Silent Role Models

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Sure, go ahead,
the professor said.
Sounds good.
You have a right to research this.
Don't be afraid
that they'll know . . . .
They have a bias,
not knowing about this.
It is okay, the professor said.
You are okay as a person
and a professional.
If this happened to you . . .
Whispers . . . .
Yes.
It happened to me, too.
We need academics
who can speak
and study this
with an informed viewpoint
instead of studying us
like some inhuman
dismembered insect.
They don't understand;
the experts don't see the big picture
'cause we are not involved.

I know what you mean, I said.
I watch the television, too.
It is not us portrayed.
Speak up is what we have to do.
Professor, you have been a great help,
an inspiration,
a role model for me.

Oh, come back into my office, she said
urgently.
I came back in expecting something
important.
She shut the door.
Remember, the professor said.
Serious she was,
acting as if
she was afraid
she had made a mistake
that could cost her reputation.
This is just between you and me,
the professor said.
Do we understand this?
She wanted my promise.

Oh, sure, Professor.
I understand.
I understand.
She needs
silence forever.
The master status.
Incest--
it can never be overcome
with any amount of education.
The stigma
is too great,
so it's best to keep it all a secret.
Nameless victims,
the minority unrecognized,
silently hiding in fear,
and I have no role models.