



Goodnight Steve McQueen

By Louise Wener
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Introduction

Danny McQueen has dreamed of being a pop star since he was 13 years old. Now he's 29 and still dreaming. But he faces a dilemma: his girlfriend Alison wants him to sort his life out. She's given him an ultimatum: find a record deal by the end of the year or find a new girlfriend. When is it time to give up on your childhood ambitions? When is it time to stop watching Columbo in your underpants and get a proper job? Is six months long enough for one last assault on the big time? Is friendship ever more important than love? Is it just your imagination or can your girlfriend always tell when you've been looking at internet porn? With the help of his boss Kostas, his two best friends and an 80 year old Kung Fu enthusiast called Sheila, Danny McQueen is about to find out.

Questions for Discussion

1. "Ambition is the worst thing to give a kid. They'll always be disappointed," mused Danny over his inability to give up his dreams - despite his ambivalent attitude about trying to fulfill them. How did Danny's mother's own "unfulfilled ambitions" and her hopes for Danny to "grow up rich and famous" prompt his twenty-something malaise? On the contrary, what positive parenting influences did Danny's mother have on him?
2. In every romantic relationship there are unspoken deal breakers. What were Alison's deal breakers? What were Danny's? In **Goodnight Steve McQueen**, how does honest communication affect relationships? Can it save romantic relationships?
3. Louise Wener writes from the first person perspective of her protagonist, Danny McQueen. Did you find her portrayal of "bokedom" to be accurate? What challenges do you think a writer faces when they are trying to write seamlessly from the perspective of the opposite sex?
4. In the United Kingdom, Louise Wener is famous for having been the lead singer of a band that topped the British charts in the 1990s. Do you think that the experience of reading fiction can be changed when readers are familiar with the writer as a public figure? Do you think that critics consider celebrities to be real writers?
5. Ike, of Scarface, is a musician who "can't sing ... can't play" and "doesn't write any of his own songs," but who has achieved rock-star status despite these shortcomings. Discuss Wener's portrayal of the music industry: of who succeeds and who is overlooked, and why. Why does packaging and image often triumph over talent? What band do you think Wener's group Sleeper might have had more similarities with: Scarface or Dakota?
6. In an interview with the newspaper the Scotsman, Louise Wener stated that: "Men are great at being friends -- much better than women." Discuss the depictions of friendship in **Goodnight Steve McQueen**. Do you think that Wener remains true to her statement to the Scotsman? In what ways do the emotional currencies of female friendships differ from the easy camaraderie depicted between Matty, Vince, and Danny?
7. Though the members of Dakota all agree to take one last shot at the big-time before giving up their dreams and becoming "minicab drivers," they more often than not find themselves hitting the pub instead of figuring out "the touring, transport, and trousers." Discuss examples of self-defeating behaviors that they have engaged in pursuing their personal ambitions. Do you think that there were similar forces at work when the band chose slacking off over practicing?
8. What role did jealousy play in the novel? What role did fear play? How do these emotions impact the relationship between Alison and Danny? How do they impact the relationship between Ike and Danny's band Dakota?
9. What did Danny ultimately learn from Sheila and her daughter Grace that allowed him to finally understand his own complex relationship with his mother? Why do you think that Sheila chose to leave Danny something in her will? What did Danny bring to Sheila's life that caused her to speak about him "all of the time"?
10. **Goodnight Steve McQueen** is narrated entirely through Danny's voice. How would the story change if it were told through Alison's point of view? If you were re-envisioning the novel for Wener, what other narrative styles would you suggest to her, and why?

About the Author

Louise Wener was born and raised in Ilford, East London. In the mid-90s, after years of singing into hair brushes and working in dead end jobs, she found fame as the lead singer of the pop band Sleeper and went on to record three top-ten albums and eight top-40 singles. She is also the author of the novel **The Perfect Play**.