The Nest

ROBERT ZACKS

"My mother was... actually wrong."

Before Reading

As a class, discuss the statement: “Parents know best”.

Jimmy was fourteen. He was listening to his mother tell him, in her kindly, measured speech, why she didn’t want him to go on the hike, and his clear grey eyes were clouded with sullen rebellion.

“All right, Mom,” he said in the controlled voice he had learned from his parents. “If you say I can’t go, then I can’t, can I?”

Mrs. Swanson said gravely, “You make me sound like a dictator, Jimmy.”

“Well, you are, kind of, aren’t you?” said Jimmy coldly. “I have to do what you say.”

His mother winced a little. She bit her lower lip and considered this.

“It isn’t as simple as that,” she said, pushing her mind with some difficulty toward coping with the point Jimmy had made. She smiled a little, however, in pleasure at such evidence of Jimmy’s growing power to analyse a situation. “My decisions are made for your own good, Jimmy.”

He misunderstood her smile. He thought she was relegating him to his position as a child. All his parents seemed to do these days was figure out how to him him in. “Jimmy, you mustn’t—”

The words, the restrictions, they wrapped around him like tentacles of an octopus, crushing in on his chest so he couldn’t seem to breathe.

He was on his feet, yelling, the controlled, polite speech lost in his bursting anguish for freedom. “Everything is for my own good. Everything! But you aren’t telling me the truth. You know why you don’t want me to go on the hike? Because of Paul. You just don’t like him.”