I mean it seems unfair to us . . . I hate it . . . It makes me mad when they make you do like, I mean I guess it's good in the long run, but I don't know.

Speaking her feelings and retracting them (“they are really mean . . . not necessarily mean”; “we think of it as unfair . . . it really is fair”), first sure of her feelings (“I hate it . . . It makes me mad”) and then uncertain (“I guess it's good in the long run, but I don't know”), Noura, like a person moving from bright sunlight into a dark room, gingerly feels her way through her interview.

But there is no doubt Noura is angry this year. She talks about fighting with her brother; it infuriates her that he listens “physically” but not “mentally” when she gives so much to the relationship. She explains how annoyed she gets when her friends, including Mia and China, tease her, though now she does not express the depth of her feelings, despite her vow at eleven to do so: “I say one little thing . . . and then I drop it . . . I just want to . . . you know, be careful . . . I'll just forget about it.” Noura, it seems, has forgotten the “simple” truth she learned after so much difficulty and pain two years before—that if things go unsaid they become enormous and that “the next time, I'm just going to say it.”

“Just saying it” is now so difficult for Noura that she no longer seems to know what she feels and, as a result, finds it hard to say what is happening. When her friends get angry at China because “one day she will be really nice, and then the next day . . . she won't be with you as much,” Noura is confused about how to respond. “I don't know . . . I don't know what to say, I usually just say something like, ‘I don't know, everyone does things like that,’ you know.” When she was ten, Noura knew how she felt, though she made choices about what to say and when to cover up. At thirteen, she now seems both to know and not to know how she feels and as a result doesn't trust herself to read China's actions accurately. “I really don't know if she is kidding or not,” Noura explains, and though “sometimes I think [China's] a little mean to

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other people," the problem "is just really confusing." "I am sort of split," Noura confesses finally. "I don't know what to think . . . I can't make a definite answer."

Out of connection with herself, with what she knows, Noura finds her relational world treacherous and opaque, and she becomes frightened of what she might feel and think. While one minute she convinces herself that what China does is "natural" and "normal," the next minute she admits,

Sometimes I think it's just too confusing to think about, and I shouldn't really . . . Sometimes I'm afraid to think one way. That's more what I am afraid of. Like that I will start hating someone and I know that's not true, that I hate someone, or strongly dislike them even . . . So I am kind of afraid of what I will think, I guess.

Disconnected from her thoughts and feelings, Noura is confused, afraid her feelings will become uncontrollable. Saying and then retracting her feelings, Noura fears that if she really thinks (and feels, we might add), she might decide "that they're right and just forget about the other side's point of view." As a result, Noura stays safely "in between," afraid to get too close to what she is feeling and thinking, unsure whether she wants to move further into relationships, which she knows can be difficult and duplicitous, or to move away from everyone. Standing in between, out of relationship with herself and also with others, Noura struggles to remember and name the "it" of her feelings.

I try to keep myself from thinking that I dislike it. Just so it doesn't get too like dominant or something . . . I sort of am afraid of it happening, but like it's just more, I guess it's just something that I do, like subconsciously . . . without really knowing it and um, I was going to say something. Shoot, I just forgot what I was going to say . . .

"Afraid of it happening"—perhaps that she will think and feel deeply, and thus have to know—Noura stops herself "at the time things make sense . . . before I confuse myself again." Like with a "math problem," where "I think okay, I understand why this works and stop thinking just so I don't bring up another point that makes

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more sense," Noura puts a halt to her feelings, to even "thinking" about her feelings. "Always taking precautions" against feeling too strongly or thinking too much, against making too much noise or taking too much time, the deep-feeling, outspoken world of relationships eleven-year-old Noura and her friends embraced is thus covered over or walled off through the amnesia of dissociation by thirteen-year-old Noura. We are struck by the clarity and specificity of Noura's description of this process, and the questions it poses for us: How will we respond to Noura? What will we say and do in the presence of this disconnection?

Judy: Losing Her Mind

Nine-year-old Judy listens intently as her interviewer talks about the study she is now a part of and the questions she will be asked in the next hour and a half.¹ "There are no right or wrong answers," the woman tells her, "We are really interested in how you think and feel." Nonetheless, Judy begins her first interview with a disclaimer: "I'm not a very good drawer," she says, as she describes her complicated family picture: "Okay, this is me . . . I have a hamster and he's Fred. And this is my mom and this is my little brother, he's seven, and my sister, who's four. My parents are divorced and I live with my mom. And my dad, and this is my stepmother, and this is my half-sister."

"Can you tell me a story about the people in that picture?" her interviewer asks. Judy, who has learned about relationships—about connections and disconnections, love and anger, closeness and withdrawal—here in her divided family, pauses a moment and then begins, in full voice, to tell a story about her brother and herself.

Okay, well. There is a boy named [Johnny] and he was walking along and then he saw his sister with her hamster. He wanted to see her hamster and she wouldn't let him, and he got really mad and started screaming at her, and so the hamster got killed.

"Oh, no!" her interviewer exclaims, "Why did the hamster have that ending?" "I don't know," Judy answers. "Because lots of my hamsters do."

Judy does not draw out the connection implicit in the story she tells. In one sense, the death of a hamster is a sad but rather inevitable event, a natural part of the landscape of facts and feelings she experiences in her life. Also part of her life are the pain, anger, and jealousy of her brother, which she returns to throughout her interview narratives. Here in this supposedly make-believe family story, Judy links the volatile anger of her brother with the death of her hamster, a member of her family. And this link can be read in at least two ways—as an astute commentary on a relational reality where male violence is explosive, and as a more personal commentary on the danger she feels, and her fears about what will happen to her or other members of her family if she expresses her strong feelings—specifically if she says no to her brother's requests.

Relational conflicts, Judy may have learned from her parents' irreconcilable differences, are explosive—fracturing relationships and making it necessary for others to resolve the disputes “in court . . . the court's decision would be best.” Living with relational conflict, in Judy's experience, makes people “get grumpy after a while and they don't feel good. They get mad.” The anger and intransigence Judy has witnessed and felt in her family, it seems, causes her to associate relational conflicts with unresolvable bad feelings or death.

For Judy and some of the other girls in this study, conflict in relationship has a gender-bias: brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, boys and girls. That boys and girls differ and disagree seems factual to Judy. Judy says she knows this “by just experiencing it with my brother,” who is different from her, who, she says, is “real mad and hyper,” who tells her what to do, who covers his actions by lying to their mother.

But also Judy struggles to explain the conflict and constant “switching” that happens among her girlfriends. How can people agree, Judy wonders—talking now about friends, but also echoing the struggle in her family—“when they're both strongly feeling what they feel?” Like the shadow of a cloud that passes over the landscape, the question of how to have strong feelings and yet stay in relationship moves in and out of Judy's responses.

Judy, like other nine-year-olds, knows her world through the evidence of her senses; her knowledge of the relational world comes from what she experiences, sees, hears, and feels. Feelings and thoughts come through her experience of being in a body that feels and knows feelings, that lives in time and space. Thus it strikes Judy as particularly insensitive when someone just walks away from her best friend, leaving her all alone “just talking into space.” Judy says she can tell that her friend is going to feel bad because “I just feel it in my mind.” When her interviewer asks her to explain this, Judy has some trouble articulating what she means: “You can just kind of see them walking away or getting sad or something, but you can't tell right then and there she's going to get hurt or anything, but you just feel it. It's hard to explain.” What Judy seems to be saying is that while she doesn't consciously think “my friend is going to get hurt,” she senses and feels her friend's sadness, and thus knows it. Her mind knows what she feels in her body—and her body resonates by feeling with others.²

Judy's knowledge of the relational world thus springs from her body: her senses, her feelings, and her experience of living in relationships. She is grounded in that experience and takes the world at face value: hamsters die, brothers get furious, parents separate, friends get hurt and feel sad, and even best friends, she says, are sometimes boring. The differences she can readily pick up in people lead them to different perspectives, opinions, and, sometimes, to conflict. Judy understands feelings both as a means of knowing and connecting with others and as an obstacle to communicating—people sometimes feel their feelings so strongly they can't speak but just scream and then, as in her story, something or someone may die. What happens when anger turns into stubbornness or violence? Judy seems to be asking. Her world, it seems, is both colored and shadowed by feeling.

By age ten we hear subtle differences in Judy's voice and in her relationship with her self and her world. This year Judy hurries her answers and her voice frequently breaks into a giggle that subtly negates the seriousness or importance of what she has to say. In her nine-year-old interview, Judy, who thoughtfully paused before each

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answer and said "I don't know" four times—once after implying a connection between her brother's anger and her hamster's death—now says "I don't know" twenty-four times in an interview of comparable length. Judy has changed in a year, and while the changes are subtle, it seems that the ground of knowledge is shifting beneath her feet.

The disagreement and conflict that seemed at once so natural and so upsetting to Judy at nine is now, at ten, obscured for her, as for many of the other girls, by injunctions to be nice. "I hardly ever get into fights with my friends," Judy now says with pride, "because we both usually like the exact same things and we do the exact same things." Between nine and ten, differences and disagreements have evaporated into "the exact same things."

Indeed, liking and doing the exact same things seems to protect Judy from the danger of feeling strong feelings that she knows have the potential to disrupt and destroy relationships. The sense of reaching a crisis point with her friends or her family and the fear that someone might leave or "move out" lead Judy to struggle between holding onto her embodied feelings and the evidence of her senses and letting go for the sake of "relationships." Her feelings make her vulnerable or open to the pleasure and pain of relationships, something Judy seems to both crave and fear.

This sense of a hovering but ambiguous danger surfaces as Judy struggles to know what she feels, particularly when she tells her interviewer about an experience she can't quite fully recall, although, she remembers, "it was something dangerous":

[My friend and I] were deciding whether or not to do something and I don't know, it might have been, I guess it was kind of dangerous, because both of us were not sure whether to do it or not.

You can't remember what it was?

No, I have a short memory. It was recently, too. And so we finally decided not to do it, because we thought we really didn't need to do this thing, which was dangerous, so we just better not. We were just doing it to see if it was fun or something and decided against it.

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As her memory gradually returns and the provocative "it" begins to take shape, Judy explains that she and her friend

found this thing that usually wouldn't be in the woods . . . It was metal or something, like a machine or something, but I can't remember what. But it was really tall and really big. And there was like an engine in it, and it was really tall. It wasn't a tractor or anything . . . it looked like there were sharp edges or something. It was more than that, but what else I can't remember.

While Judy cannot remember exactly what the thing was—"it's vague," she says—she and her friend, she recalls, were both afraid of "havin[ing] ourselves hurt" and also attracted to it, wanted to play on it and try to start it up, because "it sounded like really fun." "Excited at first," they also had an embodied, visceral response to the danger inherent in the situation and so they decided to "back off."

In response to eight different questions about this experience, Judy speaks of not wanting to get hurt by playing on "the thing"—she might, for instance, "break a leg." She is puzzled by her choice to speak of this situation in response to her interviewer's question about a time when she experienced conflict. "I kind of already knew that [I wasn't supposed to do something that could hurt me]," she says, "so it was kind of obvious." But what Judy seems to struggle with is the attraction she feels to powerful, pleasurable experiences—like this thing that was big and tall, that she could "start up," that promised to be fun to play on—even while she knows that such things are said to be dangerous for girls, that she should "back off" and go home where she will be safe.

As Judy speaks of vague dangers, dangers to her body that are both exciting and frightening, and begins to concentrate on the consequences of acting on impulse, she seems to back off from her strong feelings and rely more on her developing cognitive powers, powers that allow her to "pay . . . attention" and learn differently than she has in the past. And her interviewer backs off as well. This incipient split between cognition and emotion, thought and feeling, seem to help Judy understand and make sense of the world around

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her, but, as she herself says, this split distances her from her fear (and her attraction) and makes it impossible for her to remember what, in some sense, she knows. As Judy responds to the dangers of feeling her strong feelings by disconnecting from her bodily knowing, and as she associates knowing only with her intellect, with what goes on in her head, she loses the ground of felt experience and begins to talk *about*, rather than to speak her feelings. As her interview comes to a close, we hear the profound consequences of this loss when Judy confesses to her interviewer, "I don't know what's wrong here, I keep stuttering here, it was tough . . . I knew what the question was, but as soon as you asked me my mind went blank." Judy's dissociation, along with her ability to think in new ways, is evident as Judy knows and then experiences her mind go blank.

While the phrase "I don't know" suggested the ground of Judy's knowledge was shifting at ten, eleven-year-old Judy punctuates her interview with the phrase "I mean." As Elizabeth Debold notes, "to mean," according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, comes from the Old High German, to have in mind, to intend, to signify, to make known. The repeated tap of "I mean" in the patter of Judy's speech seems to indicate her desire to convey her thoughts, her intellect, her feelings, to her interviewer.

And indeed, this year Judy's voice sounds remarkably mature, almost self-consciously rehearsed, except on those occasions when her feelings enter the dialogue with her interviewer. In these moments Judy's voice shifts to reveal a different, less polished, uncertain Judy grappling for words to explain her experience. As her relationship with what she knows in her body changes, Judy seems to struggle to hold her thoughts and feelings together.

Although Judy at eleven does not talk about physical changes in her body, early in her interview she hints at the relationship between such changes in her body and change in her world. Asked what stands out for her in the past year, Judy says, "Well, this was the first year that I started meeting boys, just recently, because someone had a boy/girl party, and I started meeting boys." The category "boys" represents a new kind of person in Judy's world: a

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category set apart from all of the boys she has known, including her brother. Yet boys are not the center of Judy's life. Judy continues to struggle with the divisions she experiences in her family relationships.

"Lots of decisions are really simple things," Judy begins when her interviewer asks her about a time when she had to make a decision but didn't know what she should do. But the decision Judy chooses to talk about is anything but simple. "My parents are divorced and like next year I have a choice of which one to live with," she explains, "and I have just been thinking over that a lot recently. I haven't really decided. I have kind of made up my mind to stay here [with my mom]."

Judy's struggle to hold thoughts and feelings together resurfaces as she describes her conflict. Faced with a dilemma of feelings because "I would love to go be with [my dad] all the time, but I also love to be with my mom all the time," Judy tries to reason her way to a decision: "I think I'm getting a really good education and education means a lot to me now. And I like where I live, where my mom lives, and I like the neighborhood . . . and I like the way I am living right now." Judy tries to step back from what she loves and likes to evaluate these feelings against the standard of "the general, typical life of a child," which means "just growing up with a regular family and like I think I would get a regular family at my dad's, because there are two parents, they are a two-parent family with already two kids."

This concept of a "regular family" in which one lives the "general, typical life of a child" negates Judy's experience of loving and liking where she is living—with her mom—and blankets the complex feelings she has for all of the people to whom she is related—Fred, mother, father, brother, stepmother, and now two half-sisters. Alongside the ideal of a typical family are her feelings that "I like it better here just because it's regular and I'm used to it and also there I am lonely for the things I do, and, like, here I can do almost anything, I have almost any kind of freedom." Here Judy turns the word "regular" in another direction, indicating her own experiences of day-to-day living rather than cultural norms of "family."

Perhaps picking up that regular can mean both what Judy feels and knows and what others say ought to be, her interviewer asks her: "How did you feel about this issue?" "I don't know," Judy begins with uncertainty, "I feel like either my mom or my dad will feel bad, whichever decision I make." What Judy "feels" is her anticipation of her parents' feelings, and as she continues, she seems to move further and further away from her own feelings until she ends with a statement which sounds almost banal:

My dad . . . would feel bad, because he would feel like I really didn't want to live with him, but it wouldn't be that big a thing if I left my mom instead of staying with my mom, just the feelings, I think, would be different towards the parent, my parents, and it's a hard decision to make. It's like whatever I do, it depends a lot on my future.

Judy does not mention either her feelings or her mother's feelings, but "the feelings." In fact, her readiness to distance herself from or cover over her feelings is evident when she says "it wouldn't be that big a thing if I left my mom." Judy does not speak about her own sadness or love or fear or pain, or even her desire to leave. Instead she gives priority to her father's feelings and overrides her feelings with thoughts—"just the feelings, I think, would be different." And yet, on one level, Judy seems to know what she is doing and feeling. Judy thinks about and talks from her feelings—her loving and liking being with her mom—but she buries more difficult feelings under a lifeless "it": "It wouldn't be that big a thing . . . it's a hard decision to make . . . it depends a lot on my future." By filtering her feelings and desires through her thoughts and by objectifying herself and her knowledge of relationships, Judy moves away from what she feels and knows and instead moves to justify this separation.

And yet, we notice that Judy is, in fact, doing what she wants, though she finds this hard to explain: "I am thinking I am pretty much going to stay here . . . I think I'd be just as happy there, but it's hard to explain. I just think like this is what I want to do, so I think just me wanting to do this makes it right, because there is no really wrong answer unless I make it wrong." Judy struggles not to

make what feels right, wrong—staying with her mom, staying with her regular life, though not having a regular family. In the face of this impasse between what she feels and what others say, Judy resists, and the intensity of her resistance consumes her at all hours:

So here I am learning to think things through more and think about what I'm doing, and I think at night, and I always think about things and before I'd just go to sleep. And now I think about things to do and I think about the day and my future and my past and like a circle of those kinds of things.

Does it keep you up?

It keeps me up, like sometimes I'll do that when I can't fall asleep but sometimes I will keep thinking and keep thinking and I will look at the clock and it will be like 11 o'clock and like I'm "Oh, boy," because I like getting in bed by 9 or 9:30. So I need a lot of sleep.

The need to lie awake in bed late at night to think things through for herself becomes clearer when eleven-year-old Judy begins to speak about herself and her feelings in what sound like her parents' voices: she and her brother and sister are "troublemakers," "childish" for fighting. When Judy and her mother disagree and Judy "gets really mad," her mother tells her she has "a bad attitude" and grounds her. Sent to her room, Judy is left to sort out her feelings alone, and in her remorse thinks, "If I had just kept my mouth shut and didn't say anything . . . that would have been the end of it." Though Judy says "in my mind I was still angry," she realizes it's better not to "say anything" since when her mother "makes up her mind, there is no use arguing against it." Taking in what her mother is saying—that she is a "troublemaker," "childish," someone with "a bad attitude"—Judy struggles to hold onto and name what she feels, that "in my mind I was still angry." Judy learns to stop speaking in an attempt to hold onto her anger and also to avoid accusations and prevent further trouble. Instead, she lies awake at night thinking "about the day and my future and my past and like a circle of those kinds of things."

In school, as well as at home, Judy struggles to stay with the feelings "in my mind" in the face of what she is taking in—the

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voices of others and the awareness of what happens when she speaks. We notice how closely she follows these voices, how carefully she reads what others do. Judy notices, for example, how other girls in her class respond when "some high school student will come to talk to us [in assembly]." They "won't like the subject so they will look down," she explains. "And it's like sometimes like a couple of people use sign language." While Judy may agree with these girls that "something is wrong" with the speakers, she argues at least for the appearance of interest: "I think that you should at least show the people consideration . . . I mean, how would you feel if you were standing up there and you wrote something that was really good . . . and no one else is listening? I mean, I would feel like really awful." Judy considers her classmates "rude" and "selfish" for not "think[ing] about anyone else but themselves." But she also knows these girls, like her, "don't really want to hear it," and that they are responding indirectly to feelings and opinions she knows from experience cannot easily be said.

As a result, Judy finds herself in an uncomfortable situation when her friends confront her on her feigned interest. They will often ask, "You actually liked that?" or something, or . . . everyone will say like, 'That was boring, did you listen to it?' and you'd be like, 'Oh, I didn't listen to it' and sometimes it makes you feel better if you really don't listen to it, instead of just saying that." Judy, struggling not to be rude and selfish but also to be honest, now finds herself caught between conventions of nice behavior and her real feelings, a place where truth, again, becomes slippery: "I mean . . . if someone asks me like, 'Wasn't that boring?' I mean I won't really answer because I don't want to say, I don't want to have people go, 'Ugh! You liked that?' But I mean I just won't say 'No.' I mean some people can call that lying, but if you don't answer, I don't think it is really lying." In order not to lie or to be made fun of, Judy finds herself sheltering her feelings and her opinion from her friends and, in turn, echoing her mother, explaining away her friends' actions as just their "bad attitude": "I mean they start out . . . with a bad attitude about it, so all during the thing they have a bad attitude

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about it . . . If they start out saying, 'Oh, this is something that really might be good,' then the whole thing will be really good."

Thus Judy continues to struggle with the interface between what is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong in relationships; she is caught, it seems, by the difference between relationships in which people are "being really interested" and those in which "even if they don't enjoy it, I mean they should at least look interested." As relational reality for Judy often seems a matter of "attitude" rather than experience, the ground of Judy's knowledge—her thoughts and feelings in relationship—is in danger of giving way.

Two years later, Judy's interviewer notes how "sad" Judy looks. Judy's voice at thirteen is deep and resonant and often carries her sadness. Judy's speech is now riddled with the phrases "I don't know"—the bellwether of dissociation—and "I mean"—a sign of her struggle to connect herself with knowing, her mind with relationship. Taking the greater length of this eighth grade interview into account, Judy says "I don't know" nearly six times more often and prefaces her thoughts and feelings with "I mean" nearly twice as often as she did two years earlier.

Judy's psychological acuity remains apparent, however, as she recalls the list of events that led to everything blowing up at her father's the past summer:

It was really tense like the whole summer because everyone was trying to be extra special nice to people, like the whole time, my stepmother, I was trying to be really nice to her, because we all feel awkward. And by the end, we were so tired of being nice, that everything blew up and we got in like huge fights.

Her stepmother, Judy explains, "is sort of scared about what [me and my brother] are able to do, because she has never had older children before," so Judy and her brother had "to get used to different house rules . . . we had to adjust" to less freedom. Judy also "felt weird" about bringing friends to the house "because I didn't feel like it was my house." Her father then "had a total spaz" when

she "asked him for \$5.50 to go to a movie with my friend." Judy and her brother were expected to watch her little half-sisters without notice and "a three-year-old and five-year-old can really get on your nerves after a while." Their stepmother, moreover, never seemed to say "thank you" or appreciate the attempts Judy and her brother made to help out. All this came to a head when, one night at dinner, her eight-year-old sister refused to eat her vegetables. But, Judy says knowingly, "the whole thing was not about the carrots, it was just about everything else, and so they got into a huge argument . . . and after that nothing seemed to be going right . . . I don't know."

Judy knows what led to her stepmother "crying in her bedroom and I was crying in my bedroom and my sister was crying in her bedroom and my dad was going around trying to fix everything . . . and he has no idea what's going on. He's totally lost." She is aware of feelings that run counter to voices that tell her to be "extra special nice": her anger at her stepmother, her frustration with her half-sisters, her dismay at her father's being "so icky about things." The pressure she felt (and we presume the others also felt) to be nice led them to get "a little stressed out . . . we couldn't keep it in any longer." Judy knows what Noura knows: if you keep feelings in, they become overwhelming and explode.

When her interviewer asks Judy, "Is there any way you could find out of shape and then blow up at the end?" Judy's throat tightens and her voice becomes thick with emotion. "I would feel so uncomfortable doing that. Like even saying anything that bothered me. I'd feel really bad," she explains, tears welling in her eyes, "I know what you're asking, but I don't know, I am trying to think." Struggling to think what she is feeling and to respond to the connection she feels with the question and with the woman who asks the question, Judy tries to explain: "You can't make someone change for you . . . I wouldn't want to ask [my stepmother] to be someone else or anything." And with this, Judy falters, knowing what her interviewer is asking and feeling the gap between what she wants

and what seems possible for her. "I don't think, I mean, this sounds—I mean, if I was an outsider looking in, I would probably think they should just talk about it, that would be the best thing. But that's not even on my list." "Why?" her interviewer persists:

I don't know, because I don't—I don't know. I mean, I do know. I just like—I can't explain it. I don't know what, how to put it into words.

What does it feel like? or what does it look like?

I don't know, it's just like if—I don't know, it's like, I don't know, I can't even begin to explain it, because I don't even know if I know what it is. So I can't really explain it. Because I don't know. I don't even know like in my brain or in my heart, what I am really feeling. I mean I don't know if it's pain or upsetness or sad—I don't know.

Judy is so close to knowing what she is feeling, even as she struggles to locate her feelings "in my brain or in my heart." As Judy, in response to the woman sitting with her, moves into relationship with herself, with what she knows and how she feels, Judy also knows what happens when she expresses feelings of "pain or upsetness or sadness" to her stepmother or her father. Expressing what she feels disrupts the family scene others seem invested in maintaining. The interviewer's invitation, to Judy, to connect with her feelings, reveals the disconnections Judy feels and her experience of relational impasse:

I'm trying to think. Just because of the fact of we don't really, I'm not sure, I don't know. It's just—I mean, I don't really know why. It's just like a feeling I have, that I don't really want to talk about this. I can't really explain why though. Just because of the fact that we don't really know her. Especially, it's not really just [my stepmother], it's my dad, too. I mean, we want to make our vacation as good as it can be, and to do something like that might just bring it down. I don't know, it would just sort of ruin the whole point of a vacation with my father. So, I sort of avoid that and put it aside and don't worry about that, because this is our only time together.

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Though she says, "this is our only time together," Judy and her family are not really together. Covering over her feelings for the sake of a good vacation, Judy cannot come to know her stepmother or her father, and they, in turn, are shielded from her. Their only genuine connections seem to be in those moments where their feelings, out of relationship, become overwhelming and out of control, and therefore destructive. And as a result, one week before they are to go back to their father's for Thanksgiving, Judy anticipates a painful struggle and her sister is "sort of scared to go."

Judy speaks of her choice to "avoid . . . and put . . . aside" her bad feelings as she attempts "not to be depressed for the rest of my life" like her brother seems to be.³ And yet we feel the opposite is happening—by not speaking her sadness, Judy is in danger of being depressed. Trying not to be "bothered" or "never really think" about the steady stream of antagonism between her parents, Judy attempts to hold the bad feelings away from herself and not to feel her pain or her upsetness or her sadness but instead to silence herself. "Never mind," Judy says to her interviewer, in essence, articulating this disconnection and dismissing what she has just explained. "I just talk too much."

For Judy at thirteen, feeling and knowing have become "two different things":

The knowing sort of comes from the brain, like your intelligence part. Like your smartness, your brightness, your education part, and your feeling is something that it doesn't matter if you have an education or not, it's just like something that you can't put into words. That you can't really explain, but it's not, I don't know, it's just like a deeper sort of knowing than intelligence knowing. Because intelligence tells you "no," "bad," "yes," "good," and all that.

In referring to this "deeper sort of knowing," Judy says, "I am pointing to my stomach," which seems to be the bodily center of this knowing feeling. "Whenever I feel like something bad is going to happen or feel scared or something awful, I can feel it in my stomach . . . a gut feeling that you are not doing something right

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or you are doing something that you don't really care about . . . whether it's right or wrong." This feeling, Judy continues, "is an internal sort of knowing, that it just has to do with like not your brain but more your mind".

A mind sort of has your real thoughts and a brain sort of has the intelligence . . . what you learn in school, like all that sort of thing, physics, and statistics and all that, but your mind is sort of associated with your heart and your soul and your internal feeling and your real feelings.

Yet, while "no one else can really affect . . . the feelings that you've had . . . because someone can't say you don't feel this, you do." People, Judy explains, "can control what they're teaching you and say 'This is right and this is wrong,' that's control like into your brain. But the feeling is just with you; [the feeling] can't be changed by someone else who wants it to be this way. It can't be changed by saying 'No, this is wrong, this is right, this is wrong.'" "Some people can . . . name lots of different things any different way, like you can name something 'innocence,' and you can name this 'wrong,' and that's the way someone put it into my head." Yet, she continues, "it still comes out inside of you the same way."

As Judy describes the very process of knowing what she knows through her feelings described by other names or covered over with what "people put . . . into my head," she finds herself "struggling for words that I don't even know exist, or my feelings that I can't even say, something like that, I don't know." But Judy does know that this has happened to her, that "when we grow up we sort of forget about our mind and we are behind . . . So that like right now, when I am trying to explain things I'm not familiar with [the mind], because I forgot about that part of me, so it is too hard to put into words." In an extraordinary moment, Judy begins to think and feel her way through her experiences and, in the process, comes to her own theory of development:

I think that maybe really young children have . . . [mind] more than anyone else because I don't know, they don't have much of a brain . . . and I think that's when you get all your mind stuff

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because that's the only thing you really have then because then you . . . transform some of the mind things to the brain, so then that starts to evolve and that's sort of like the way you are brought up. It goes into your brain. And I think that after a while, you just sort of forget your mind, because everything is being shoved at you into your brain.

"I mean," Judy continues, using the very language that signifies her own loss and forgetting, "it's sort of like something that happens gradually. And I mean, I don't know, it's sort of, I mean some people, I mean, everyone has it, a little of it, but they can't . . . really acknowledge what it is. I mean, they just know it's there." Working through the life-span, Judy retraces her own experience of how "you just sort of forget your mind":

Like little babies, they can't understand . . . they have . . . really nothing, because they're just starting, but then . . . by like seven . . . they have the most mind, but they are starting to lose it actually.

With "what you learn in school" and all that's "shoved at you into your brain," Judy explains,

people seem to just like sort of gradually forget about that and then just worry about the sums and totals of checks and stuff, and it is sort of stagnant . . . I mean, it's sort of just like they have other things on their mind and they don't want to worry about [the feeling] . . . or maybe perhaps that since they don't know what it is, they don't want to have to worry about it . . . they don't really acknowledge the fact that they don't really understand it. But they always sort of have it.

Shifting to speak of the "it" as she traces how people lose their minds, Judy reads into the future, to the end of life: "When you start to realize that you are going to be dying soon, I think that perhaps then some people start to get it back, because they are sort of sick and tired of all that brain stuff . . . maybe that's why grandparents get along so good with grandchildren, because they're really old and they're really young and they sort of connect."

In a poignant moment, Judy describes "my grandfather, I really

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respect him . . . he has a lot of knowledge . . . in his stomach . . . I mean, he has real feelings, he understands things easily." Yet, Judy watches from the periphery as this man who "understand[s]" . . . people, the inside of them . . . the inside of their feelings, goes on a "trip during the summer" with "all his male grandchildren . . . when they're about ten." Judy adds, "I have never been on a trip because he takes his grandsons with him." Although Judy says that she can "understand what probably was going on," she doesn't voice any feelings about being left behind.

Judy does not draw out the implications of her experience with her grandfather—his preferential treatment of his grandsons and the seeming failure of this man, whom she describes as having "real feelings" and who "understands people . . . the inside of their feelings," to understand her feelings. But she does have a theory about "why the earth isn't the greatest place to live." All this shoving of things into the brain "sort of loses the beauty of things," she says. "Someone looks at like a sunrise or something and says how like 'The sun goes through this.' Why can't people just accept the beauty of it?" That felt appreciation of the beauty, Judy says, is "sort of like your stomach. That's the sort of thing that makes you think, it's sort of a mysterious sort of thing." Maybe, she wonders aloud to the woman sitting with her, "people are turning to crime because they forgot about the beauty in life":

Maybe . . . a lot of people have lost that sort of beauty, because they have been shoving brain things at them and no one can really realize that sort of a feeling and then when they try and think about it, it's just so overwhelming because they have never been able to think about that, that part to put into words. I don't know.

Trying to hold onto the feeling herself, Judy, standing and looking at a setting sun, finds herself "want[ing] to shake them and say, 'Look! Look how beautiful that is!'" While her own path of development places her well on her way to worrying "about the sums and totals of checks," Judy still struggles to "accept and let it be beautiful."

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Judy, at thirteen, speaks of a felt reality that is beginning to elude her—a reality that holds mind and body, thoughts and feelings, reason and passion, together. Mind, for Judy, connects with the original meanings of the word: with deepest and earliest memory, integrating feelings, perceiving and thinking, which arises out of intention and desire to embody mental life. Losing her mind to the voices shoved into her brain, Judy also covers over bodily desires and sexual feelings with romantic ideals. Talking about a friend who “goes out with guys” and “goes farther than most people would,” whose behavior is, for this reason, “disgusting,” Judy places herself squarely within the conventions of the romance story:

Because no one, except for her, everyone wants a really good relationship with someone. I mean, we are like thirteen, but still you want to be romantic . . . That just made me, if I had done something like that, I would feel like total dirt and totally worthless and she's so proud of it. I just can't know how she did that. No one else would ever do that, because they don't—that's not romantic, that's just plain disgusting.

Like other feelings such as anger and “upsetness,” Judy “cannot know” how her friend could feel sexual desire, cannot imagine having such feelings herself. Instead, Judy looks to romance for “a really good relationship with someone.”

Judy thus describes her education as a process by which information is “shoved into your brain” and defines so-called reality as the way she ought to know and see the world. Aware that she is “forgetting” the reality of her feelings, Judy is concerned that she is losing something of great value. Wanting the “regular” family, wanting romance without sexuality, wanting to be the “exact same” as her friends, Judy feels the pressure of norms and conventions inside her brain, particularly those of feminine goodness, which, taken in, are creating ideas of reality that are at odds with her experiences of living as a feeling mind/body. The “deeper knowing” that Judy mentions, the embodied knowing that led her as a nine-year-old to “feel in her mind,” has been overridden by voices and romances that have entered her brain.

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Victoria: Building a Shield

The image of the perfect girl looms large for ten-year-old Victoria, who, upon offering a picture she drew of her family, describes her picture as “really horrible” and compares it to that of her classmate, who “is good at everything,” who’s “perfect at everything.” “How does that make you feel?” her interviewer asks her. “Bad,” Victoria replies.

In fact, Victoria’s family picture is not perfect, nor is it pretty; drawn in pencil, a line of small drab stick-figures hug the bottom of the page: “That’s my mom, that’s my dad, that’s my brother, that’s my sister, that’s my cat, that’s my other cat, that’s my dog, that’s my boss, and that’s my horse barn.” “And where are you?” her interviewer wonders. “I didn’t put me in this,” Victoria replies. But if she were to put herself in her picture, Victoria explains, she would draw herself “with a horse” on the opposite end of the paper, far away from the others.

Victoria, who has a part-time job working at a stable—her “home away from home,” a place where she often sleeps on the weekends—is self-reliant and straightforward but also, it seems, lonely, sad, and disillusioned with the people in her life. Animals “are better than humans,” she tells her interviewer; “They’re nicer . . . because [if] you tell them something, they don’t get mad at you, and they listen to you.” At home, Victoria doesn’t feel listened to, but feels, she says, “like a sandwich” between her younger sister and older brother, who are “spoiled”—one is “a baby,” she says, and one is “a boss.” Victoria is the girl who describes herself and her two friends as “leftovers” in the cafeteria of school social life. At school “you get picked on a lot,” she tells her interviewer. People “get mad” and “can pass [their feelings] on to someone else, and it will keep on going around so everyone can pick corners.”

Though school is socially difficult, Victoria’s disillusionment and anger focus in large part on what happens at home. On the surface Victoria lives the life of the “typical” child Judy so dreams about—a member of a white, middle-class family living in the suburbs, a father who is a judge, a mother who is, for the most part, a

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homemaker. But inside the privacy of her home things are quite different than they appear from the outside.

According to Victoria, her "bossy" brother is both careless and cruel; he "doesn't listen" to anybody, she says, and "even talks back" to their mother. Victoria's anger is palpable when she recalls how her brother let her dog out of the house one evening and it was hit by a car—"He was only a puppy too," she explains. "It was so sad." "I'm mad at him," Victoria then tells her interviewer, "everything he's had, a bird and a hamster . . . he got them all killed, so my mom doesn't let him get a dog or a cat . . . [He] used to hang [my cat] by its tail, wrap a rope around its tail, and hang it and stuff. And that's why my mom doesn't want him to have anything more like that."

Now that Victoria has been promised a new dog, she knows she "should" share with her brother—some things "are nice but not fair," she explains. But to be nice, Victoria would have to ignore her brother's irresponsible and cruel behavior; she would have to disregard what she knows he is capable of doing; she would have to put her dog in jeopardy. Standing firmly against the idea, she says, "I'm not going to share it with him." Though she is willing to go so far as to say her brother may "not realize" what he is doing, Victoria is unwilling to cover over his cruelty or bury her own strong feelings of sadness and anger.

"In some things," like with her brother's treatment of her cat, Victoria can count on her mother to agree with her and support her. But more often she must deal with her father, who "doesn't really say anything" when she complains and who, according to Victoria, sticks up for her "unbearable" brother. "I don't think it's right," Victoria tells her interviewer, referring to her father's loyalty to her brother. "Do you ever say anything?" her interviewer wonders. "Yeah," Victoria replies. "My dad just gets mad at me."

Victoria knows from her own experience that "everyone's different." She, herself, is very different from her father and her brother most of the time. She knows, also from experience, that while one person can "be aggravated by one thing . . . the other may . . . just overlook it." Knowing that people see things "looking at an angle,"

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Victoria nonetheless refuses to change the angle of her own vision. Instead, she stays with what she feels and thinks, even in the face of her father's and her brother's wrath. "It's not wrong to say what you think," she tells her interviewer, and even when it is too risky to speak, "I can think it always in my head." At such times, feelings move out of Victoria's body and into her head.

A year later Victoria, now eleven, describes her life: "I work at a stable, and I've worked there like every weekend for a long time now. And, I have a brother and a sister, and, I hate—my brother is a real jerk . . . He tries to boss you around, like my mom will tell him to empty the dishwasher and he'll go and tell you [to do] it. Or he will say, 'Victoria, I'm gonna beat you up,' and I'll say, 'Go ahead,' and he'll do it, and for no reason. He's just too wild, just kind of like a bully."

Her brother, who is thirteen, is now, Victoria says, "really tall"—"he's bigger than my dad." Daunted by her brother's rapid growth, afraid of what he is now capable of, Victoria does not feel protected from him:

My mom told us to clean up the living room, including my dad. My brother took a towel he picked up from the floor snapping it at me, just kidding, so I sat down and my dad grabbed me by my wrist, he didn't hurt me or anything, he just grabbed me and pulled me up and said clean up this living room now. And he sat back down. And then I said, "Dad, why aren't you listening to me?" And he said, "Clean up this room now." And I started screaming, "Will you listen to what happened?" And he goes, "Clean up this living room now!" And so then he sent me to my room because I wouldn't do it and five minutes later he came up and said go clean up the living room and then come up here. But he would not listen to me and when I explained it to my mom she agreed . . . it's just like she is always on my side, it seems to me . . . she agreed that he should have listened because he had no right to grab me and pull me across the room when it was my brother's fault.

Victoria is not a passive player in such dramas—she screams to be heard, she refuses to do what she is ordered, she complains to

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the one person in the house who will listen. But though her mother "is always on my side" and aligns with her in private, Victoria notices that her mother often agrees with her father "when he's in the room." She senses why this is so as she ponders the differences in power between her father and mother. Her father, she explains, "knows exactly how much money [my mom] has, but [my mom] doesn't know how much money he has." Listening and watching her parents' stormy relationship, Victoria begins to worry that if they were to get a divorce, her mother would have no money. Since her mother "worked and made her own money" before her parents were married but now stays home, she would have no job "to fall back on."

Victoria's concern over the dissolution of her parents' marriage grows as she watches her mother and father play, in her words, "Mr. and Mrs. Shock," where they say things they don't mean just to upset each other, so that "now," Victoria says, "I don't know what to believe." Aligning herself with her mother, Victoria sees the effect these conversations have. "He mentally drains her," Victoria says, referring, as an example, to her father threatening one minute to sell the house because they have no money, and then the next assuring them that they have plenty of money—"We're not sure whether or not he was just saying it," Victoria explains, "or he really meant that we had to do something."

Victoria worries so much because she knows in vivid detail what is going on between her parents. "[My mom] doesn't keep [her thoughts and feelings] a secret from me," she says, but tells Victoria "what they were fighting about or how much money she's got and what would happen if they got a divorce or something." Allowed to see inside her parents' conflicts through her mother's eyes, Victoria is especially sensitive to the differences between what her mother and father do and say in public and what her mother feels and speaks about in private. Victoria aligns herself with her mother's view and notes with annoyance the polite games her father plays when, for example, he says to her mother every night: "Dinner was the best you've ever made." "He always says that no matter what," she says, "if it's awful or anything . . . and he makes it so exagger-

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ated, it kind of like drives me crazy . . . I guess he wants to please her, but it drives her crazy, too."

Sensitive to the differences in power in her house associated with gender and money, Victoria begins to pick up these differences elsewhere in her life—she notices that the woman she works for part-time "likes boys better than girls," for example, and has been proving her preference by paying her less than the boys she works with. When Victoria, in anger, tells her mother, her mother "agreed that that was unfair but we couldn't really do anything about it." Again Victoria is confronted with the different angles of her parents' visions: "My dad says . . . she did it by accident, she didn't mean to and my mom agrees with me that she did it on purpose."

Victoria struggles to stay with what she knows from experience in the midst of these different constructions of psychological and social reality. The woman who interviews her seems really interested in what Victoria knows. And it may be her interest and responsiveness, her willingness to listen, that leads Victoria to speak out about the way power differences between women and men literally affect the renaming of her mother and, in Victoria's words, "drain her potential."

At the beginning of the interview you mentioned that referring to your mother and father as Mr. and Mrs. [Hanson] is unfair. Do you want to explain that to me?

Because it always says Mr. and Mrs. [Jim Hanson] and it's like, what about the woman, she's here too. And then it says, Mrs. and then not her name but my dad's name, Mrs. [Jim Hanson]. But it never says Mrs. Elaine or Ms. Elaine, something like that, her name, it just says Mrs. and then his name, and that's unfair because it makes it look like she's not even there.

Why does that bother you?

Well, because, like my mother, she's good and she's smart and she's understanding, but like everything about these names and stuff is kind of draining her, draining her potential and stuff.

Why because of the name?

Just because, because like everything always points to the man, like the man is most important and the woman is not even alive

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... to put it that way, the men are the most important people. Just say it. Like God, this is not right!

Victoria, passionately invested in what she feels and thinks, sees and questions the consequences of a societal norm that suggests, because of "like everything about these names and stuff," her mother is less than who she could be, who, according to convention, "is not even alive." Yet Victoria seems caught between her personal knowledge of her mother—her own relational experiences of her mother as "good," "smart," and "understanding"—and a growing awareness that "if [her parents] got a divorce and [her mother] had to work, no one would know who she was." There is no public record of what Victoria and her mother know to be true privately; this knowledge, it appears, is not welcomed in the world and so it is not held up in the world—even by her mother. Perhaps, then, things aren't what they seem. What can it mean that the person with whom she has felt the strongest bond and with whom she has placed the greatest trust and value is made to "look like she's not even there"? What does it mean that her mother goes along with this construction of herself—says one thing in private and then says something different in public? What really can Victoria believe in, who can she trust on an emotional level?

Speaking up, Victoria observes, can be dangerous and disruptive. When she speaks directly and openly about what she sees and hears, her father warns her—and her mother, at least publicly, agrees—that "people are going to think you are dumb when you say that" or that "people don't appreciate you telling them that; it makes you look stupid." Struggling to remain visible and public when others seem to want her to go unnoticed and unheard, Victoria begins to feel pressure to not know what she knows, or at least not to say it. And so like Jessie in fifth grade, who carefully chooses when to stay with her feelings and speak and when to "pretend" to "agree to be nice," and like many other girls in this study, Victoria struggles to authorize her thoughts and give voice to what she knows in the face of pressure to be polite, presentable, good, and nice.

Victoria strains to understand all the layers of meaning and

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innuendo in what is being said by those around her, as she tries to anticipate how what she says will be heard and responded to and tries to decipher how people really feel beneath the nice things they say to each other. When her mother talks with her, confides in her, assures her, agrees with her in private, and then in public supports her father, Victoria feels betrayed and all alone. When her father so exaggerates his compliments that they have no meaning and when her parents, rather than say what they feel and want, play Mr. and Mrs. Shock, Victoria feels a little "crazy." In the face of these radical disconnections, eleven-year-old Victoria tries desperately to be "honest" and "trustworthy" with her family and also to stay in relationship with what she knows to be true from experience. But in this judge's family there are no rules of evidence, there is nothing she can count on, and no one who is reliable. And so when Victoria says in the beginning of her interview this year, "I don't know what to believe," we have a sense that her "confusion" is, in fact, a stunningly clear and astute commentary on her relational experiences.

A year later Victoria, now twelve and in the sixth grade, struggles to control and to contain her feelings. If the underworld and the surface appearance of relationships are so radically different, perhaps it makes sense to align with the world everyone else sees—at least she will not be alone, at least she will have witnesses. But in Victoria's life, by her account, she cannot expect loyalty—she will remain alone since the witness, most often her mother, will not speak publicly in her defense. Perhaps it is this realization that accounts for the change in Victoria this year, since her anger and sadness of the year before seem now transformed into a deep-seated bitterness and despair. "I think life stinks," she tells her interviewer, "My life stinks."

People who can't rely on other people, Victoria explains, "are people in trouble." And this year, it seems, Victoria is a person in trouble. Either the physical violence in her family has escalated or Victoria, in her attempt to hold on, has decided to speak about her experiences more openly. Victoria seems confused, however, about how to respond, how to feel and think about what is happening to

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her—at times protesting, at times denying the violence, at times hating, at times idealizing the perpetrators. Talking about a time when she accidentally broke something, for example, Victoria denies she has ever been “beaten” even while she introduces the word and imagines in detail the experience of being hit by her father: “I was kind of surprised and upset and afraid of being yelled at. Even though I hadn’t been hit for a long time, I mean I was never beaten or anything, but I used to get spanked, so I kept thinking of his hand coming down on me.”

And even though Victoria describes in detail how threatening her fourteen-year-old brother and his friends have become—“He has the worst kind of friends . . . One . . . has been in jail . . . for breaking a leg of a girl when he . . . threw her over a fence,” and “[my brother] took one of my Reeboks and . . . started hitting me with it, on my leg and I was screaming”—her description of abuse turns suddenly to idealization as she tells her interviewer, “I always used to try to please my older brother, he is like my god.” As Victoria insists over and over that no one is listening to her—“Whenever I am at home all my protests and all my screams and all my fits just go into deaf ears”—and as she follows scene after scene of intrusion and violence with denial and justification, we know something is terribly wrong.

If Victoria feels the physical pain of being in violent relationships, she continues to feel the emotional pain when her mother turns away. In disgust, she watches the relationship between her mother and her brother develop—as her mother attempts to set boundaries and rules for him, “He just talks my mom out of everything,” including being with Victoria. The family story her mother hands down to Victoria further distances her from her mother and brother’s relationship: “He’s the first . . . he has always been really obnoxious . . . even when I was a baby, the only time she spent with me was when she was feeding me, even at night when I was sick, as long as he was awake he wouldn’t let her near me, because he was really jealous all the time.” Victoria feels her mother’s absence even when she is most needy. Though she sees her brother

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as the cause of her mother’s absence, she also sees her mother giving in to her brother’s demands.

This year Victoria says that when her brother hits her, her mother says, “Well you deserved it,” in essence treating Victoria as she, herself, is treated. “Life is not fair,” Victoria concludes, echoing the words her mother so often says to her, “It is lucky.” From Victoria’s vantage point, where being “outsoken . . . has got me in trouble” and where “whenever I say something it goes in just deaf ears,” it truly seems foolish to depend on people. As a result, Victoria says, “I don’t care . . . The only person you can rely on is yourself.” “There is a couple of people that I really trust that I will tell anything to in this world,” she adds, “but most of them are dogs.”

The bitter disillusionment and internal division we heard in Victoria at eleven remains acute for her at twelve. Her anger and mistrust of her brother has grown into intense hate as he continues to intrude on her life. “He has learned how to open up my diary,” she tells her interviewer. “He has learned the combination.” His intrusions begin to have sexual overtones when Victoria, now at the edge of young womanhood, complains that “he’s learned how to open my door, so I’ll be in the middle of doing something or I will be changing or something and he will just come in with one of his friends.” Her brother’s constant trespassing and voyeurism on Victoria’s private life leads her to withdraw, physically and emotionally. “I only ask for peace and to be left alone,” she tells her interviewer, “I just want to be private and to be left alone.”

But Victoria, angry and hurt, longs for relationships that are authentic and trustworthy. Real friends, she says, “need to be able to trust each other and they need to be able to be loyal and stick up for them no matter what. [You need] to be able to tell them your feelings and not to have to worry about them going and telling someone else or showing them something.” Though she has felt betrayed at home, she holds out hope for loyalty and cherishes her few “best friends” who “always listen to everything I say real carefully.”

Still vulnerable, still open to feeling pleasure as well as anger and

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sadness, Victoria is nonetheless wary. Looking with clear, sharp eyes at the people around her, she concludes that none of them are perfect "obviously." In a sarcastic voice, she explains the changes in her life. "I was," she explains, "an idealistic child." "I have always tried to get good grades and do just what my mommy and daddy wanted me to do and if I got yelled at that means that I wasn't doing, I wasn't being perfect, which upset me . . . Now I do things to please me and not my parents . . . and if they yell at me I don't really care because they are not perfect either, obviously."

For Victoria, realizing she could please herself came as a revelation, something she learned quite unexpectedly from her music teacher, who said to her class after a concert: "You guys were wonderful . . . but I hope you did it to please yourself and not me." Now with three part-time jobs, proud and determined to buy her own clothes, unable to "stand . . . tak[ing] my dad's money," Victoria is claiming her "independence . . . my independence from everyone."

But "independence" in Victoria's mind is infused with many different meanings. It is a word passed down through generations of women—to her mother and, through her mother, to her:

I am writing my autobiography now and my mom, I asked her if there was one family trait on her side of the family and she said there was, independence, because for the past five generations the women's husbands have been either like total alcoholics or they have not gotten along and the husband has walked out on them and she said that she thinks because of this the parents kind of teach them, their mothers kind of teach them to be independent towards men and I am just independent towards them.

But the underside of this story of independent women is another story—of duplicity and repetition—since why would each generation of women choose the same kind of man? Were these women not talking with their daughters? Warning them? Were they blind? Victoria's mother's experience with marriage explains this seemingly inevitable outcome, an outcome likely to happen to Victoria as well if she follows the same path of disconnection that, in her family, is

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called "independence." The complication of this story of independence is evident in Victoria's account of her mother's relationship with men: "I think [my mother] expected to marry the guy of her dreams and everything and have a happy life . . . My dad bought her chocolates and everything . . . [but] in a real person in life he is not like that at all. And so her life just hasn't turned out the way she has wanted it to . . . She has kind of shut out the world around her." As a result, Victoria says, "I don't blame her [for not listening to me, at times], her life is really terrible, I mean her life is worse than mine."

As Victoria sees it, her mother might have been able to listen to her and be happy if only she could have "married the man of her dreams." But when Victoria starts to write her mother's story—"what she regretted most in the past"—into her autobiography, her mother tells her to cover over the truth with a lie "in case my dad read it." Experiencing the duplicity, Victoria still wants what her mother once hoped for. Like in the romance novels she and her mother read, Victoria says, "I'm hoping some day I will fall in love with a man and we will be happy and live happily ever after." But, Victoria adds, hesitant not to make what she sees as her mother's mistake, "if it doesn't happen, I want one child, hopefully a girl, and I don't want to be married because I am not going to marry someone I don't love."

What Victoria longs for sounds only slightly different from the "idealistic" vision she had as a child, when she "used to believe in the fairy princess and happily ever afters." "I am related to the romance stuff," Victoria admits. And we hear this relationship when she describes the man she will love: "He is going to be at least six foot and have a beard and a mustache and he's going to be really nice and gentle and . . . the perfect prince. He is going to be rich, too. He's going to have money and it's all very strange." It is strange, it seems to us, to hear Victoria speak of her "independence" from everyone and yet hold firmly to her desire for a "perfect prince" who will, it seems, support her emotionally and economically.

Victoria's desires, though troublesome, are understandable—her hope for romantic love seems directly connected to the betrayals

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and losses she has felt; her expressed desire for independence seems connected to her disappointment and abuse in relationships, and to her fear of isolation and abandonment. Victoria's romantic ideal depends on her not knowing what she knows from her experience to be true—that "no one is perfect," that her "perfect prince" might well, "in a real person in life," turn out to be disgusting or an alcoholic like her father. But rather than take in the reality of her own anger and sadness at the frustration and violence that surrounds her and intrudes upon her and confuses her, Victoria, like her mother, who "shut out the world around her," longs to disconnect from this reality and take in the possibility of romance, crafted with the help of her mother and the novels they read. Claiming her "independence from everyone," Victoria thus tells a story of withdrawal from others to keep the pain of her relationships from hurting too much, and then covers her intense feelings of loss with a romantic ending. Perhaps to assure that what she knows and feels remains walled off from others' intrusion and violation Victoria says, "I try to build, it's kind of bad really to do it, but I try to build a little shield."

Two years later fourteen-year-old Victoria speaks with the same woman she has confided in for the past three years. Their relationship has grown. In fact, the year before Victoria had written to her interviewer for understanding and advice about her feelings. This year they greet each other in the small office that has become an interview room. Before turning on the tape recorder, they talk about how things are going for Victoria, how she has been feeling. However, when the interview begins—formally, publicly—Victoria becomes resistant and sarcastic:

Can you tell me something about your life during the past year?

Nothing's happened.

Nothing's happened? Anything? No? You are not going to talk about anything?

Nothing's happened.

You just told me a bunch of stuff?

Alright, my dad got married, that happened. I went out with a

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bunch of scums, that happened. I went to work all summer long, that happened.

Trivializing their earlier conversation, Victoria begins to reveal in the here-and-now of the interview situation the vulnerability and mistrust she feels when what she has confided in private is now open to public scrutiny. The relationship between Victoria and her interviewer, tentative and honest in the preceding years, seems now choked by the interview questions, and Victoria, defensive and angry, dares the woman to stay with her in the presence of her self-proclaimed "craziness." If the interview is to go on, Victoria seems to have decided, she will play Mrs. Shock. The interview itself becomes a relational drama.

As Victoria throws out one provocative statement after another, we sense the depths of her sadness—her bitterness and despair. Relationships with guys—the "scums" she goes out with—are, she says,

like a little game you play. You know, you don't really care, and you sit there and say "I love you," and if they say they love you back, you know that means they want to go farther the next time they see you or whatever . . . Yah, it's a game. I mean it's like preparing you for the ultimate game which is like marriage, you know. The trick.

From what her mother told her, and then told her not to write in her autobiography, Victoria knows that her mother feels that she had been tricked into marrying her father. Marriage thus seems the ultimate trick in a long series of relational games. Although her parents now have divorced, Victoria, the incarnation of that marriage, also carries forward its radical separation between private feelings and public images; she feels disgust and disdain for the boys she goes out with and yet continues to "play for my image." Her emotional distance from the sexual relationships that she describes with boys, whom she deems worthy of her "dirty looks" but not her trust or true feelings, goes along with her fear that these boys have

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the power to make advances and then "dump" her, that they have the power to trick her.

Victoria is openly angry now at what she experiences as her mother's lies and betrayals—the "sweet" and nice public persona which conceals a private "bitchiness." Yet Victoria feels for the most part alone with what she has experienced in this relationship. Dismissing her father—speaking of him with disgust and disdain—she talks with condescending bitterness and disappointment about her relationship with her mother:

What annoys me about her is she's like really sweet [on the surface]. All my friends are like, "She's so sweet." The ones who spend a lot of time at my house [realize] she starts bitching at me, or she starts screaming at me for something or another. [The others] think she is really sweet, you know, "You have such a neat Mom."

Victoria's awareness of her mother's duplicity now seems joined with feelings of helplessness as she realizes how readily others are taken in by what she knows to be a surface. People who do not spend a lot of time at her house will not know the relational truth and thus will not understand or feel the grounds for her sadness and despair.

Victoria's aloneness also comes through this year as she speaks of her relationships with her friends. These friends tease and hit one another, they speak cruelly about one another, they categorize and judge one another according to the nature of their relationships with boys and their sexual behavior, they talk behind one another's backs and spread false rumors. Going down the list of her friends, Victoria says: "Donna likes someone, and Gina likes someone just to like someone, and Lucy is a major slut, she sleeps with anyone. Cloe is a slut, she sleeps with anyone, you know." As for herself, Victoria fears she will be called a lesbian—a girl who has "no emotion" for boys. Explaining herself, Victoria says, "I am in love with the idea of being in love. I want to be loved, you know, really, so much, that I'm in love with the idea of doing it."

Although Victoria imagines romantic love washing over her like a wave and carrying her into a place where she is loved, she does

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not expect this to happen to her. "I want to fall madly in love," she says, but "I don't think that will happen. I mean I'm not the lucky person, that will be the one in a million." In the face of her longing to be loved, she turns to self-help books: "I have read all about this," she explains to her interviewer, "the psychological impact of wanting to be loved, the little doctor books." And she recognizes herself and her family in what she reads. Because she is in love with the idea of being in love, she fears that she will "be stupid and go out and get pregnant when I'm seventeen because I think I'm madly in love." She connects the mistrust she feels for all but her best friends to the alcoholism she sees in her family and fears that because she too desires to "escape it all," she is "like the perfect person for alcoholism."

Victoria's hurt and anger and also her hope for genuine relationship repeatedly break the surface of her cynicism and despair, only to be overcome once again by her feelings of hopelessness—that what she most wants will never happen to her, that there is nothing that she can do to change things, that there is no one who can really help her, including the woman who is sitting with her and to whom she wrote. And yet she continues to wonder about the goodness in people: "How do you like view the good in people?" she asks:

Like some people, when someone makes a mistake, they go, "Oh, it's a nice try." And other people, they go, "Gee, she was stupid for not getting that," you know . . . which is what I'm like. But some people are like, "Oh, nice try."

Victoria yearns for someone who will understand her, who will see that she is trying to be loved and liked despite her disclaimer that she does not care. Explaining herself, she says, "I had a distorted childhood . . . I don't care. I mean I know that a lot of people are a lot nicer than me. I'm just not a nice person . . . I'm spiteful and nasty." "Says who?" her interviewer asks. "Says me . . . I know what I'm like . . . I don't mean to, but I am . . . I hide it, but I am . . . I know a lot of people in my class don't like me . . . it's how you view me."

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Victoria, a reader of self-help books, sees the connection between her "distorted childhood" and her not caring. When her interviewer asks about the connection between Victoria and her mother—"Aren't you doing the same thing that your mother did? Going out with or starting to have like dating relationships with people you don't like and respect?"—Victoria responds by differentiating herself from her mother, calling her mother "stupid" and "a slut" and then retracting these accusations as she begins to go underneath the labels into feelings that "are rather different," feelings that she cannot explain. Speaking of herself—of the fact that she is dating boys whom she describes as scums—Victoria says:

Well, I know, but I'm not going to marry them. I mean I'm not stupid enough to marry them . . . My mother was a slut. No, actually she wasn't. She was stupid. No, not stupid. I just, I can't explain. My feelings for my mother are rather different.

Victoria in her effort to explain why her mother would have married a man she so disliked asks a series of emotionally difficult questions: was her mother a slut who would sleep with anyone, was she really tricked, or was she just stupid? And these questions are ultimately questions about herself as well. This year Victoria and her mother fight on a regular basis. Victoria's struggle is evident as she says, "You know, we fight a lot, but I still like her," and then backs away from this feeling: "We got in a fight one time too many . . . I learned my Mom was a bitch, that really changed a lot of things . . . because then I don't have to be nice to her anymore."

Giving full rein to her anger and disappointment in her relationships with women, Victoria calls her women teachers "phony" and "fake." Outwardly, they speak of fairness and strive to be "perfect" teachers. The reality that Victoria knows is that she feels treated unfairly, unloved, and left alone. "It's kind of my punishment in life," she says. When her interviewer asks, "Can you tell me about a time when something happened to you that was unfair?" Victoria answers: "Being born," and then adds sarcastically, "Does that count?"

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Rejecting the possibility of relationship with this woman to whom she had written and who is now sitting with her, Victoria turns on her as well. The interview is "stupid," she says. The questions are stupid, and obvious: "like 'What's your name?' 'Victoria.' 'Why?' Like that. They're just, anyone with common sense would know." "I'm tired," Victoria says—suddenly vulnerable: "I didn't go to bed last night or the night before . . . When I close my eyes, I get the same nightmare back, you know." "What are you dreaming about?" her interviewer asks. "A lot of different things. Just having a lot of problems. I mean I go through stages. Usually, usually when I'm cold at night, I have nightmares. And it's been cold, so I start having nightmares again." Victoria is tired, she has been having nightmares, she has been having a lot of problems, it has been cold.

The coldness of Victoria's world is shocking. Throughout her interview, her experiences and stories read like a nightmare. Still playing Mrs. Shock, Victoria tells how her friend Lucy tried to run away. In doing so she refers matter-of-factly to rape, beatings, and suicide attempts. She tells of stolen credit cards, Lucy's mad dash to the airport, the last-minute discovery and capture. And she describes Lucy's suicide attempts and rapes in counterpoint to her own exhaustion and despair:

If she wants to kill herself, she's going to do it herself. I was sleeping over at her house one night . . . and she wakes me up and she has like a razor blade at her wrist, and she's like, "I'm going to kill myself," and I'm like, "Don't kill yourself until morning, I'm really tired." And she was like, "No, I'm going to kill myself." "Lucy, promise you won't do anything tonight, I have to sleep, because I'm not awake." "I'm going to kill myself. I'm going to kill myself."

Speaking of Lucy, Victoria feels helpless, "not awake"; it seems that Lucy is trying to kill herself: "If she doesn't die from [suicide], she's going to die from AIDS . . . She is really strange. She is always getting raped, she has like a blade scratch like this because one of the guys she was making out with got mad at her or something, and

so he, I don't know, he got mad at her, so he took a switchblade out in the car . . . She's also been pregnant already."

The interviewer struggles with how to respond to these stories of violence, violation, and despair. Victoria senses her uncertainty and discomfort; indeed, she plays to it, reminding her interviewer of her promise of confidentiality: "I was going to tell you [about Lucy running away]," she says. "You couldn't do anything anyway." In essence, she has put the woman sitting with her into the same position that she feels herself to be in: confronted with chilling realities, aware of the dangers women are in, and unable to take action to stop it.

Undereath the drama of relational violence, the depths of Victoria's pain and sadness seem clear. Through her stories about Lucy's suicide attempts and the "dash to freedom" on the part of this friend who is "psycho . . . just too strange . . . weird," Victoria points to what she herself seems most to fear and to long for: Lucy, she says, doesn't "trust anyone." She has been hurt and abused. She has learned "to duck when you're about to be slapped," to "say what you have to say" behind people's backs. Talking about Lucy allows Victoria to say, "I'm psycho too . . . I'm going crazy, I'm not kidding," without feeling herself to be too strange, too weird, too all alone.

Turning back to the question of the interview itself and the tape recorder, Victoria says that her friends "put me up to this . . . They told me I had to act really crazy to [convince you] that I'm going crazy." When the interviewer asks why she thinks that she is going crazy, Victoria says, "I don't know. I'm just not logical anymore. I think it is a logic thing . . . It is not appropriate to put on tape." Asked to explain ("Why, what do you mean?"), she goes on to voice the intensity of her anger: "I'm like, alright, [a guy] pisses me off, so . . . I tell them I'm going to castrate him. Or my brother gets me mad, and so I'm going to kill him. Not move away, I'm going to kill him. I mean violence . . . It's not normal . . . I am not acting myself."

The rage and violence that well up inside her do not feel normal

to Victoria, do not feel like herself. The changes in herself are "not just development," she tells her interviewer, struggling to give words to what she is experiencing in herself:

It's like different-minded. It's not like I am getting older and I understand things from a different point because I'm older. It's [that] I understand them because not only does the way I see things change, I don't know how to explain it . . . It's not crazy, like bad crazy, it's like good crazy, but it's not good crazy, it's just not me.

In her "craziness" Victoria "sees" a reality which should not be seen: that underneath sweetness, there is "bullshit," or "bitchiness"; that people who present themselves as fair and model perfection are unfair and imperfect and therefore "fake" and "just so phony." Victoria struggles to name what she experiences, to bring her feelings and her experiences into relationship with herself. And she wonders, is it "bad crazy" or "good crazy" to feel as angry as she now feels toward boys—toward her brother, her father, and the guys she goes out with? Is it like her or not like her to be so angry at her mother and to feel so betrayed and lied to by her?

Victoria knows with certainty that she has changed. She cannot not see the dark underside of the privileged world in which she is living, and yet she does not know if it is bad or good, crazy or not crazy, to comment "rudely" or to say what she hears and feels and thinks and sees. As though to underscore the bitterness she feels about her life, she pulls away the last remnants of pleasure when she tells her interviewer "I don't love . . . working at the horse barn anymore." "Now," she says, "I'm so sick of animals . . . they're so dirty and everything." "I'm just not myself," Victoria says again, "I'm messed up" but "I'm not confused."

Noura, Judy, and Victoria are involved in very different ways in a common struggle against losing something which feels essential: their voice, their mind, their self. Each girl describes fears and confusions which feel exhausting and potentially overwhelming, at

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the center of which is a relational problem: how to resist the pressures, internal and external, to let go of what they know through experience and take on images of women and stories about relationships which they know in some sense to be untrue and untrustworthy. And yet as girls reaching adolescence and experiencing changes in their bodies, in their feelings and thoughts, and in their relationships with others and with the world at large, they do not know whether or not they can still rely on what they feel and know—whether they can or whether others will take what they know from experience to be true.

As girls at the edge of adolescence gain the cognitive and emotional capacities to know the relational world in new ways—to bring to their understanding a new breadth of thought and depth of feeling as well as a capacity for abstraction and generalization—they begin to grasp the realities of relationships and of women's lives in new ways. In essence, they become capable of seeing the whole picture and also of learning how "people" speak of what is happening: the conventions, the explanations, and the justifications. What feels and seems unloving to girls is often called love; what feels and sounds mean or cruel in women is often covered by sweetness and called "sweet" or "nice." It becomes difficult for girls to listen and watch the relational world as they did in childhood and also to take on ways of seeing and speaking that are said to be true, or good, or at least not rude.

Seeing the framework for the first time—what is now commonly called "the social construction of reality"—and also feeling the power with which this framework or construction is enforced or held in place, girls pose genuine questions about love and power, truth and relationship. And their questions, if taken seriously, disturb the framework and disrupt the prevailing order of relationships. When their voices are muted or modulated, when their experience is denied, their reality questioned, their feelings explained away, girls describe a relational impasse—a sense of being unable to move forward in relation with others, a feeling of coming up against a wall.

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The fears and confusion, the ambivalence and uncertainty, which many girls in our study give voice to seem to us not simply the natural consequences of the move from childhood into adolescence, as some might suggest, but also a sign of a truly disturbing and perplexing experience: a feeling of having to not know what one knows; of losing one's mind, of building a shield, an experience of losing voice and relationship.

We became aware of the wall girls face and their responses to the experience of relational impasse by listening to their voices and hearing their disillusionment and confusion, their sadness and their anger, but also their courage and their resistance to the pressures they feel from within and without not to feel what they feel or know what they know. One by one, these girls narrate their lives—what they see and hear, what they feel and think, and then over time their experience of anxiety and conflict when they find themselves in situations where it seems necessary either to disconnect from others or dissociate from themselves.

When Noura moves from knowing her distinctiveness from her brother—that her feelings are not his—to incorporating his opinion of her as paranoid, when she moves from speaking her feelings and thoughts in a loud voice with her friends to silently pondering her life late at night alone in the privacy of her room, we see—where others have seen a growth in subjectivity—a danger of losing voice and also a struggle against dissociation. When Judy moves from loving the regularity of her life with her mother to desiring to be in a regular or typical family, when she begins to sense the danger in the erotic and then narrates how she has come to split her feeling mind from her reasoning brain, we feel the power of the impasse and its effects on girls' psyches. And when Victoria buries her sadness and anger in response to the dangers of speaking, only to have them resurface as feelings of craziness, intense hatred, and idealization, we grasp what is at stake in girls' lives and also what is at stake for women.

As we listen to Noura, Judy, and Victoria narrate their journey to the wall, their struggle and finally their compromises with the

realities they face—their dissociation and feelings of disconnection—we wonder what choices these girls have, growing up in this time and this place, this society and this culture: what relational paths are open to them, what can they feel and know and say and still be in connection with others, what are the economic and political as well as the psychological and educational realities of their situation? Beginning with girls at early adolescence—at twelve and thirteen—may give us a clearer understanding of the gains and losses some girls experience and what becomes of girls' struggles and resistance.

5

Rivers into the Sea: Three Guides through Adolescence

We began with twelve-year-old Anna, to stand with her at the crossroads of adolescence. Returning now to Anna—tall, slender, with short brown hair and green eyes, quiet and wary—we place her amidst her twelve- and thirteen-year-old classmates. What we see are the signs of change all around. What we feel and sense is movement; like rivers flowing toward the open waters of the sea.

This is a time of visual change. Two thirds of the girls at this age will have begun menstruating.¹ There is no physical prototype: some girls appear childlike, tall and gangly; others look like young women, their bodies less angular, more rounded and full—bodies stirring, desiring, knowing, yet caught in the reality of the immediate, uncomfortable and shy in the gaze of others. Elizabeth Debold, a member of our research team, wishing to see a seventh-grade dance class, was told by the instructor that the girls were too embarrassed, too uncomfortable in their leotards to be seen by a stranger. This led Elizabeth to recall her junior high dances, herself and other girls standing in nervous, furtive groups, whispering among themselves in low voices. "Twelve-year-olds," she says, "cluster together like gangly trees in a dense patch of woods. Often when they speak, they put their hands over their mouths." She remembers the stance: "pinched posture, shoulders pushed awkwardly forward, head slightly bent. Between the lithe, jazz movement of the ten-year-old girls and the cultured grace of the seventeen-year-olds is the discomfort of twelve and thirteen."²