

Discussion Questions - Precarious

1. All the stories in *Precarious* involve different characters at different points in their lives. What, if anything, do they have in common with each other or with you?
2. Several of the stories revolve around a romantic triangle of one kind or another. How does that dynamic affect the characters? Is it the cause of conflict or a symptom of something deeper?
3. In the first story, "Sleeping with Smiley," the narrator does the right thing but regrets it. Do you think he would have been happier if he had chosen differently? What about other characters in other stories?
4. Spiritual and sexual concerns collide in several of the stories. Are such conflicts inevitable or imaginary? Would the stories be fundamentally different if the characters were not religious?
5. In "Men Are Such Boys" we meet a woman who thinks all men are merely boys in bigger bodies. Is she right? Do other stories in the collection support her point of view or refute it?
6. Another common theme in *Precarious* is friendship. What part does it play in a collection of stories about love, sex, and misunderstanding?
7. The teenage narrator in "Don't Stop Now" is clearly struggling with what his role should be. In this and other stories, how do men and women use each other? How do they define themselves? Are they very different or more or less alike?
8. Overall, do you think the stories in *Precarious* present an optimistic or pessimistic view of love and sex? Why? What do the characters learn from each other and about each other? How do their encounters with each other change them? Are they better or worse for the experience? What examples can you recall?