

MARVALYN

Oh, my gosh! I'm sorry! // Oh, my gosh! I just clocked you! >

STEVE

You hit me! Most people go away, but you hit me!

MARVALYN

I had to see [*what would happen*]! But – are you okay?

STEVE

Yeah, I don't feel // pain!

MARVALYN

. . . Don't feel pain, right, of course you're okay! – but – are you sure?

STEVE

Well, is there any blood?

MARVALYN

No.

STEVE

Any discoloration?

MARVALYN

No.

STEVE

Then I'm okay.

MARVALYN

Well, buddy, you can be hurt and not even look like it.

STEVE

But –

MARVALYN

Trust me. There are things that hurt you that make you bruised and bloody and there are things that hurt you that don't make you bruised and bloody and . . . they all hurt.

(Beat.

Then, giving him back the book labeled "Things That Can Hurt You":)

I'm Marvalyn.

STEVE

I'm Steve. I live on the third floor. Room Eleven.

MARVALYN

(Deflecting.) I live with my boyfriend, Eric. I love him very much.

STEVE

Yeah. We saw you move in.

MARVALYN

Yeah. Our roof collapsed from all the snow in December. We're just here until we can get our feet back on the ground.

STEVE

Oh. Well, that's good, 'cause that's what Ma Dudley say her boarding house is. A place where people can live until they get their feet back on the ground. My brother Paul says we've been trying to get our feet back on the ground our whole lives.

MARVALYN

Oh.

STEVE

Yeah, it takes some people longer to do that than others.

MARVALYN

Yeah.
(*Beat.*)

STEVE

You guys are loud.

MARVALYN

Huh?

STEVE

You and Eric. You yell and bang. We're right below you.

MARVALYN

Oh. Sorry about that. We're goin' through a rough patch. Happens. Sorry.
(*Beat.*
Then, changing the subject:)
What is it like?

STEVE

What?

MARVALYN

To not feel pain.

STEVE

I don't know. I don't know what it's like to hurt, so . . . I don't know. I don't really feel.

MARVALYN

Is this . . . how you were born?

STEVE

Yeah. I don't have fully developed pain sensors. They're immature, my brother Paul says // , and because they're immature –

MARVALYN

How does he know that?

STEVE

Oh, he *reads*, >

MARVALYN

But –

STEVE

and because they're immature, my development as a human being has been retarded, he says, >

MARVALYN

But –

STEVE

but he *teaches* me what hurts, though.

MARVALYN

Why??

STEVE

So I won't ruin myself. I have to know what hurts, so I know when to be afraid. See, my mind can't tell me when to be afraid, 'cause my body doesn't know what being hurt is, so I have to memorize what might hurt.

MARVALYN

Okay . . .

STEVE

And I have to memorize what to be afraid of. (*Showing her, in his book.*) Things like bears. And guns and knives. And fire. And fear – I should fear fear itself – and pretty girls . . .

MARVALYN

Pretty girls?

STEVE

(He thinks she's pretty.) Yeah.

MARVALYN

Why should you be afraid of pretty girls?

STEVE

Well, 'cause my brother Paul says they can hurt you 'cause they make you love them, and that's something I'm supposed to be afraid of, too – love – but Paul says that I'm really lucky, 'cause I'll probably never have to deal with love, because I have a lot of deficiencies and not very many capacities as a result of the congenital analgesia.

MARVALYN

Wait, what do you mean you're never gonna have to deal with love // , why –

STEVE

'Cause I'm never gonna know what it feels like, Paul says.

MARVALYN

Well, how does he know that?

STEVE

'Cause it hurts.

MARVALYN

It shouldn't.

STEVE

And, plus, I have a lot of deficiencies and not very many capacities.