FEBRUARY 6
I don’t know what I am doing here. Well, I do really. It’s because I was getting nowhere at the hospital. I have been sent here to learn to talk again. Sent here because my mother can’t stand my silent presence at home. Sent here because of my face, I suppose. I don’t know.

This is my third day at this boarding school, Warrington. Today Mr. Lindell, our English teacher, gave us these journals and told us we have to write in them every night, during homework (except that homework here is called Prep). We have Prep for two hours every weekday. For that time we have to sit at our desks and be silent.

I am in Prep now. On my left is a girl called Cathy Preshill. On the right is a girl called Sophie Smith. Cathy seems very thin to me and I wonder if she has anorexia, but she probably doesn’t. I do though – anorexia of speech.

This journal is starting to scare me already. When Mr. Lindell gave them out, I felt the fear and promised myself that I would not write in it, that it would stay a cold and empty book, with no secrets. Now here I am on the first page saying more than I wanted to, more than I should. What if he reads them? He said he wouldn’t.

If he doesn’t keep his promise I am lost.

Music: Pearl Jam "Wishlist"

FEBRUARY 11
I think I write too much in this journal. When I started it I was determined that I wasn’t going to think about my father ever again, much less write about him. But he’s still so powerful.

I wonder what it’s like where he is? Kind of like here, maybe. Having to line up, always being ordered around, no privacy, no freedom,

Anyway I’m in Prep again. The others seem to be doing so much work. Cathy, the thin one, seems so intense and serious. Sophie is the opposite. She’s very funny and lively, can’t sit still, always getting in trouble.
FEBRUARY 12
Here is a letter I received in today's mail:

Darling,
Am in a great hurry, so this is just a short note, hoping that you are happy in the new school. J.J. is well and sends his love. We are all very excited about the trip. What would you like us to bring you back? And do you have everything you need for school?

Love,
Mummy

Am I happy in the new school? No, but perhaps it is better than the hospital in some ways. Not so many weirdos, better food, no more group therapy.

There is only one question she really wants answered and that is the question she cannot bring herself to ask: “Have you started talking yet? Or are you still my daughter, the silent freak?”

Music: Pearl Jam “Wishlist”

FEBRUARY 15
Today Mrs. Graham, the house-mistress, spoke to me. She said: “Now we’ve given you a good long time to settle in and I expect you to start contributing more. I don’t want you to opt out. I know you’ve had a difficult time in the past twelve months and I’m arranging for you to see Mrs. Ransome, the school counselor. But we’ve got a good friendly group of girls in third form and I’m sure, if you make the effort, you’ll find them very easy to get on with.”

That’s what she said ... more or less.

I don’t think I’ve had a good long time to settle in at all. I mean, I’ve only just started here. Am I supposed to be grateful that they’ve taken me in, the nut-case, the psycho with the deformed face?

FEBRUARY 17
Sophie got angry at me today. She yelled at me quite a lot and shook me by the shoulders. It was because I hadn’t done my job properly in the dorm (we all have jobs: mine is to sweep the stairs) and because of that we failed inspection and because of that she couldn’t go out on leave till after lunch. So she was angry.

I left the dorm and I heard Cathy say to her: “You know we’re not supposed to yell at her.” Sophie said something about veggies, vegetables.

FEBRUARY 18
When I read this journal I think I sound quite confident. But it’s not like that at all. I slink along walls, huddle in corners, shrink from contact – the freak of Warrington. So the words lie, as they always do.

Music: Pearl Jam “Indifference”
FEBRUARY 19
I make people uncomfortable. The kind ones get angry because their kindness doesn’t work. The unkind ones get angry because they think I am attacking them.

FEBRUARY 20
I had my first meeting with the counselor today. She said not to worry about talking or not talking; I could just sit there and use the time any way I wanted. She said that the sessions with her could be just a break from the pressures of school, if that’s what I needed most. I don’t know what I need. I kept wondering how much Dr. Harvey, from the hospital, had told her about me.

FEBRUARY 21
I remember in fifth grade I had a teacher called Mrs. Buchanan. She was a friend of my mother’s. One day we had to do what she called “Creative Writing” and I wrote a whole lot of stuff about a fight between my father and mother the night before. I was pretty upset about it, I guess, because I remember crying a bit as I wrote it.

Anyway, I must have said something too awful in it (I think I called my mother a selfish bitch) because Mrs. Buchanan was so angry at me and when my mother picked me up that afternoon she gave her my book to read. It was pretty bad. My mother just froze. It was about a week before she’d even speak to me again.

I don’t think she ever told my father, though. I should be grateful for that, I guess. He always hated me to see them arguing. Sometimes after they’d had a fight he’d come and tuck me in, and make sure I had my bear. He’d just be fussing around, checking that I was O.K.

FEBRUARY 22
I had a letter today:

Darling,
I rang Mrs. Graham last night. She said you had settled in well but you weren’t making much of an effort to involve yourself in the life of the house. Darling, I do think that’s such a pity. Warrington has given you such a good chance and there are so many opportunities for you at a school like that. I do wish you’d try a few things.

We leave on Monday for New York, so we must make this quick and then get on with the packing. We’ll be back late March, but you know how to contact Grandma if you need anything. We’ll send you lots of postcards and bring you back lots of lovely presents.

All my love,
Mummy

FEBRUARY 24
I like writing in this journal on Sundays because there’s no rush, no pressure. Mrs. Graham told me that my Grandma had rung and sent her love and might be taking me out next weekend.

After lunch I watched all the cars arriving, all the parents taking their daughters out for the afternoon. All the families. I watched from behind a tree, in the garden. I wondered
what they talked about all afternoon. Was it difficult to think of things to talk about? I wanted to call out warnings to them.

DON'T TRUST THEM! LOOK OUT! THEY HATE YOU! THEY HATE EVERYONE! THEY HATE EACH OTHER!

But then something terrible happened, something that to me seemed terrible. I heard a noise above me, a rustling of leaves and branches. I looked up and saw Lisa Morris sitting high above me, hidden in the tree. She had been watching me all that time - and all that time I had been relaxed, at ease, not worrying about controlling my face. And she must have seen all my expressions during the whole time. I am trembling even now, as I write this. To have shown so much!

Music: Radiohead “Paranoid Android”