



SUZANNE HERMAN

TEN DAYS

There are two kinds of snowfalls. It used to snow here every winter. Whether a dusting or a storm there would always be flakes, gathering on doorposts and window ledges behind which people sat, warm and dry. But once the last storm broke, the largest the town had ever seen, it never fell again. It was like we had used up our allotment, like we'd been greedy and were being punished, like we'd spent it all on one last hurray. It hasn't snowed here in over twenty years. But I was here when it did, and I still know about the snow. I know, for instance, that there are two kinds of snowfalls. There is the one that leaves the air gray and foggy, the other that leaves it sharp and refreshing to breathe. People in the first kind of snowstorm grow irritated, they stomp the water from their boots and shout over the noise and inconvenience of the snowplows. Families who try and venture out in that weather are soon driven away by ice and sludge and the layer of dirt that lies hidden beneath even the cleanest snow. The second type of snowstorm does not complicate the world. It is not an obstacle to overcome. Instead, things are laid bare. The slate is wiped clean of grime and replaced by pure, flat light, encompassing everything. It silences the noise and casts a hush over people and homes.



In first grade Lucy and I had cubbies next to each other at school. The colored paper that hung above my cutout in the back wall of the classroom was blue, hers red. Together, I told her proudly, we made purple.

For the first few years of our friendship I recognized no difference between Lucy and me. When we played make-believe under the slide at recess we imagined the same fantasies; when we spent sleepless nights giggling in each other's bedrooms we had the same questions and the same fears. To me our hair was not respectively blond and brown but jointly a dark gold.