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book.) I'm Marvalyn.
MAN. I'm Steve. I live on the third floor. Room 11.
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 Marvalyn items in his THINGS TO BE AFRAID OF book.*) Things like bears. And guns and knives. And fire. And fear — I should fear fear itself — , and pretty girls ...

MARVALYN. Pretty girls?

STEVE. (*Thinks Marvalyn is 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. >

MARVALYN. What!?

STEVE. 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. (*And she's kissing Steve. At first it's just her kissing him, but Steve participates, and she quickly 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 ...

as a 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.

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

MARVALYN. (*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.