Sex Talks to Girls
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I can see now that it was complicated, but at the time, she was simply my best friend who I held hands with and wrote love notes to (and vice versa). For the record: we were no closer to having sex in high school than those two stuffed Piglets over there on my daughter’s bookcase. Maggie (Magdalena) put her fingers in her ears and hummed aggressively whenever the word sex was mentioned by her mother or any other well-meaner. I knew something about the subject but wasn’t extremely impressed. Through most of high school we both wanted to marry Jesus. We planned on entering a cloistered convent together and doing just that. Jesus the bigamist. Ha ha. We didn’t care. It made sense to us—the way the Mormon practice of polygamy does to some people and polyamory does to the less patriarchally inclined.

Magdalena’s parents were not as fun as mine (they didn’t drink), but they were entirely parenty and sane. I stayed over there a lot
through high school, as far away from home as legally possible. My mother had kind of flipped out after my two sisters were born, and it seemed like anytime I opened my mouth she'd be chasing me up the stairs with her hairbrush, pushing open my bedroom door, and lowering the boom. She said I had developed a *smart mouth*, and it was definitely her new religion to make me dumb again.

Maggie’s bedroom was red and white, a guaranteed slutty color combination according to our art teacher, Sister “Birdie,” who told her young charges never to wear red and white together because red reminded boys of passion and white reminded them of bedsheets. Maggie and I thought she was loopy, of course, an alarmist at the least. We’d climb into the double bed at night with our Noxema’d cheeks and our fresh Colgate breath and hold hands innocently until we fell asleep. With our persistent lack of sexual savvy, we were like seven-year-old fourteen-year-olds.

Eventually we were maybe ten-year-old seventeen-year-olds, still nonchalant about bees, birds, and boys, still hell-bent on the God thing. The only possible fervor that rivaled the religious kind for us was music in any form. We were our high school mascot musicians from the time they recognized we could sight-read and, later, that we rocked when we played fourhanded piano. We were excused from classes and study halls to perform together at school events, or to practice for those events, and sometimes we’d just pretend we had to practice and skip class to climb behind the folded up bleachers in the gym to the baby grand and play away. We were like idiot savants who moved through high school on wispy pink clouds, lacing fingers during orchestra practice, bundled in the same white blanket at night.