

VICKY DECKER'S SOCIAL ANXIETY PORTRAYED IN *HOW*

***TO DISAPPEAR* BY SHARON HUSS ROAT**

THESIS



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UIN SUNAN AMPEL SURABAYA

2020

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From the explanation above, the researcher is inspired to analyze social anxiety in teenage life from a novel entitled *How To Disappear* by Sharon Huss Roat. This novel is about the story of a teenage girl with social anxiety. As the main character, Vicky Decker, is a high school student who cannot adapt to the social situation. She always disappears in the bathroom when she cannot stand going to class and facing others. She also always spends her time in the bedroom instead of going outside and joining any social activity.

After looking at her friends' Instagram accounts, she is inspired to create an account using "Vicurious" as her user name and her Photoshoped photo as her profile. Sooner or later, she becomes famous and starts to talk with others online. Being "Vicurious" makes Vicky freer and more comfortable to deal with people. Besides the technology use, some of Vicky's peers have a significant role in overcoming social anxiety.

Looking at the behavior of the main character related to Pierce's journal (2009), the researcher assumes that Vicky's problem is appropriate to analyze social anxiety and technology. It is because technology has a significant role for those who have social anxiety. It makes them more comfortable communicating without facing social situations they fear (Erwin et al., 2004).

shaking, blushing, looking anxious, or stupid. But the hardest thing for people who suffer from social anxiety is fear, which is sometimes excessive and illogical. The negative and illogical thoughts of social situations prevent them from interacting with others and participating in social activities. As a result, these people appear to be uninterested in social relations (Stemberger, Turner, Beidel, & Calhoun, 1995).

Common characteristics of people who have a social anxiety disorder are shyness, poor achievement, low self-esteem, and little social support (Antony & Swinson, 2008). However, in social anxiety disorder, the shyness is much more paralyzing and can bother with most areas of life (Jefferson, 2001). Those areas include the economic and educational worlds. The problems of unemployment and retirement commonly happen to people with social anxiety (Wittchen & Beloch 1996). While the educational accomplishment of children and teenagers with social anxiety can be bothered by leaving school earlier and getting worse qualifications (Van Ameringen, Mancini, & Farvolden, 2003).

2.1.1 Social Anxiety in Teenagers

Children and teenagers may manifest their anxiety a little differently from adults. Social anxiety in teenagers can be a permanent disorder if it has never been treated properly (Davis, 2012). Critical social disorders mostly occur between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five, in both males and females (Piet,

correlation analysis result of *product-moment* correlation test obtained $r_{xy} = -0,533$ and $p = 0,000$. Her research shows that there is a negative relationship between self-esteem and social anxiety. She argued that the higher the level of self-esteem, the lower the level of social anxiety. Otherwise, the lower the self-esteem level, the higher the social anxiety level.

Azka, Firdaus, & Kurniadewi (2018) analyzed college students' social anxiety and its effects on social media addiction. The correspondents of their research were 342 students of State Islamic University of Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. They found that social anxiety influences social media addiction to college students, with an influence of 7,2%. They concluded that most of the participants experience social anxiety and social media addiction.

From the three studies conducted above, many researchers were discussing social anxiety. But mostly, they did not analyze social anxiety in literary work. So that the researcher intends to explore social anxiety in the fictional character of a novel. The researcher chooses the main character in *How To Disappear* novel, Vicky Decker. This research analyzes the main character's social anxiety that is depicted in the novel. It also examines how the character deals with her social anxiety.

imagines her friends' faces intimidate and grin at her. Even before she starts thinking about what she should be doing that day and seeing her classmates' faces, Vicky is already experiencing anxiety and excessive panic until she feels that she has stopped breathing. Then she returns to reality when her classmate whispers her name and says that she can start the presentation. After getting some favors from her classmate, Vicky can finally present her project. Only people with social anxiety experience this fear when they face social situations around them, just like Holt et al. (1992) had stated that people with social anxiety are generally scared of some social situations, including having a presentation in front of the class. The scare sometimes makes the sufferers have difficulty breathing and abnormally heart beating.

Besides being afraid of situations that require sufferers to interact in public, interacting interpersonally with strangers is also avoided by people with social anxiety (Holt et al., 1992). In this novel, Vicky, several times, faced situations that cause her to interact with strangers. Unfortunately, she shows reactions such as panic and worries, which are excessive and unreasonable. "I'm nervous taking my haul up to the counter because I'm always nervous at checkout counters. Sometimes the clerks are chatty ..." (p. 44). Vicky always feels nervous when dealing with clerks because she thinks that they still talk a lot. Vicky avoids conversations, especially with strangers. Compared to people who do not have

and chose to hide behind Lipton because she felt the shoe guy's gaze judging her; even the truth is, he only asked about her shoe size. Apart from that, Vicky also thinks everyone was paying attention to her silliness, making her even more panicked. After facing the shoe guy, finally, Vicky and Lipton got their shoes and played Bowling.

3.1.2 Somatic Symptoms

For people who experience social anxiety-like Vicky, somatic symptoms such as excessive sweating, trembling, and palpitations in social situations are frequent (du Toit and Stein, 2007). In this novel, Vicky frequently shows these symptoms when dealing with the social conditions around her. “Standing by my locker, I can already feel the sweat circles forming on my T-shirt” (p. 1).

At the beginning of the story, the researcher found that Vicky experiences the somatic symptom of sweating just because she is at school without Jenna, her best friend, which means that she has to face every situation there by herself. Being at school without her best friend is what makes Vicky feel worried and sweaty quickly. The night before, she talked to her best friend over the phone, who told her to talk to her other school friends. To fulfill her best friend's request, Vicky tries to talk to Hallie Bryce, one of the famous students at Richardson High School. “ I clear my throat to make sure it's still working, and that's when I spot Hallie's gloriously perfect dancer bun gliding down the hall

Vicky had just done, speaking in complete sentences, Vicky immediately feels her heart beats as if it hits her chest so hard and something punches in her face harder.

Besides Hallie Bryce, Marvo, and Beth Ann, Vicky also panics and shows sweating somatic symptoms when talking to other Richardson High School students. For example, when she tries to talk to Lipton Gregory, “I, uh . . . wasn’t . . .” I shake my head. Why am I talking? I’m causing unnecessary sweating here” (p. 22). In that situation, Lipton was the first who spoke to Vicky. However, she still felt nervous, and she stuttered and sweat suddenly.

This somatic symptom is also usually accompanied by excessive palpitations. “Raise your hand if you want the topic, and you can form a group with the others who want that topic, too.” My heart rate has doubled at this point, and I can feel the sweat circles forming” (p. 23). When Mr. Braxley announces that there will be a group project in World History class, Vicky realizes that it will make her interact with people in a group more often. However, before she gets the topic and the group that will work with her, she already had somatic social anxiety symptoms, sweating, and heart beats faster than usual.

Another somatic symptom of sweating that Vicky experienced was when she tried to talk to one of the girls’ school. Even though she did not know about this girl, she had to do it because she wanted to defend Lipton, who was always

teased by the girl. It took Vicky so much effort to fight her fear of talking to other people. She felt her sweat pouring down and felt as if her stomach had been twisting. "His name is Lipton," I say, trembling under her glare. I can feel my sweat starting and my stomach twisting in knots. My voice is shaking, but I keep going" (p. 198).

Not only when dealing with people, someone with social anxiety like Vicky can also sweat and tremble when she thinks of something terrible, which does not necessarily happen to her. "I start sweating, the room spinning. I don't have a paper bag, so I cup my hands and breathe into them, sitting at my desk chair to drop my head between my knees" (p. 170). Vicky feels a great panic and fear, which makes her start sweating, and it gives an effect as if all the properties in her room are spinning. It makes her feel nauseous because she thinks she will be surrounded by people who will embarrass her later when she goes to a concert with Lipton.

Apart from sweating, blushing is also a somatic symptom that often happens to people with social anxiety. People who do not experience this phobia will be blushing when they are really in a condition that makes them embarrassed. It is different from social anxiety sufferers. They will experience this somatic symptom more often when they are in any social situation. "I blush, absolutely mortified that someone was listening to my babbling enough to quote it back to

me. And remembered to do so a whole day later” (p. 12). Vicky feels embarrassed because Lipton said something to her about her chattering. She thought this was enough to make her very ashamed because she did not expect somebody to hear her chattering.

Vicky also felt like her face was burning when somebody looked at her closely. “...when the door to the yearbook office opens and Marissa’s head pops out, inches from mine. “There you are. Are you coming in?” The temperature of my face rises about a thousand degrees. I didn’t even think to knock” (p. 34). When Marissa, the school yearbook staff leader, suddenly opened the door and appeared in front of Vicky, who was so close to her, Vicky felt that her face was burning because she did not expect that Marissa would suddenly appear before her. Vicky did not know if Marissa had been waiting for her in the room. She did not even want to knock on the door until Marissa met her in the school hallway.

The same thing happens when another yearbook staff is talking about Vicky but not in the wrong context. "They *all* turn and look at me. "You're a Photoshop genius?" asks Marissa. "Uhh . . ." I shake my head, face burning" (p.76-77). The situation happens when all the school yearbook staff discuss the new edition of the school yearbook's content. Suddenly, they looked at Vicky. Marissa thought that Vicky was an expert in Photoshop. Although this is true, Vicky refused to admit it. Instead, she felt like her face was burning because everyone was

whether she was walking in the school hallway or when she got to her seat. This kind of behavior is common among people with social anxiety (du Toit & Stein, 2007).

Apart from avoiding direct communication or interaction by putting her head down, Vicky always chooses not to be in a place where people are usually there. “By 3:57, I’m on the bus and slinking into my usual seat (the one over the hump of the tire where nobody else ever wants to sit)” (p. 7). It shows that Vicky prefers to sit alone on the school bus and prefers a place where other students never chose that place to be occupied. She does this so that no other student would sit with her and talk to her.

Even if Vicky is forced to speak in certain situations, she will act silly or awkward.

“I, uh . . . yes. Here’s your drumstick. I caught it. Self-defense, of course, totally. You could put an eye out with that thing. But here you go. All yours now. Happy to be of service.” Oh my God. *Happy to be of service?* Did I actually say that out loud? The word-spew is an occasional side effect of never speaking to anyone. It’s like my brain stores up every ridiculous thought I’ve ever had, and then projectile vomits it all over the place (p. 5).

When she was walking in the school hallway, she accidentally nudged Adrian, who is very popular in Richardson High School. He is the drummer for a local band called East 48. At that time, Adrian was carrying a drum stick. When Vicky

When Vicky told Jenna about the things that embarrassed her in class, Jenna laughed at Vicky's story. However, for Vicky, it was the worst thing. She thought that Jenna laughed at her. Well, Jenna did not mean to laugh at Vicky, but she was laughing in the story. Jenna did not think that Vicky was stupid or wrong. Vicky told Jenna that she embarrassed herself, and all her friends laughed at her. Vicky could only tell her best friend and hoped for support from Jenna. However, knowing Jenna's reaction, Vicky thought her best friend was just like her other friends who laughed at her because she was stupid even though Jenna had said that it was a joke, and she and the others laughed with, not at her.

Vicky was also worried that Marvo would think she was weird and no longer want to meet or greet her.

I'm really trying to listen to him, but my brain can focus on only one thing at a time, and right now, I am conscious of how much I am sweating and worry he'll start to feel a little damp (p. 129).

When Marvo and Vicky were walking down the hallway and talking about something, Vicky should pay attention to what Marvo was saying. However, in that situation, Vicky instead focused on other things and worried about something she should not be. Vicky was anxious that Marvo would notice her sweating excessively and would make him feel uncomfortable about it. Because Marvo was hugging her shoulder, which made Vicky more panicked, she was

When Vicky decided to hide from Marissa's party, she did not know that she was hiding in Lipton's backyard. When she was about to run, Lipton first greeted her. After an extended interaction, which made Vicky panic and sweats a little, Lipton surprisingly invited her to play Minecraft. Playing video games was not scary for Vicky, but she was thinking and worrying about other things that did not matter to Lipton and might not be wrong, such as maybe Lipton's parents and siblings were lovely people. However, Vicky's mind was quick to think about the things that made her anxious.

I would sincerely like to concentrate on what he's saying, but I'm too busy trying to calm my heart rate and figure out what just happened. Lipton asked me out. *Breathe*. He asked me to come to his house. *Breathe*. To pet his cat. *Breathe*. I panicked and said I was busy (p. 112).

The quotation above shows that Vicky was experiencing excessive anxiety just because Lipton asked her to go over to his house. She could not even concentrate on what Lipton was saying and what she had to say. Vicky just focused on her panic and talked to herself to calm down and keep breathing. She did not even immediately respond to Lipton's request. Until in the end, after struggling with anxiety and panic, Vicky said words she did not want to say, or in other words, she tried to accept Lipton's invitation. However, she was too panicked and finally said, "I was busy," which means rejecting Lipton's invitation.

against this and thought her mother's way would only make her feel worse than before.

There is only one thing worse than never being invited to anything, and that's the pity invite. No, wait . . . even worse than the pity invite is the my-mother-made-me-do-it pity invite. "You're killing me. You are literally trying to kill me" (p. 40).

When her mother suggested a party for teenagers, Vicky did not believe that her mother was trying to put her in a situation she hates, and she thinks that she never be able to lean on. Parties and meeting people in one event will only make her feel sick. Even though her mother only wanted her to hang out like a teenager, Vicky thought it would only mess her. Her mother just wanted Vicky to present herself in the way other teenagers would. However, for Vicky, this was not what her mother should do to her. Parties and anything else that gets crowd is not Vicky's thing. Of course, this only happens to people who have social anxiety. Where interacting and being surrounded by many people will only make them panic and think negative always.

Apart from forcing Vicky to hang out with other teenagers, her mother also forced her to dress the way she wanted. She did this because she saw Vicky has a monotonous style. However, it made Vicky feel that her mother's efforts were only making her more uncomfortable. "But it also wouldn't hurt her to stop treating me like I'm some kind of Barbie doll she can dress up" (p. 46). Vicky

(Hidayati, 2012). Vicky still thinks negatively about whatever is around her, including herself. She still feels that other people are much better than her. It, of course, affects self-esteem and feels insecure in all situations. "I won't win any popularity contests dressed like a giant blob of Dijon mustard" (p. 1). At the beginning of the story, Vicky has shown a symptom of social anxiety, she is feeling like a giant blob of Dijon, and she feels stupid because she is wearing an oversized sweater that she can use to hide. Vicky prefers to wear this kind of fashion even though she realizes that she will not win any dress contests by dressing like this.

"I mouth the word "thanks," and he smiles wider. My face gets hot. Because I'm ridiculous" (p. 74). Vicky always thinks she is a freak and ridiculous because she is still acting like a *weirdo* when interacting with her friends. It is like when responding to Lipton for giving her an article paper related to her project. When Lipton gave it thumbs-up, Vicky immediately looked around and made sure that no one paid attention to them. She whispered the word "thanks," which made Lipton grin, and Vicky reflexively looked down in embarrassment. She thought that she was so ridiculous just because she had dared talk to Lipton.

"The fact that I know this pretty much confirms that I am, in fact, a pathetic weirdo stalker" (p. 34). Vicky named herself as known in the quotation

because she prefers to stalk her friends at school through social media. Even though she also watched every Richardson High School student quietly. This activity makes her feel so pathetic, and she thinks that she is a *weirdo*. Vicky even knows the color of Raj's favorite t-shirt. She always pays close attention to his expression when walking in the hallway and found the usual expression Raj posts on his Instagram. She also stalks the Instagram accounts of others.

“She gives me a side-eye. “Yes, and I think you'd look great with one of those hairstyles.” Because I look terrible the way I am” (p. 84). This quotation is a conversation between Vicky and her mother while heading to a hair salon. Although she refused at first, she finally complied with her mother's request because she thought cutting hair was nothing too terrible than appearing like her mother's style. When Vicky was watching a pile of torn magazines containing all kinds of hairstyles, her mother thought that Vicky would look more attractive if she changed her hairstyle just like one of them. Vicky automatically assumed that she did look bad the way she is now. However, her mother did not mean it, she just wanted her daughter to try something new, and maybe if Vicky cut her hair a little, she would be more confident and would not have to look down when walking. Nevertheless, Vicky still feels that she is terrible.

Sometimes, Vicky realizes that she is indeed a freak and awkward person. That is why she never made friends and interacted with people. However, this is

not entirely caused by people who have social anxiety like Vicky. They just need someone who is always supportive and tells them that they are just like people they think is much better than them. "I sound like a freak.. I wasn't always this bad, or maybe I was and didn't realize it until Jenna left" (p. 6). Jenna is one of the support systems for Vicky. She was also a shield, which would always protect Vicky from fear and anxiety when in social situations.

However, Vicky felt even worse when Jenna left and was no longer by her side when walking to the class or facing her friends. Vicky just realized that she was a freak when there was no longer someone who always supported her. Since then, Vicky has become a much more introverted person and does not want to make friends and interact with other students. "...because my brain has thankfully gone into complete lockdown and we have swept away in the throng of students. *This is why you can't have nice things, Vicky.* Like friends. Or conversations" (p. 5). Vicky thought that she did not deserve to make friends other than Jenna. She is always acting, which makes other people judge her as a freak person. The quotation above shows that Vicky realized that sometimes she felt lost and did unexpected things. That is why she cannot have good things in her life.

Apart from thinking negatively about herself, Vicky often compares her friends who are much better than her in her mind. It is one of the reasons that

people with social anxiety often feel inferior. Hidayati (2012) stated that people who experience social anxiety always thinking that they are worse than others. “My mother’s face is pained as if failing to be an adoring fan of Marissa DiMarco is making it all the more unbearable that I will never *be* Marissa DiMarco” (p. 18).

Marissa DiMarco is one of the most popular students at Richardson High School. Some of her photos are always attached to the School Yearbook. Vicky is also one of her secret admirers. She often stalks Marissa’s Instagram because she thinks that Marissa deserves to be known. Vicky, who is always busy with her thoughts and not interested in a social situation around her, prefers to stalk her friends via Instagram.

When she found Marissa’s photos with her friends, Vicky felt amazed and thought she could never be like Marissa. Having lots of friends and being fashionable is not Vicky’s thing. “I have absolutely no reason to dislike them, but I do. They’re so perfect. So everything that I am not” (p. 18). This quotation also shows that Vicky compares herself with other people she thinks are better than her.

When Vicky's best friend moved away and went to a different school, she soon found new friends. However, Vicky still keeps in touch with her best friend. One day Jenna told her that she felt some kids watched her when she was on the

say and made Adrian surprised by Vicky's behavior. Without thinking anymore, Vicky ran away because she felt panicked and dizzy due to the incident.

Instead of running to the class, Vicky went to the bathroom. Unfortunately, she spent too much time in the toilet and made her very late and would embarrass herself even more if she went to the class. Therefore she preferred to stay in the toilet longer and spent her World History period there until the next period, "I spent the second period in here, and then decided I might as well stay through until lunch" (p. 13).

Besides the World History class, Vicky also skipped other classes. After the embarrassment in the previous class, Vicky chose to hide in the toilet. She sat on the book she had stacked in the bathroom and spent time there until the lunch period. It means Vicky purposely avoided class in the second period. After three hours of silence in the toilet, and she heard the bell indicating the fifth period English class, she decided to leave.

Mrs. Greene, a guide and counselor at Vicky's school, also confirmed Vicky's disappearance, "You've been missing some classes lately," says Mrs. Greene....."And the missed classes?" She opens a folder in front of her. "Two last week, one Monday, and three yesterday"(p. 25). After confirming that Vicky had left classes several times, she was asked to see Mrs. Greene in the guidance room. Mrs. Greene confirmed that Vicky often skipped classes by showing her a

joining a club and meeting people is one thing on her Terror List. “The yearbook staff is always looking for help,” she says. “Editing photos, doing page layouts . . . Does that sound of interest?” “I don’t know.” The thought of joining an already-formed group is making me want to vomit” (p. 27).

After Mrs. Greene tried to get Vicky to join her school activities, she finally found a club that might make Vicky interested. Previously she asked Vicky about things or activities she likes or does when she is free. Of course, Vicky will not say that she enjoys manipulating herself with Photoshop or she spends her time stalking her friends' social media accounts every night. In the end, she said that she spent a lot of her time in front of her computer. Mrs. Greene offered several activities, such as gaming and computer programming club. However, Vicky quickly rejected those offers and explained to Mrs. Greene that she studied Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator for a long time.

After thinking and looking for extracurricular activities that match Vicky’s interest, they finally found a Yearbook staff who always needs help in photo editing and layout. Even though Mrs. Greene felt that this activity suited Vicky, she hesitantly accepted the offer, and she imagined how to join a club that requires interaction with many people. This situation made her feels nauseous and anxious.

Working in groups is something that Vicky has always avoided because she

does not know what to do if someone or everyone in her group stares at her and invites her to interact. That is why in various projects in her class, she prefers to do it herself. "I cling to the words "up to" in hopes that I can do the project alone, in my group of one" (p. 23). At the second meeting of World History class, Mr. Braxley announced that there would be a project in which students present on a topic of their choosing. This project is for groups of up to four students, and they can determine their members. When everyone in the class starts to get excited about choosing group members, and Mr. Braxley began reading out the topics to discuss, Vicky remained silent. She focused on the lunch box she was holding under the table. She was not interested in working in a group and did plan to work on this project individually.

Furthermore, showing herself to the public had a bad impact on Vicky, especially emotionally. Therefore, she prefers to spend time after school in her room and do something that makes her not think about the world. However, for her mother, these things should not be done. Her mother wants Vicky to interact with her peers or attend a party, typically for teenagers.

My mother has been telling people I'm "just shy" my entire life, and maybe that excused a lot of my awkward behavior growing up. But I don't think it explains whatever's wrong with me now. This isn't the same as hiding behind her skirt when I was little or timid around strangers. This is me feeling like I'm going to die if I have to walk into that house. And I don't understand why she doesn't see that (p. 94).

Although Vicky refused to go to a party at Marissa's house, her mother insisted on taking Vicky there. Her mother said she would take her to a pizza restaurant. After realizing that they headed to Marissa's house, Vicky begged her mother not to do this. Her mother insisted that Vicky was just shy, and she could overcome this. However, for Vicky, it was not just shyness. She felt like she would die if she had to walk into Marissa's house and meet many people. While in the car, Vicky feels very intimidated by her mother, who forces her to go. She also felt very sick when she imagined what would happen if she met her friends inside.

Besides, people with social anxiety usually avoid social situations and events when other peers attend (Rubin et al., 2006). Vicky always eschews and prefers places where no one will stare at her or ask her to interact. Being alone and hiding from people make her calmer than having to be around her friends, who would make her intimidated. "Which is gross, I know, but the cafeteria and I are presently estranged and there's nowhere else to go" (p. 13). Like during lunchtime, if all students eat their lunch in the cafeteria, Vicky prefers to eat it in the toilet. Even though she admitted that it was gross, but she had no other choice. Vicky thought that the cafeteria is not her place. She always feels anxious to eat in a public place where all the Richardson High School students are there, so that Vicky chose the toilet as her place.

The toilet might be Vicky's escape when she feels anxious, or something is happening unexpectedly, however, since she joined the yearbook staff at her school. Vicky finds a decent place to hide from the crowd and have lunch even though the other staff sometimes ask her to interact. "I don't have to talk to anyone or go to meetings or give high fives or even sit in the same room at the same time as anyone else. I can just slip behind a computer in the corner and do what I do best—watch from the sidelines." (p. 35). During her first meeting with Marissa in the yearbook's office, she was shown some things to do and told that she could ask questions about anything related to the school yearbook via group chat. It means that she does not need to interact a lot with other members while working. Although she was hesitant to join at first, Vicky started to like this club because she can work and focus on her computer in the corner of the room and does not need to interact much.

Apart from avoiding people at school, Vicky is also not interested in any event held by her friends outside of school, such as parties, concerts, etc. She prefers to be in her room all day long rather than going to parties and meeting her peers. "I'd rather hide in my room than go to a party, which is probably the definition of pathetic. But Jenna and I had plenty of fun *not* going to parties" (p. 72). The quotation above shows that Vicky is not interested in going to parties at all. She prefers to hide in her room. Her mother forced her to go to a party which

of them is using her ability in Adobe Photoshop technology.

I turn the music back up and stare at the picture, and it almost feels real. I'm there. Only I'm not worried that people are laughing at me, or I'm dancing wrong, or I don't belong. I'm at the concert, not caring what anybody thinks (p. 31).

Vicky opens her Instagram and some Youtube channels to see people out there having a perfect life as her night routine. Then she thought she could be like the people at the East 48 concert by using her Photoshop skill. She manipulated herself as if she was around people by taking several photos in her room, selecting the best ones, and editing them in Photoshop. Vicky photoshopped herself into the crowd. She seemed to be dancing, jumping, enjoying music without worrying about anything and anyone. Even though the photo is just a manipulation, but Vicky feels that it is real. She manages to bring herself into the crowd without anxiety and fear.

Vicky became more comfortable with the manipulation; she even created an Instagram account that she named Vicurious. All the photos she posted were the result of her photoshopping. "So I go to Instagram, where there's always *someone*. Instead of signing in as Kat, I start a new account. I call it "Vicurious" (p. 48). After she knew that her best friend called her pathetic, Vicky wanted to prove that she was not like that. She can interact and go anywhere without feeling nervous, anxious, and scared. That is why she created an Instagram

interact. Even though he knew that Vicky was still quiet and put her head down in the world History class, Lipton tried to get close to her. At first, Vicky thought Lipton had no intention of her, just talking and trying to help. But no longer, their relationship grew closer, and her anxiety reduced when talking with Lipton. When Vicky interacts with other schoolmates who are not very close to her, she still gets panic attacks. Vicky did not expect Lipton to replace Jenna's position as the only person who could accept her and help her against her social anxiety.

If time could stand still, this would be a pretty good moment to press the pause button. I am in a crowd but not terrified of it, in the company of someone who knows I have issues but likes me anyway (p. 188).

For the first time, Vicky accepts someone's invitation to attend a concert, one of the things on her Terror List, and for the first time, she is in a crowd but does not feel anxious or panic. Otherwise, she felt very comfortable and did not want the time to fly. It is because there was Lipton beside her who kept her close to make sure Vicky was safe and comfortable. Although she had told Lipton about anxiety, fear, public places, crowds, and herself, Lipton was still holding her.

When panic and anxiety attack Vicky, Lipton understood her. Even when they were not in the crowd and Vicky started talking scary things about her, he stayed there and calmed her down. "Lipton scoots even closer. His face is inches away. His eyes steady. "You can be yourself with me. I don't want you to be

around. I can hardly believe it, and I'm not delusional enough to expect it to last. But I'm here at the moment; I'm part of the action. It's real, not vicarious. And I am breathing just fine (p. 162).

Like when Marissa was talking about her relationship with Adrian to her partners in School Yearbook. Marissa looked unhappy when she saw her boyfriend spending more time with his friends rather than with her. It happened after Adrian followed *Vicarious* and became obsessed with her. Now Adrian is a person who cares more about his friends who have not been noticed by him. One of those schoolmates is Raj. Even though Marissa was jealous of Raj, but she did not hate him. She was just annoyed that Adrian never had time for her anymore.

Knowing this, Vicky felt guilty and tried to calm Marissa as well as Beth Ann. Seeing their friends crying, Beth Ann and Vicky did something silly, and it succeeded in making Marissa laugh out loud. Vicky, who had never been this close to her schoolmates, is now doing things she never did before. It turned out that Marissa and Beth Ann did not think of her as a freak person. They keep doing silly things and laughing together. Vicky did not feel the symptoms she usually feels when she is part of an interaction. She continued to breathe normally and enjoy the moment to joke around with her partners.

If some of her friends can accept who she is, it means she has good friendship qualities. Even when Jenna moved to Wisconsin, they remained

friends until she found Lipton. "I drag my gaze to the interior of my locker, to the photo of me and Jenna taped on the back wall. I touch the picture because it helps. I don't know why" (p. 4).

After considering the things that must have happened to her for trying to comply with Jenna's request, in the end, Vicky forced herself to talk to someone else, Hallie. As usual morning, Vicky always goes to her locker before class. Coincidentally, the locker next to her belongs to Hallie. That morning she was standing right next to Vicky. She had been thinking about Jenna's words and finally tried to greet Hallie or instead whispered something to her because Vicky sounded more muttering than greeting. Hallie was surprised because it was the first time she heard Vicky say something. Watching Hallie's reaction, Vicky is panic and mocking herself. Then she looks at her photo with Jenna in her locker and remembers how their friendship was when Jenna was in Richardson High School with her. It helps her to get rid of all the anxiety.

I can almost imagine her saying it, leaning her shoulder against mine on the bus seat, huddling in close to listen. Texting is not the same; it never will be. But at least she's there. I exhale the stress knotting my shoulders and recount the story of my failed attempt to say hi to Hallie Bryce in excruciating detail (p. 8).

Although Jenna moved away and left her alone in a situation that makes her feel bad, Jenna is always there whenever she needs her. It proves that they are still in a perfect relationship. Even only by telephone, Vicky could still feel

her best friend's presence, as happened when Vicky told about the incident that made her very embarrassed at school. They keep in touch via messages all the way. Vicky thinks that messages are not enough to express all her feelings. But she is grateful because her best friend is willing to listen to all her stories and has a good friendship with Jenna even though Jenna has a new life in Wisconsin.

Apart from having several friends who understand her situation and having a good quality of friendship, Vicky also gets a lot of support from her friends in real life and all her followers on Instagram. Hutcherson and Epkins (2009) found that close friends' support was significantly correlated with decreased social anxiety. The first is Jenna, who has been her best friend, and she called her a shield for about 12 years.

Jenna has been the only person I ever really talk to. When it comes to communicating with anyone else, she has always spoken for both of us. Even if someone directs their question to me. I hesitate, and she jumps in to answer. It's just the way we are (p. 2).

Vicky only talks to Jenna; the rest is she just keeps quiet or even disappears if she is in a public place and meets people. It is because she is unable to deal with her anxiety when people ask her to interact. Luckily, before Jenna moved, she was the one who became Vicky's shield. When Vicky is faced with a social situation, Jenna will come forward to replace Vicky. Even when someone asked Vicky, Jenna would answer it. Thus, Vicky did not need to feel anxious and

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