



THE AIR YOU BREATHE

I know many people disapproved of my parents' choices. The psychiatrists and psychologists I was sent to regularly in my teens to treat my severe agoraphobia and social anxiety all made it clear—explicitly or implicitly—that they did and that they found in those choices of my parents sufficient cause for all my symptoms. My last three lovers might concur. I myself am not so sure.

Consequently, I've found it is generally wiser not to share the particulars of my upbringing anymore. This isn't denial. It just doesn't help me clarify my own responses. Certainly, I know I was shaped, permanently, by the events of my late childhood and prepubescence. I believe I would have been whatever choices my parents made. I'm not sure I see that formation as negatively as did Drs. Robinson, Freed, Smith, Dalton, and Ellis.

But it came up this afternoon in the conference about Sophia Greene. I found myself taking her side—to the surprise of everyone at the table. Sophia is fifteen. Her sister Chloe is seventeen and in severe heart failure. She is on a transplant list, but is very low on it because of uncontrollable pulmonary hypertension. Chloe is eligible for hospice, to her mother's great distress, but that only involves a weekly nurse's visit and monthly social worker's visit. She doesn't like staying home alone, and it also worries her mother if she does. Chloe isn't eligible for home health because she is mobile and able to care for herself. She is in virtual school. Her mother wants Sophia to go to virtual school with her sister Chloe this year so they can have as much time together as possible.

The girls are close and Sophia is fine with this plan. Sophia is a smart girl, extroverted and generous, and her homeroom and English teacher Annie Hughes's pet. Annie Hughes is the one who has insisted on calling in