

on this incident?"

*Incident.* Her face flames fire, so she brushes her cheeks with icy fingertips. "No," she says. "I'm sorry."

The first cop drops into an armchair and leans forward, balancing his elbows on his knees. He's an awkward triangle. "Anything at all," he says. "Even something small. Something askew."

The cop has a desperate desire for this single clue she potentially holds, not because he cares about Donna—just someone's little girl—but because he's tired of sitting in this house where no one smokes, where the tray holds only store-bought windmill cookies.

Should Donna's mother say that the boys claw homemade dough off the hot cookie sheet five seconds out of the oven, finger-scooping globs of raw dough from the bowl? That they don't much like the windmills so crunch through a stack of three at a time only if there's absolutely nothing else to eat? What's the point of cooking nice for a pack of boys who eat in bulk, shoving in food, teeth grinding away flavor and texture? What's the point of being worried silly about teenage boys maybe being sent to Vietnam when it's the girl gone missing?

"Anything," the other cop says. "There must be something. Think."

Donna's mother says, "If there was, I'd say it." Her weak voice.

The first cop asks, "Are you afraid of something?" In contrast, his rough voice like dice rattling a cup. "Or someone?"

"I'm afraid of snakes," she says. "And probably ghosts. Though I've never seen one. That's all."

They laugh, as if being afraid of snakes and ghosts is a big fat joke. One laughs out a lively staccato, and the other's laugh rolls slow. Now's the first time they've laughed in these long two weeks.

"Ma'am," the first cop says. "We're doing everything we can to find your daughter. But we need your help."

"Wasn't my husband helpful?" she asks.