

— are you sure?

MAN. Well, is there any blood?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. Any discoloration?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. Then I'm okay.

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

MAN. But —

WOMAN. 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.

MAN. 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 says 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.

MARVALYN. You know what, a lot of people do. (*She kisses him. At first it's just Marvalyn kissing Steve, but, eventually, Steve participates. Then Marvalyn breaks away.*) I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. Are you all right? Are you okay?

STEVE. (*Doesn't quite know how to respond. He hasn't learned about this. Then, maybe feeling his lips, and resorting to his usual way of answering this question.*) Well ... is there any blood?

MARVALYN. No ...

STEVE. Any discoloration?

MARVALYN. No.

STEVE. Then I'm all right. (*Is he?*)

MARVALYN. Yeah. You are. (*Beat.*) I'm so sorry I did that. It's just — ... You're just very sweet.

STEVE. (*Trying to make sense of what just happened.*) But ... you have a boyfriend and you love him very much.

MARVALYN. (*She begins gathering her stuff.*) Yes I do. And yes I do.

STEVE. And you just kissed me.

MARVALYN. Yes I did.

STEVE. And it's Friday night and you're doing your laundry.

MARVALYN. Yes I am.

STEVE. And people who are in love with each other, they don't kiss other people and do their laundry on Friday nights, I've learned that. People who are in love with each other, they go to The Moose Paddy on Friday nights, or they go dancing together, or they go skating. And they kiss each other. They don't kiss other people — you know what? I don't think that's love, // what you and your boyfriend have —

MARVALYN. (*Deflecting, preparing to leave.*) I've been down here longer than I said I would be and he doesn't like that.

STEVE. Who?

MARVALYN. My boyfriend.

STEVE. Who you love very much.

MARVALYN. Yes.

STEVE. Even though you kissed me?

MARVALYN. Yes.

STEVE. Wow, I'm going to have to talk to my brother Paul about this —

MARVALYN. No! Don't talk to your brother Paul about this! Tell him to stop teaching you.

STEVE. What?

MARVALYN. Whatever he's teaching you. Tell him to stop. What he's teaching you ... isn't something you wanna know.

STEVE. But I have to learn from him —

MARVALYN. Look: I was gonna be a nurse, so I know: You need to go to a doctor, and not have your brother read whatever it is he reads.

STEVE. But —

MARVALYN. You know what, I gotta go.

STEVE. (*Sits down on the bench.*) Right. You gotta go. You're —

you're leaving. I knew you would. That's what people do.

MARVALYN. No, I just have to — . I told you, Eric // doesn't like it if —

STEVE. Your boyfriend?

MARVALYN. Yeah, he doesn't like it if I'm down here longer than I said I'd be, and I've been down here longer than I said I'd be — *(On this line, Marvalyn picks up the ironing board. Then, as she goes to put it away, she accidentally swings it around and hits Steve in the head, just as she did at the beginning of the scene. Steve gets knocked off the bench.)*

STEVE. OW!

MARVALYN. Oh! I'm so sorry!

STEVE. OW!

MARVALYN. I'm so sorry!, are you all right? I can't believe I just did that to you again!

STEVE. OW!!

MARVALYN. *(She goes to help him; stops short.)* Wait — : What did you just say?

STEVE. *(As he rubs his head, he realizes what he just said. Beat. He looks at Marvalyn, tells her plainly:)* Ow. *(Music. Marvalyn and Steve just look at each other. Utter uncertainty. This is scary. And wonderful. But mostly a little scary — because who knows what's next. Lights fade. Transitional aurora. End of "This Hurts." After the lights have faded and "This Hurts" is over, we begin Scene Four, which is entitled ...*

GETTING IT BACK

Music fades. We hear someone — Gayle — pounding on a door.

GAYLE. Lendall! *(More pounding.)* Lendall! *(More pounding.)* Lendall! *(Lights up on the living room of a small home in Almost, Maine. It is furnished with a comfortable chair and an end table. Lendall has been woken up. Maybe he was asleep in bed; maybe he was asleep in the chair. Either way, he's up now. He turns on the light, and goes to answer the door. Gayle continues to pound on the door.)*

LENDALL. Okay! Gayle! Shhh! I'm comin', I'm comin'!

GAYLE. Lendall!

LENDALL. Hey, hey, hey! Shh, come on, I'm comin'! *(Lendall*