Sex Talks to Girls

Seaton, Maureen

Published by University of Wisconsin Press

Seaton, Maureen.
Sex Talks to Girls: A Memoir.
University of Wisconsin Press, 2008.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/8743.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/8743

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=189737
After I married and divorced Dan in ’81 I moved myself and the kids to Illinois (for the first time) and stayed there one year before returning to Ossining. My life often volleyed between the Hudson Valley and the Midwest—and when I was home in New York, up and down the Hudson like a tugboat (please see map, if lost). My parents had moved to a small town outside of Chicago as soon as Harper and I married, and I made that trip between New York and Illinois dozens of times by car, plane, bus, and train, kids in tow, for short and long recuperative visits.

That Illinois year I was in love with my new friend Jesse and her cousin Jeff at the exact same time. Jeff and I had a little bit of sex for a few months; Jesse and I never got started. Jesse had a master’s degree in philosophy and turned me on to Susanne Langer. Jeff was a musician and songwriter and turned me on to things aural and oral. We
all huddled together that Midwest winter in a hot-chocolaty miasma of music and feminist theory. I wrote a song with Jeff. I cooked Greek omelets with Jesse. We survived one winter day together—eighty degrees below zero with the wind chill—when a neighbor froze to death in a snow bank between Crystal Lake and McHenry, his blood stippled with Wild Irish Rose.

Clio was in sixth grade at Cary Middle School and, in her observant way, had caught the vibe between Jesse and me and decided to talk to me about it.

Mom, she said, are you a lesbian?
How do you know what a lesbian is?
I heard about it at school. It’s a woman who doesn’t want to marry men. I think Jesse is in love with you.

Why?
She looks at you kind of like she loves you. Plus, she always repeats everything you say to other people, like she thinks God said it or something. So are you a lesbian?

There’s nothing wrong with being a lesbian.
I know, Mom. Mom!
No, I’m not a lesbian. I like Jeff, remember?
Oh, yeah. Well, would you tell me if you were?
Definitely.
Okay. Mom?
Yeah?

I wouldn’t mind too much if you were a bisexual. Just don’t be a lesbian, okay?

When Clio the Inquisitive was four I’d promised her that she could take her red two-wheeler to heaven if she died. Years later, she made me promise that if I died before her, I would not come back and visit her as a ghost, no matter how much I wanted to.

I told her that her daddy wasn’t feeling well when he left us and moved in with Honor. Then I told her that he was better but he
wasn’t coming back and that he would always love her and Sophie as much as his new blonde children.

Sometimes I lied. Sometimes I didn’t know I was lying.

_I promise I won’t be a lesbian._

The truth is tricky.

At a certain age she threw my motherly wisdom and my collective promises into an enormous pot and boiled it all down. That rich half inch, that essence of (mis)information—she kept.