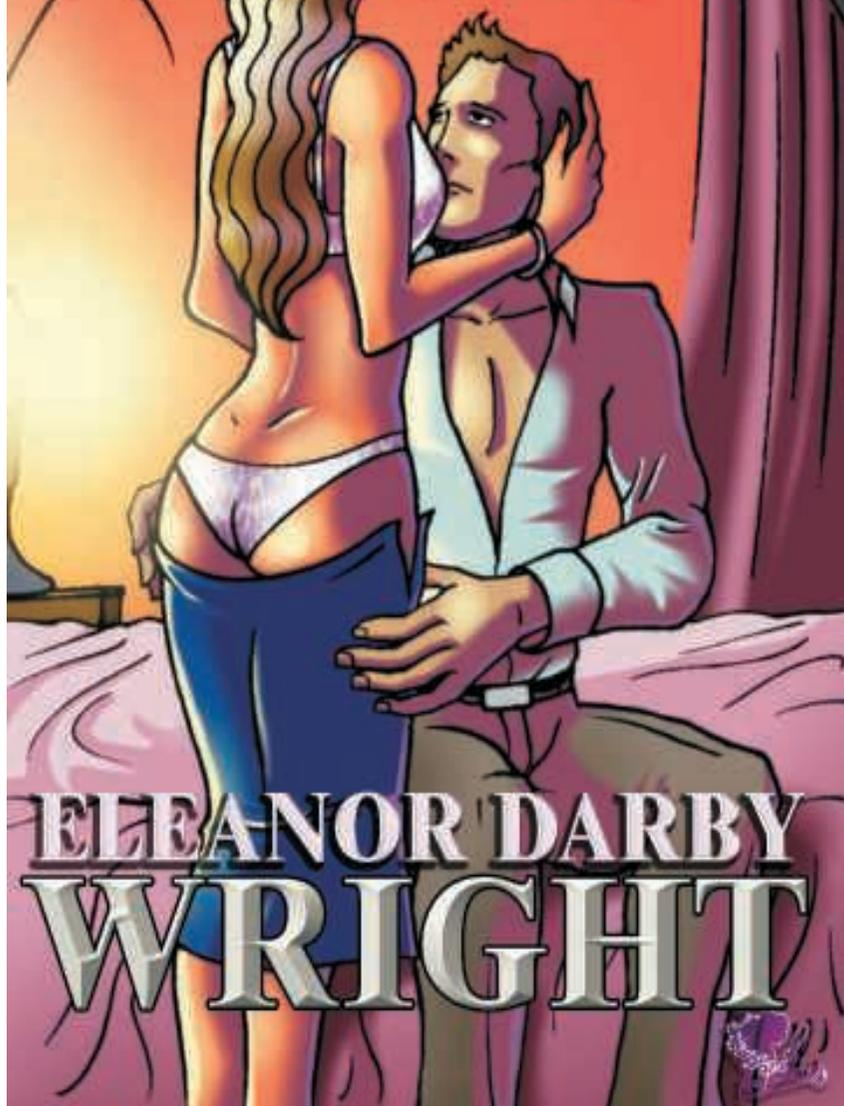


# A New Woman Wife

## Part Two



ELEANOR DARBY  
WRIGHT



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# A NEW WOMAN WIFE

## part two

by Eleanor Darby Wright

### XIII. ROOMMATES

At VC Audio, I breezily told them in Personnel that my wife earned 'the same as me'. In other words, she wasn't gainfully employed anywhere at present. They should just assess me as a single guy, as my last company had. So where does your wife work? It was the inevitable question that followed. She's at university full-time, I answered, and got out quickly before anyone asked any more. Oh, I'd hear a lot more from the bean-counters, I knew that, but it would be so much easier when I had my 'divorce' from my 'New Woman' wife come through.

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Terry's car, with the pink, vanity plates Terry used, got me lots of attention I didn't want, either. "Is Lucy your wife's name?" was the most common question I was asked, by a lot of the girls on staff at VC Audio.

It was my wife's car, I had to explain, and that brought more questions. Oh, I was married, was I? The girls on staff wouldn't be happy, ha, ha, ha, the guys said to me. Oh, by the by, why couldn't she drive something Japanese like everybody else?

I went 'home', "you've got to bring us a picture, tomorrow, Kev, and show us how cute your wife is," after a pretty gruelling day at work. This job was going to be a challenge, I could see. I wasn't the expert in this department, far from it, but the expectation was that I'd lead several young guys who, though they'd no completed university degrees, were, to say the least, very experienced hackers. Yes, the usual combination of computer nerds and sex-starved porn freaks that you'd find everywhere in our line of work, Bing, the eldest, confided in me.

I entered Terry's apartment to the smell of something delicious cooking. There was a neat tablecloth on the table set for two. An older air conditioner that I hadn't noticed before in the window was whirring faintly but the temperature was pleasantly cool.

Someone I didn't know came shyly out of the alcove back towards the back of the building.

"Terry?" I asked, feeling very weird as he came out of the kitchen, pushing a checkered apron into a drawer as he came.

I'd seen the dark head on the pillow when I went to bed, yes, my bed beside hers. She was in the black nightie. Yes, I got a charge seeing the thin, black, silky straps over her shoulders, then, and again in the morning as I left in a rush. She was still a girl to me. I hadn't thought what Terry, the boy, would look like with

parted, combed hair, no earrings, a dark green golf shirt, tan pants and sneakers.

"Uh huh," he said and bit his lower lip nervously just as he did when he was a girl. "This is the real me."

His voice was like a girl trying to speak in a low voice. At any moment, I thought he was bound to break into his girlish tones.

"I thought of putting a rose or flowers on the table, even candles perhaps," Terry said huffily, that's the only way I could describe his tone. His eyes sparkled and I thought, this is the Terry I know, as he tried to tease me. "But I knew you'd get the wrong idea about me," he finished, trying hard, I think, not to let his voice rise.

"You don't have to cook for me," I said as I put my jacket over a chair at the table.

"You mean I'm not your little wifey anymore?" he asked. He laughed gruffly and then had to hang onto his throat and take a sip of iced water from the glass on the table.

It was so strange to hear that from a youth like him. His features were delicate for a man. His eyebrows in fact were so thin and shaped that, if it hadn't been for the way he was dressed, his shirt tight to him, he could easily, I think, have been taken for a girl.

"If you don't stop teasing me," I warned him, "I might insist that my little wifey serve me in a skimpy little outfit."

"Like a French maid, in a little black dress and frilly white apron?" he asked, the sparkle still there in his eyes. "Is that what turns you on? Kinky!"

"Do you actually have something like that?" I asked Terry with a smile

"Oh, you've got a weird idea of what transvestites wear," Terry said, blushing at me. "But I actually do have a costume I could let you try on. It used to belong to Amanda!"

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I should have known better than to bandy words with Terry. I hadn't got the best of her, him, yet. The idea of her in such a costume though. Hmm, the thought alone stirred something inside me.

I think Terry saw it, too, for he retreated quickly to the kitchen and quickly brought out a casserole from the oven, placing that, the French bread and a bottle of red wine on the dining table.

"I don't do the wine bit every day," Terry said as he sat nervously, even clumsily, opposite me, "but you said it was your first day in a new job."

"Thanks," I said, tasting a Bordeaux that was delicious.

"How did it go?" he asked, as we dined. I filled him in on what I was doing, the guys and lone girl in my department, and how the job was going to be a phenomenal challenge. I didn't mention that the guys wanted me to bring in a picture of my cute wife. Well, I had described 'her' like that, for them to see.

"By the way," I said, "I am going to be bringing a laptop and another computer home." His head snapped up at my use of that word, 'home'. He gave me what I would call an impish smile. "I called about Internet service, too, and made an appointment for next Tuesday to have us hooked up. Can you be home then in the morning? If not, I can change it."

"I can be here," he said. "Will I be able to use the computers, too?"

"Of course," I said. "I expect there'll be three e-mail accounts allowed by the company so that should suit the three of us fine."

"The three of us?" he asked, breaking more off the baguette and buttering the end, offering it to me.

I shook my head. I was stuffed with the tossed salad and tasty chicken casserole. I'd eaten too quickly and was glad to sit back and sip my wine.



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"The three of us," I said with a grin. "You, me and Teresa."

Terry flushed and gave me a sharp glance, his thin eyebrows pulled together. "I suggest you keep university messages and such distinct from your other persona," I said. "You'll use your own passwords, which means that you can keep what you want, private."

He considered. "Thanks," he said, with no saucy backchat. I didn't tell Terry that nothing he ever did on a computer would be safe from me. Whatever password he used, I could find it in an hour at most and that was for the tricky ones.

He asked me about computer programs then and that got me started. It was nice to have an attentive audience, even if I kept trying to imagine Terry with longer, fairer, yes, ash-blonde, femininely styled hair, not with a careful parting and male styling.

"So, what do you do in the evenings normally?" I asked as we cleared the table. Terry had smiled and said that he never ate dessert with a meal. He had to control his weight or ... He didn't finish but I could guess that he wouldn't fit in his pretty little dresses if he ate as much as I did. But there was ice cream in the freezer.

Terry gave me a quick, little smile. "You have to ask?" he said quickly and then bit his lip again. "I'm sorry. I know I shouldn't. I-I really don't want to find double meanings in everything you say. I'll try harder to bite my tongue."

"I can do that," I said. Terry froze for a moment, giving me what I would call a frightened look.

"Okay," I said lightly. "Bad joke. I'll try harder to bite my own tongue, too."

Terry smiled warily.

"Look," I said. "It's going to come up. Nothing we can do about that. I'd rather laugh at a good retort than

have each of us trying to walk on eggshells. Just fire away, as you want or don't want. Okay, little wifey?"

I hadn't seen him smile since I'd come in. Oh yes, Terry looked just like 'her' when he showed his teeth. "All right, Mr. Kinky," he said in her voice. His hand came up to his mouth in a feminine gesture. "Oops!" he said in a lower voice, but his eyes sparkled as he laughed at himself.

"So I won't say, normally, again," I said. "But what do you do for entertainment around here in the evening?"

We went for a drive in the end, intending to go to Santa Monica, but the traffic tie-ups were too bad on the freeways, and so we ended up parking and taking a walk through Buena Vista, all new to me.

"By the by," I asked as we strolled down palm-lined streets, "don't you have pierced ears?"

"Yes," Terry agreed warily. We were walking past some gorgeous, Spanish-styled houses with long driveways and well-manicured grounds.

"But you don't have anything in now," I said. "Mightn't they close up?"

He shrugged. "You don't think, well, that studs or tiny hoops make me look too girlish?" he said, making a face at my expression. "When I'm trying to express my boyish personality," he added in an exasperated tone.

"Everyone wears studs these days," I said.

"You don't," Terry said in his deepest voice as we approached some other people walking the other way.

"That's because I am a stud," I said complacently.

Terry got a fit of the giggles at that. The older couple, walking their toy poodles, looked at us almost angrily as we passed them. "Gay boys," I heard the man say as I stopped and pointed out to the giggling Terry that one of the houses was for sale.

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"Last thing we need here is some of their kind!" the woman said loudly, intending to be hurtful.

"We should look at this one," I said equally loudly to Terry. "I think it's far enough away from the neighbors that our parties won't affect anyone."

The couple gave us one vitriolic, backward look and then scurried away as fast as the little legs of their dogs could be pulled.

Terry gave me a little smile. "Would you like to live here?" he asked. "After that?"

I shrugged. "I'd love to have the money to be able to afford to live here," I said. "How about you?"

Terry nodded slowly. "Living in California, I've often thought how nice it would be to live in a house like that, with a swimming pool, and a games room."

"A computer room," I added.

He smiled. "A guest house for visitors," he said.

"How many children?" I asked.

Terry hesitated and began to walk on quickly.

"Do you think of having children?" I asked, quickening my stride to catch up.

"Don't you?" he countered as we came to a line of dark, yew trees, shielding one place from the sidewalk.

"I think of one or two," I said lightly.

"Sons?" Terry asked with the faintest of smiles. "Just like Dad but better athletes, thanks to your coaching?"

"Ouch," I said, realizing how paternalistic that sounded. "And you would like daughters, I suppose, to spoil with pretty dresses and long hair to comb and put in ribbons."

Terry sighed as we turned the corner at the intersection, heading back to Lucy. "If I am ever a father," he said slowly, "yes, I think I'd be better with a daughter, don't you?"

Ever a father? I thought. Suppose you were a mother though, Terry. But I knew I could not ask that too personal question. "I suppose so," I agreed. We didn't talk again as we got into Lucy and went grocery shopping.

It was chilly in the air-conditioned mall. Terry put on his sweater. It was a light green and very bulky. It came down to the top of his thighs in fact, covering the zip of his tan pants. That, and his nails and hands, must have convinced the girl clerk what gender Terry was. His nails were long and shaped like a girl's even though they were unpainted. He had no hair on his hands, either, unlike mine.

"Yes, miss?" she asked him, when Terry went to ask her if they had the brand of pickled mushrooms I'd said I liked. He flushed and looked at me. I'm sure he raised his voice and spoke to her in his girlish voice. The 'other' girl smiled and pointed out a shelf where we'd overlooked them in our shopping. Then she turned and looked at me and said something to Terry that made him blush even more and nod quickly before hurrying back to me.

I noticed then that he must have run his hands through his hair. He had lost his male parting. Now it was sort of loose and long enough to fall over his ears. As a man, he needed a haircut. As a girl, he just had short hair. With his eyebrows, and his hair like that, plus his delicate features, yes, I could see how his grungy style would make someone think, "Girl", when they looked at him.

"Let's get out of here," murmured Terry, his face still red when he rejoined me. I still had beer and wine to buy. I did so and we lined up to go out. It had to happen that the very girl who had made that remark to Terry should come and take over at our line on the exit to the supermarket.

"Did you get everything else you needed, miss?" she asked Terry with a smile. "Did you see the sale on

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Bonnie Bell and Max Factor in the cosmetics department? They have the loveliest shades of nail polish and lipstick, don't you think?" She showed us hers.

"And you have such lovely nails!" she exclaimed to Terry. "I noticed them right away. It gives you away immediately even if you don't use makeup in that androgynous look. I could never do that." She sighed. "I would love to be as slender as you and have really short hair. It's so convenient, isn't it?"

She was so chatty but I could sense that Terry was getting very bothered by being addressed as if he was a girl when he was trying not to be.

"Let me get this, honey," I said, touching him on the arm. "Why don't you go out to the car and see to the dog?" I turned to the clerk and began to talk to her about other products I knew in the Mid-West and asked if they were available in California. It took me fifteen minutes to get out of the place with the cartload of bagged groceries we had bought.

"Honey!" stormed Terry as I loaded the bags into the front of the car.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you that I like that, too, on my toast," I said, straight-faced, as I closed the hood and pushed the cart away.

"It isn't funny," said Terry in the deepest tone I had yet heard him use. He really did sound like a man, a lot.

"No, it isn't," I agreed with him. "But it will happen. She didn't mention your scent, either, did she?"

"My scent?" he asked uncertainly.

"I don't want you to change," I said. "It's only when I'm very near you that I smell lilacs anyway. It's very feminine and reminds me of our wedding night."

The car wobbled as she sped up for a moment. "I am never in my life," she said bitterly, completely a feminine Terry for the first time that day, "ever, going

to get as drunk as I was that day again. Never, never, ever."

"No, honey," I said meekly. At least, she laughed with me, her laugh as natural and feminine as I remembered it.

"You are so bad," she scolded me, clunking the gears as we turned a corner. "I really have to practice my boyself, I really do. I'm going to be back in school next week. There are a lot of people who know me there!"

"Okay," I said solemnly. "No more honey or darling or dear. Just beer and sports. We can get the baseball highlights if we get home in ten minutes."

"Right on, bro," Terry said in a deep voice, spoiling it all with a very feminine giggle as she, no he, I had to start thinking of her that way, yes, as he sped up. He raced the yellow light on Kinney that got us into our almost treeless part of town, and into the parking lot behind the apartment building, in three minutes.

#### **XIV. A STUPID EFFING CONTEST**

I got home the following Wednesday by cab. Terry had dropped me off in the morning at the lab and had gone into the university that day to get books. I'd worked late deliberately and told him I'd order pizza when I came in. One look at his red-rimmed eyes and the way he was sitting, all hunched up on the sofa, made all that disappear from my mind. He was obviously badly shaken up.

He looked up at me fearfully as I hung up my jacket. "What's wrong?" I asked. I thought of all the terrible things that could have happened to him but he didn't appear to be marked by anything else except extreme emotion.