

e a s y t o w n b o o k s
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preview

we need to talk about sex

book 2/1, travelling

easy town books

easy town books

preview: we need to talk about sex,
book 2/1, travelling, San Francisco

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Further publications

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what you need to know beforehand

Alice Adler convinced the US billionaire Tom Holbon to join her in developing a town experiment.

Some month later, Alice and part of her team travel around the world to build an international network for the Easy Town Project.

They fly with Tom's private double-deck airliner.

The interior of the airliner was expensive on both decks: velvet and leather seats, plus sofas, carpets, wooden panels, indirect lighting, dark furniture, light-coloured walls.

But it wasn't overdone. It sort of felt comfortable and practical rather than overly luxurious.

book 2/1, travelling, Happy Flying

Before the travelling team take off for the first time, Alice has to give a pep talk in the airliner's lounge.

we need to talk about sex

book 2/1, travelling

Alice was standing between the two semicircular sofas, and she felt the urge to take yet another step backwards.

More people were entering the lounge from both directions: the passenger area next to the bar, and the spiral staircase next to Tom's quarters.

Alice grimaced. Nearly a hundred and thirty people, board crew included. And so many unfamiliar faces.

Tom and Fran stood in the front row. Leo, Alice's assistant, was with them. Audry was at the bar. Andy, Devery and Javiera leaned against the central circular sofa, and Jazz stood near the staircase. All right, some faces were familiar.

When the last arrivals had squeezed into the lounge, everyone focused on Alice, and she met the expectant glances with a half-smile, trying to guess professions and ages, and trying to decide what to say. Pep talks had a way of sounding silly, and she had no idea how to avoid that.

For some seconds, her eyes lingered on a couple. He whispered something into her ear, she smiled, and he sealed his remark with a kiss.

'We need to talk about sex.' Oops.

Instantly, the air filled with giggles and murmurs. Eyes widened, some people blushed. Leo pursed his lips. Tom and Fran tensed.

Well done, Alice. But since it's out, I might as well get on with it. I'm supposed to talk. Why not talk about something that keeps puzzling me? And what better place to talk about sex than the cramped and indirectly lit lounge on Tom's plane?

Alice inhaled. 'Like I said, we need to talk about sex. Sex has been puzzling me for some time, and I'd like to find out whether there's some sort of key, something that could help us to better understand our actions, behaviour, motives and needs. Sex makes up so much of our lives and—'

That's how far Alice got, because Fran interrupted her. 'Alice, you're not in your first week any more. You can't jump something like that on us. And I don't want to discuss this in public.'

Most people seemed to hold their breath.

Alice swallowed. Not so much from embarrassment, but because she really wanted to argue her point. Except, getting into a public argument with Fran, or anyone really, wasn't a good idea. Not with so many new faces around, not on the first day. Besides, Tom's eyes clearly stated: 'Don't look at me. You brought this one on yourself. Sort it out.'

Alice forced her mouth into a lopsided smile: 'Sorry, everyone. That thought just popped up, jumped over the checkpoint and popped out.'

Many people chuckled, and everyone was breathing again.

Alice inhaled. 'Now, welcome on board everybody. Today we'll start with a six hours flight to San Francisco. Not enough time to meet all the new faces, but we can make a start. You've been briefed, so all I can say is: happy flying.'

Happy flying. Really? Hell, I blew this one too.

Juno Brooks, their red-haired pilot, saved Alice from more embarrassment by announcing that it was time to find a seat. In a reassuring voice, she added: 'I am proud to be your pilot. Weather conditions are excellent, and we will take off as planned at ten thirty this morning. My crew and I are thrilled to be part of this exciting project. It is our great pleasure to ensure your comfort, safety and well-being on board of this airliner. Please, do not hesitate to come to us with any request or question you might have.'

So, that's how it's done.

At once, nearly everyone started to move towards one of the exits.

Alice was undecided where to go or what to do. Tom was talking to Fran, moving towards the private quarters. Leo was surrounded by his team, moving towards the passenger area. Andy and Devery were busy with their new team members, probably explaining that the little scene between Alice and Fran shouldn't worry anyone. It really shouldn't, Alice thought when Tom's voice made her turn.

'Let's talk about sex then,' he said with the hint of a smile.

'You want to talk about sex? With me?'

Tom inclined his head. 'Alice, you messed up the pep talk, and my wife is still upset about that.' Tom paused, briefly looking over his shoulder. Alice followed his gaze and saw Fran enter the private quarters.

'She's sorry about attacking you in public,' Tom said. 'She will tell you herself. Just give her a moment to calm down.'

'Can I ask you why bringing up sex bothered her this much?'

Tom pursed his lips. 'Let's say, she's an all-American. We are a bit prude, sometimes. Also, I think she's angry that you couldn't for once—' Tom stopped.

'Keep my mouth shut?'

'Alice, you do understand, don't you?'

Alice sighed. 'Yes. You want to be comfortable with everything I do, because you really want to support this project.'

'Ah, well put. See, we know you, and we want to support you. But you can be—'

'—sorry?'

Tom gave her a half-smile and said: 'OK. So let's talk. How about we sit down in the corner over there. I had the seats put there for our open office. We have our workspace, and at the same time, we are accessible for our teams. What do you think?'

'Hence the table between the two seats, the single seat facing the two, and the extra coffee table so we can offer our guest a drink?'

'Ah, you get the idea. Yours is, of course, the window seat.'

'Thanks. I like it.'

'Excellent. And look around, for now we have the lounge to ourselves.'

'Hm. Shouldn't there be a chaperon while we're talking about sex?'

'I detect the first signs of recovery. I'm glad you're less moody. I told Fran, all Alice needs is something that intrigues her, then she'll be fine.'

Alice smiled a little.

The engines rumbled, and the airliner slowly left the hangar. Gradually bright daylight filled the lounge.

Alice and Tom were fastening their seatbelts when the flight attendant appeared. He gave them a satisfied nod and disappeared down the spiral staircase.

'So?' Tom said.

'All right. I've been thinking about sex on and off for some years. And I can't help feeling that somewhere in all of this mess, beauty and horror, is an important key. Sex makes up so much of our lives and cultures.'

'Go on.'

'I don't know where to start or what to include. Though for now, I'd say, let's include everything that has even the slightest connection to sex. From advertising to riding a horse. From passionate love making to genital mutilation—'

'Genital mutilation? Um. Sorry, carry on.'

'Um, from marriage to trafficking. From honeymoon to domestic violence. From gender to architecture. From fashion to sex education. From puberty and menopause to cooking. From going to war to making love. From dancing to

homosexuality. From the Kama Sutra to parenting and whatever else we can think of.'

'Well, that's not what I expected. What are our questions?'

'For example. Where does the irritation with the human body and especially with our genitals come from? Why do we still know so little about our bodies? Why has the body been demonised and mystified in so many cultures? What are we afraid of? Why are sex and nudity perceived as offensive? What is the offence? What is it we are guarding by hiding behind clothes. What is sex? Where is the connection between sex and violence? What's so funny about genitals and sex that it constantly comes up in jokes? Or on a different note. Why do governments still concern themselves with gender, sexual orientation, fertility or even marriage? And what makes sex so important? How can sex be such a wonderful experience for some, and the worst experience for others? Why is one touch pleasant, and another intrusive? Why is rape a violation that goes far beyond physical pain?' Alice inhaled. 'So, when I talk about sex, I'm not just thinking about making love but about everything that has even the slightest connection to sex.'

'Um. That's a lot.'

'I know. But I'm sure that somewhere in all of this, there's a key—' Alice paused and looked out of the window, distracted by the take-off.

The airliner stopped on the runway. The engines accelerated. Then the brakes were released, and the airliner shot along the runway and took off into the blue sky.

It was only after they had reached altitude that Tom said: 'If we find the mysterious key, what are we going to do with it?'

'We won't know before we know what the key is. Best case scenario: we'll have a better understanding. It might help us to treat ourselves and our fellow humans better. Because one thing seems to be clear: our sexuality has brought a lot of devastation to people, and that for centuries. If we understand sex better, maybe we can enjoy the pleasant aspects of it while

avoiding the destructive ones. And since our sexuality influences us far beyond the sexual act, a better understanding might help us to reassess, and maybe even rethink and redefine, a lot more than just sex.'

'But how would we apply the findings to our town experiment?'

'I don't know. We could make a point of not caring about anyone's gender or about their sexual preferences. Maybe most importantly, we could have an open discussion about sex, sexuality and all that comes with it. Make our sex research part of the experiment.'

'How would you start?'

'I'd set up a small team. A group of people who are comfortable enough with each other to explore everything without holding back, and who don't believe they have all the answers already. Also, I'd like to ask each project team to consider where and how sex might be influencing their specific fields.'

'OK. That sounds workable.'

Tom's phone pinged, and he checked his display. 'Oh! One of our new team members posted your pep talk online.'

'Oh, no.'

'Yes. Fran writes the internet is celebrating.'

'So it's not just on the Hub?'

'No, it's everywhere. And happy flying gets some applause too, Fran writes.'

'Great.'

(...)

Later, Alice and Fran talked. They were both a little tense at first. But after hearing more, Fran offered to organise the sex talk. Since Fran was the head of the Research Team that was fitting, and Alice agreed, provided that curiosity and openness would not be restricted.

'That sort of openness will be a challenge for me,' Fran admitted. 'But I accept the challenge.'

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The easy town book series is a work of fiction.

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easy town books

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