



I'd never hidden it from him- well I'd lived with a woman for two and a half years of his life, that was when he told everyone in school that he had "two mommies". I have lesbian, gay and straight friends - in pairs and single, but we never actually sat down and laid it on the line.

So when I did it was a bit of a surprise - for me too. Well, what reaction would you expect? What's a Lesbian?/You're a what?/What do lesbians do? (you might expect that at my age!!!)/Can I go play with my nintendo? Actually it was none of the above - what I got was, and I have to quote exactly, because I couldn't make this up - "I often wondered what it would be like to live with a lesbian...and I've been living with one for eight and a half years!" - all said with splendid surprise, total enjoyment, and a great big wide grin that showed, as much as anything else, what a wonderful time he was having.

"So you know what lesbians are?" "Sure I do! They're women who have sex with other women." "Well there's a bit more to it than that. Let's discuss this a little further."

And that's where I found out that he could tell me what lesbians did,

in raw detail you wouldn't believe - and I couldn't even tell him not to say things like that because he was staggeringly accurate.

What had he been watching? To whom was he talking? Had he interesting magazines under his bed? The source turned out to be the little girl who lives in the flat downstairs; all of two years older and butter wouldn't melt... Where is she getting her information?

What a generation gap. I had never even heard of sexual preferences until I was fifteen (going on sixteen). Truly. That's despite my having been deeply in love with my (female) history teacher since I was thirteen, with all my attendant fantasies.

The next hurdle was how to explain in a comprehensible way about the friend one floor below/his class in school/the entire street/and everyone on the Dublin Area Rapid Transit. How to explain the fine line between shame and privacy to an eight (and a half) year old. About what is our business and how things can be open to misunderstanding, prejudice and ridicule. That once said it can not be unsaid. Seeing as how the kids in school do such a good trade in name calling over the slightest of circumstances, imagine what a field day they'd have with your mom being a lesbian. BUT, at the same time it's OK and nothing to be ashamed of - and you are clear, aren't you, that gay and pervert are not the same thing...

So, life goes on, days pass into weeks, a season changes - I enquire causally, "Does my being a lesbian have any effect on your life?" "No". "Do you ever even think about it?" "No". "No effect at all?" "No". Vague, Vague, Vague. "Mom?" Oh, a question. "Can I have a go on your word processer now?"