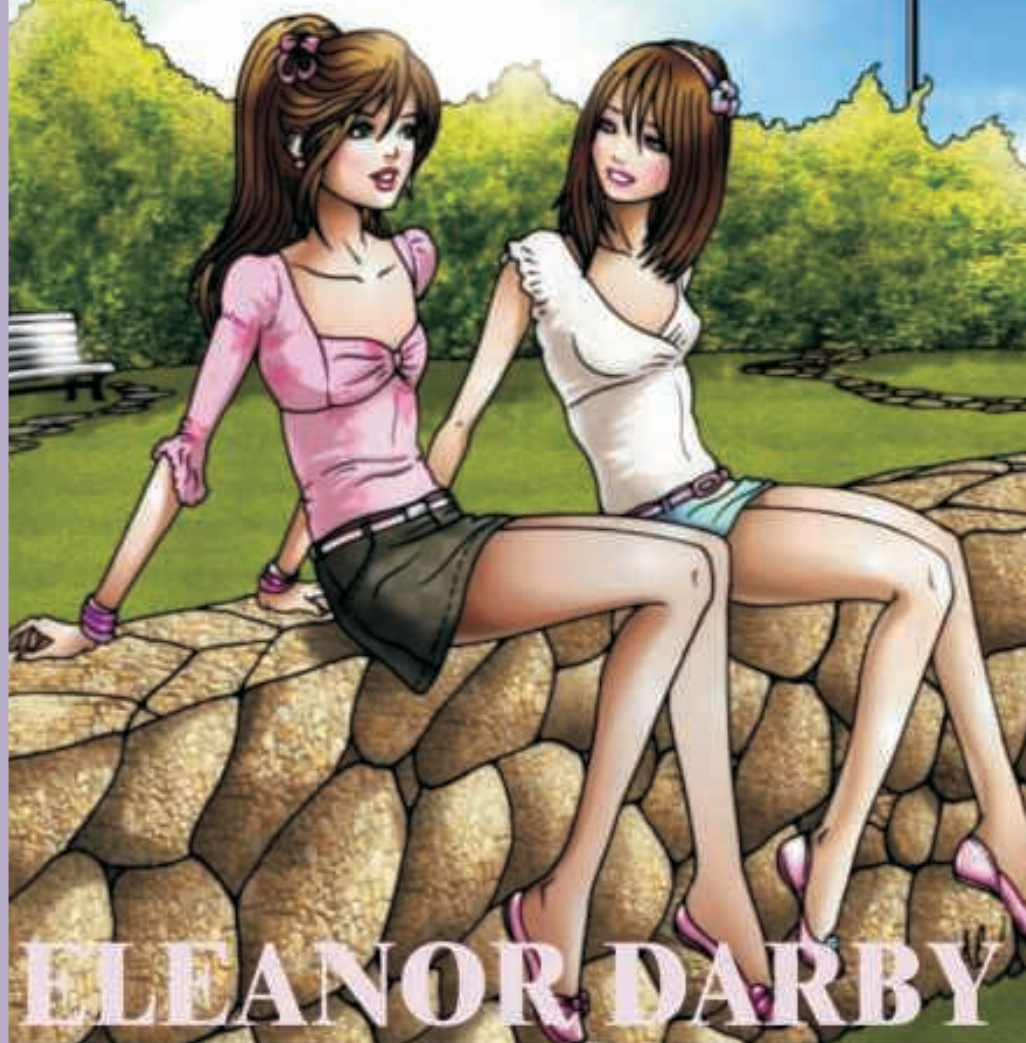


REPUTED TO BE A GIRL



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REPUTED TO BE A GIRL

by Eleanor Darby Wright

I. PENNY'S LITTLE GIRL FRIEND

Penny and I sat out on the grass, our legs dangling over the stone-topped brick wall and watched the little knots of boys and girls come together along the paths that led to the parking lots and the street. It was one of Penny's favorite places to be on campus. When I was feeling brave enough, I would go with her and we would lie on her dark blanket in the sun and compare the tan on our bare legs or, as we were doing today, the different shades of our stockings.

I had shaved my legs that morning, and a few other parts of my body, and so I was feeling particularly brave. I loved looking down the blanket to my legs in their skin-toned stockings, the hem of my skirt concealing how I held them up with my tiny garter belt. I had to look over the well-defined mounds on my chest in the frilly blouse I wore to see my lovely, girlish legs. It was a pity that my chest mounds weren't real. Taping them to make my chest muscles bulge, as I did between my legs to do the opposite, to prevent any bulges from showing, had to be accompanied with some padding. With the long hair flowing over my shoulders, however, I could only feel delight as I lay beside Penny and know that I looked just like her.

Dressed as prettily as a girl as I was, Penny smiled at me, knowing how I felt. Well, what I felt was particularly sexy, if I can use that word about the way that I felt. I really did feel like a sexy girl or g-u-r-r-l, as Penny would say it. I didn't often get a chance to go out with her for a girlish walk about the town or about the campus. I wished that she hadn't picked this day to come to school when a lot of people were rushing in to check what

classes they had on opening day, next Monday. This was a very high-risk area for me since I might have been recognized.

I might have been recognized for who I was despite the makeup on my face, the way Penny had shaped my eyebrows, the longish, dark hair about my neck and shoulders and the pink blouse and grey skirt that I wore. A pink ribbon about my hair, it was always a pink ribbon when I went over to Penny's house, helped the pins to hold the hair tight against my head.

I wore a corset that gave shape to my chest and to my waist and hips although Penny said that I really didn't need it. She knew that I didn't eat much and she was always going on that I was so much thinner about the waist than she was



Penny had had another falling out with Shirley, her best friend, and that meant she was at a loose end while her mother and father were away, seeing her other sister off to university. So she'd called me, at last, and laughed as she told me to get Marcie over to her house that morning as she was planning on spending the day with her.

I would have dropped anything I had going on to go over to Penny's house, anyway, not needing to be cajoled at all. We would have the run of the place and all of her sister's and mother's beautiful clothes and Penny knew that. She knew how I loved getting dressed up in smart and elegant women's clothes. We had been friends since kindergarten, maybe before. She had come over one day unannounced to find me dressing up in my mother's clothes. I was really aggrieved with myself because I couldn't get the lipstick to mark out my lips properly.

Penny had showed me how to use a lipstick pencil and how to use just a little lipstick and lick my lips together without getting red stuff all over my teeth. We had played for hours while she and I became princesses and queens and paraded

about the bedrooms and then up and down the curving stairs at the front of my house. We giggled like crazy at how we looked in the big mirrors that were on each side of the front door. My mother had slept through it all on one of her famous drunks, famous to the family, me, that is.

Some weeks later, Penny had invited me over to her house to play and we had dressed up again and put on a fashion show for her laughing elder sister who had told me that I was a cutie pie. That was when my mother had taken me to one side, after a phone call from Penny's mom, and told me that it wasn't nice for little boys to dress up in girls' or ladies' clothes. She told me that no-one would ever like me if I did that.

That didn't stop Penny and me. Penny came over whenever she had nothing better to do. But, it was sometimes long times between visits. She had had the lecture from her parents as well and so she was circumspect about her visits. If my mother was around and she was alert and awake, we would play hopscotch and soccer outside, or across at Vander Park. If it was bad weather, she brought videos with her and popcorn or board games, though we had a lot in my mother's and my house.

If my mom had to go out, though, and my mom did work a lot and leave me alone basically because she couldn't afford a babysitter, Penny would always shove the video and the popcorn under a chair, smile wickedly and say to me, "Let's go and dress up."

My mother had once been a dancer and she still had many of her old outfits in a big trunk that she kept at the far end of the basement. That was what Penny loved so much. She loved the boas and the blonde wigs, the fishnet stockings and little dresses that all ended in frilly, little skirts. She insisted that I had to dress with her as the playbills in Mom's trunk were all for the 'Dolly Sisters', 'Harvard's Girls', or 'June and Julie'.

So Penny was June and I was Julie and we played some of the tapes Mom had saved with the tape recorder turned very low. Penny had started dancing classes and so she taught me everything that she was doing. She taught me how to curtsy and how to put on false eyelashes. We batted them at each other and giggled as we made up outrageously and called each other Marilyn and Brigitte as we did solo numbers and even little routines like the Rockettes.

I went to Penny's concerts with her parents and applauded her like everyone else, so jealous that I couldn't be up on the stage with her, particularly as I often recognized the numbers that she did as ones I had practiced with her in one of our basements.

It was Penny who suggested we go out on Halloween as 'June and Julie'. She came over dressed as a cat but then I turned off all the lights and we went downstairs and made ourselves up as two of the sexiest little, well, prostitutes would have been going too far, but jailbait girls wouldn't have been. Penny was recognized, of course, but no-one knew me except as 'Julie'. I cavorted down the streets in my fishnet stockings and high heels, thrilled in every way to be out with 'June' and for the two of us to be so flirty with all the people we met on the doorstep and with the few boys who tried to hang with us. But we didn't need boys then, just chocolate.

It went off so easily for us the first time, my mom didn't come home till eleven, and Penny was gone and I was cleaned and washed, the scent we had poured over ourselves a distant memory after all the scrubbing I did.

The next year, we were cheerleaders, our routines practiced and polished in my basement as Mom had an evening job. That was so thrilling and Penny kissed me lightly, the first girl ever to kiss me and send shivers through me, though she did it softly and so casually. I was enthralled and hoped she'd come over again very soon but, like everything else in everyday life, there was a bit of a lull then as Penny found new friends and I did as well.

Of course, I did do some things, like the turbine models I made for the science fair that won first prize and even had me on local television. The commentator remarked that I was the sort of boy who would one day make his mark on the world. All it did for me, really, was to label me as a geek to everyone in school and so I had very few friends.

I was eleven when Penny snuck over two dresses from the show she had been in the year before. She had been Sleeping Beauty and the fairies had all worn beautiful dresses that matched hers save for the gauzy wings on their backs. I wore Penny's pantyhose for the first time, and her panties, under the light blue, sparkling ballet dress as the Good Fairy. One of my mother's blonde wigs made me look girlish with all the makeup that Penny put on me, my eyes needing a day to recover from the scrubblings I had to give them to make it all come off.

I can still remember dancing down the street in Penny's ballet slippers, twirling as the cold wind blew about my legs, but I gloried in the feeling as I knew that I was passing as a girl. The highest point was when we got to Sean Unger's house at eight o'clock and were invited in by a smiling Mrs Unger. We found a party going on with all of the cool kids in class, all in gorgeous costumes. Mr Unger was playing rock music on his stereo. "Oh, good," he said, when we went in, shivering and carrying our cups of hot chocolate with lipstick all over the front of them, "now we have enough girls so that you guys can all dance."

I thought that I had died and gone to heaven as Penny and I were asked by boys in Grade Seven, as well as Six, to dance with them, and Sean danced with me and told me what a pretty fairy I was. Sean's mom came in and stopped the only slow dance we had as we all awkwardly shuffled about, our arms about each other for the first time. I smiled and blushed at Sean when he told me I was a good dancer and asked me where I lived and where I went to school.

'Just outside town' and 'to a private school out in the country' worked for a couple of years until the older boys grew more persistent. By the time we got to the end of high school, however, everyone sort of knew that Penny had a sort of cousin who lived out in the boonies and who sometimes came in to visit her.

It was after another long break that Penny came over when I was in Grade Ten as Halloween was approaching. My mother knew that there was more to me than met the eye. She noted dryly how things in her theater trunk, as she called it, had been moved about. I tried to convince her that it was all Penny who liked to practice her numbers in front of me and get my criticisms of how she was doing.

"I wasn't born yesterday, Martin," my mother said to me. Martin was my second name and what she always called me. John was my first name and what everyone who saw my name on a list called me at first. I had given up correcting everyone in high school and so John Green was pretty much who I was outside the house. "I'm pretty well aware that it

takes all sorts to make a world and I've known a lot of men who have worn dresses prettier than mine on occasions." My cheeks were flaming as she said it to me and I tried to deny it but the words almost choked me.

"You just have to know, son," my mother went on, "that once you get a reputation for liking to dress in my clothes, old and fanciful as they are, you'll be called gay and fag even if you're not. So if I was you, I wouldn't do it at all, not at Halloween with Penny Shepherd, and, really, not at all."

I assured her that she had nothing to worry about on that account with me. My mother snorted and then staggered over to the kitchen cupboard where she kept her booze. She hasn't mentioned it again but then she doesn't go down in the basement much.

I mentioned what my mother had said, however, to Penny when she came over and Penny stared at me. "Actually, your mother is right in a way," she said after a few disparaging remarks about her friend, Shirley, and what the bitch had said about her, Penny, at Sam George's party that Penny hadn't been invited to.

"You shouldn't be dressing up in costumes all the time," Penny had told me then. "We should make you up properly as a girl and go out as girls really do. I would love to go shopping with Marcie or go and get our nails done properly. We could hang out at the mall as well." Penny said the last with a big smile.

"We, we do that already," I told her. It was true. We did meet sometimes in a music store and I would treat her to a burger or a shake as I was usually the one with money left at the end of the month. But I was just another geeky boy hanging around her and not the costumed girl from our basement life. She claimed that I wasn't short of money because I didn't have to buy makeup and lipstick and perfume as she did.

"If you were a girl, you would know that," Penny had said to me, explaining where her money had gone, on more than one occasion when there had been others in attendance on her, including the moody Shirley.

It was such a thrill to think of going out as a real girl. I didn't need too much persuading from Penny to let her make me up in the same way that she did. She taught me how to do it as well. I had to sit there in front of the mirror and copy her every move. I had to practice my voice as well, even though it was a strain. I think that my voice had broken but I still had what everyone called a 'quiet' voice.

"Talk like that," Penny said pointedly as I pouted my lips and used a brush to make them pink like Penny's, "and everyone is going to know that it is you, Martin, and not Marcie. Now say that again and don't use the chest muscles at all."

"I sound so awful," I simpered at her and she laughed.

"It's going to take a longer time for us to go out together, Marcie," Penny told me, "if you don't practice. There must be something on the Internet that can help you. You've got lots of time on your hands. Why don't you look it up and practice, practice, practice."

So I did. Then on my birthday, Penny came over with the most adorable wig for me. The ash-blonde, streaked hair looked nothing like my natural, brown hair color. I quivered in excitement the whole time that I made up, put earrings at my ears and then put on the wig. I was transformed. I looked like nothing that I had before.

Penny had already brought some of her old clothes over and they were in a cupboard of older clothes that my mother had forgotten about, or so I thought. I could barely contain myself as I put on a corset, panties, stuffing the bra part, and looked at the girl emerging in the mirror. It was such a thrill to put on stockings and to attach them to a garter belt. The bulge in my panties just seemed to grow and grow as I was aroused by the women's clothing I put on. Penny had me put on another, tighter pair of panties.

"You must do something about that," she told me pointedly again. "We can't have you going out as a girl and looking like that."

I loved the pleated skirts that she had given me. The white, lacy blouses, that she must have worn to school, I guessed, showed the bra and slip straps slightly as most girls' blouses do these days. The shoes were a little problem as the best fit was just a little small for me but they had small, feminine heels and I was prepared to suffer for my appearance.

The slip and skirt about my legs made me feel so wonderfully girlish. I loved the hair touching my neck and wished that I dared to let my own grow to such a level. When I was out on my own, I said to myself, delicious shivers running through me as I looked at 'Marcie' in my basement mirror, I would have real hair just like the pretty wig that Penny had 'liberated' from her sister.

"Well, enough primping," said Penny, standing up, taking the cologne spray and firing it all over me.

"Penny, don't!" I gasped, loving the female fragrance that surrounded me, that was all coming from me.

I sort of knew how to walk like a woman, sort of how to whisper and talk femininely and that was enough for Penny. I shivered, dithered, protested, but I really wanted to do it. We went out of my house as two girls. We were down the block, my legs aching after so much walking in small steps and heels, when, turning into the corner store to get some breath mints, I saw my mother's car come down the road.

Penny let me hide behind a telephone kiosk and light pole as she waved at my mother in her car. "I don't think she saw me," said Penny then. "She didn't look at me at all."

"I, I have to go back," I said in my high, squeaky voice.

"No way," said Penny with a smile. "It's taken me this long to get you out of that musty, old basement, Marcie. So now we are going to do what girls do on a nice night like this one. We are going to go by the mall and check out the guys and see if one of them is willing to buy a thirsty girl a malt."

I had money, I was about to say, but Penny forestalled me. "A pretty girl never has to pay for herself," she said with a smile. "And Marcie dear, look at the two girls I can see in the dark, glass window there. You really are quite a babe, you know."

Penny kept up all the banter with me and I shook with excited fear as we entered the Livingston Mall and window-shopped, Penny gushing at everything that she saw. "Hi, Brian," she said with a wave to Brian Gooding, one of the football captains and an editor on the school paper. He was with a bunch of other guys and they checked us out.

I have checked out girls myself at the mall. I have looked at their legs and figures as well as their faces. I have looked away hastily when they have looked back at me and I

have felt real panic when a girl arched a thin eyebrow and coyly smiled at me. Penny said I should do that to anyone I found 'scoping' me. I shuddered and couldn't do that, however, as it was Alan Webb, in Physics with me who smiled at me and looked me up and down, taking in my stockings, my smooth legs, my skirt and my shaped blouse, and then my painted face as I tried to keep eye contact as Penny had told me that girls did.

"I didn't know that Alan Webb had such good taste," said Penny quietly as she swayed against me and we sashayed along the mall to the food court where there were large crowds of people, as the movie theaters had just let out, and a long line of young teenagers had started to move in to see some horror movie.

"The Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants is playing," teased Penny. "We girls should go and see that." We had talked about it already and me, in my male incarnation, had pooh-poohed the idea of going to see a 'chick flick'. "If we go into a horror movie, we'll have boys all over us. They think we'll be so scared that we'll cuddle up to any one of them and they can get in a few kisses or feels while we are all a-quiver!"

"The Sisterhood, then," I said nervously and Penny laughed at me. But we did go and see it. It wasn't bad but I think that I was the only guy in there along with a hundred girls the same age or younger than us. I was totally shivering when Penny insisted on introducing 'Marcie' to Wendy Tiller and her friends as we came out, mincing and swaying in our little high heels. Wendy was in the same Math class as me. I thought her shy and awkward but she was anything but when introduced to me when I was dressed as a girl.

Wendy and her friends babbled on to us as we went along the railed section of the mall and out into the cold, night air. "It was so nice to meet you, Marcie," said Wendy, wrinkling her nose as she pushed her glasses back into place. "You must have been the one to bring Penny to this show. She's always into action and Sean Unger and that crowd. You should hear the jokes they make about the Travelling Pants. Boys can be so crude."

Penny joined in on that right away, saying all the things that my boy incarnation had said about the 'chick flick' and I was left to squirm until finally Wendy's father arrived with his car to pick her up and another of her friends. They offered us a ride but we lived close enough not to need it.

"If Brian asks me for a date," said Penny, as we strolled along, my heels taking strides the same as hers, my body swaying and my skirt swishing just like hers, "and asks me to bring along my cousin for one of his friends, then you and I are going out on date, Marcie, on the weekend."

I shuddered. "I can't do that!" I said in a panic.

"Better voice," said an approving Penny. "I am going to make you my favorite girl friend yet."

II. MARCIE SHEPHERD, COUSIN

By Grade Twelve, I was confirmed in my persona as Marcie Shepherd, distant cousin of Penny's. I had 'dated', or rather, Marcie had dated, several of the boys in our high school and several others whom Penny had encouraged to pick us up at the mall. I had

been invited out by several of the guys whom Penny had arranged for me to double date with her but, of course, I had never gone out with anyone unless I went out with Penny.

We didn't get specially dressed up to go to the mall or out in the evenings but we did go into several teenaged dancing clubs. I could dance like a girl. I had practiced enough with Penny and so it was easy and thrilling. It helped to pay for our drinks, Penny said with a grin, telling me to smile as if I was enjoying dancing and so I tried very hard and I found out that I did. I loved being twirled by boys who could dance well even though I was always in mortal fear that my wig would be knocked off. It was pinned and glued down pretty well and so I never had an incident like that. It would have been devastating and would have probably stopped me from going on cross-dressing as much as I did if it had ever happened that my wig was knocked off.

I dreamed and looked forward eagerly to the next time that Penny and I would go out, my legs as trim and feminine as hers in the mirrors and shiny marble that we passed. She had bought me some strappy sandals like hers with real high heels and I loved wearing them and walking about with her and watching boys and girls looking at us, admiring my pretty hair and my skirt and, of course, my stockings. It was a continuous thrill.

I think that Penny, though, did not always like double-dating with me as some of the boys I went with were really nice and she got some of the jerks, as she called them. She was particularly miffed when my date at our first movie with boys turned out to be a boy she really liked. I was very apprehensive about going to a movie as a girl and she had only talked me into it after a long time.

I knew that she liked Sean Unger a lot and guess who it was who put his arms about my bare shoulders in front of the theater. I was wearing a summery dress with very thin straps as I loved the way the dress swished about my stockings. But Sean Unger! I would have changed with Penny if I could but Brian seemed as if he was really interested in Penny and he was quite a catch for any girl in our school, anyway.

So I hadn't been Penny's friend for a long time since I had gone out with Sean and she had been with Brian. It was Penny's own fault in a way. She was the one who wanted a movie date and giggled about getting one for me. She had told me how a girl had to behave, how I had to hold the boy's hand, she not knowing it would be Sean, how I was to cross my legs and how I was to kiss him when he wanted me to.

I had protested and refused to go out with her and she had had to cancel the first time we were to double date at the movies. I did not wish to kiss other men. I wasn't gay or a faggot, I explained to Penny.

"No, you just like wearing my clothes," Penny had said with a laugh.

"Yes," I had said defensively. "I am a guy in female clothing." I know how that sounded as I squeaked it out in my most girlish tones. "If there is anyone I want to be kissing in a movie, Penny, it's you."

That had made Penny laugh and laugh and we had started kissing each other, when we met and left each other, but it was all light and girlish, and nothing like kissing a boy in a dark movie theater.

Penny did say to me though as I trembled and tried not to talk about dating boys, "Seriously, Marcie, all girls get kissed. It really isn't the end of the world. You don't have to let a boy get to first or second base with you and most of them won't try if you tell them not to, that you're not that kind of girl. But kissing a guy at the end of the night is what we girls do to reward guys who take us out and pay for us, sometimes, at the theater or for our drinks. In a movie, of course, you have to let a boy kiss you as well. It's what they take you in for."

I knew that going in and I knew that I was going to be a very bad kisser. In the movie we went to see, it was that one about Sarah Marshall, Brian and Penny had moved together right from the start and were snogging, that horrible word that means repeated kissing and caressing, right next to me. I was edgy, shifting and re-crossing my nyloned legs a lot of times as I sat with Sean, holding his hand. It was a long time before Sean finally drew me to him and I knew what he wanted and what I had to do.

I intended to kiss him badly, woodenly, but something happened when his lips met mine and his free hand caressed my dress against my stockings and garter belt. I felt so girlish in my summery clothes with Sean's hand beside me. I felt my chest tightening and my body arching against his as I slid my lipsticked mouth over his. It was exhilarating to be kissed by a boy and a boy like Sean.

It wasn't bad at all and it felt so perfectly right as he pressed down on me and I responded by moving my waxy lips. I felt a thrill right away all the way through me, my whole body on fire as it never had been even when I had kissed the few girls that I had. I hadn't moved my head back at all as Sean kissed me, his hand making goose bumps appear all over me as he caressed and tickled my bare neck and shoulders. I actually thought that I was feeling how a real girl would feel when she was kissed by a nice boy like Sean. It was wonderful to feel so alive, so aroused and so appreciated.

Sean seemed to be enjoying kissing me, Marcie, as much as I was thrilling to being kissed by him. I was quivering after that first kiss and then Sean whispered in my ear. "I've been waiting to do that to you, Marcie," he said to me, "ever since you were the Good Fairy at Halloween. I still have the picture of you and me dancing, that my father took, on my wall."

"Oh no," I had gulped, my heart starting to race.

"Oh yes," murmured Sean and he had kissed me again and I twisted in my seat just as Penny had. I let him touch my arms and caress my dress to me, just as she had allowed Brian. I gave myself up to kissing Sean then and felt like a girl from the tips of my wig about my face to the stockings about my newly painted toenails. I left my lipstick on Sean's lips, his face and his shirt as we necked and petted in the back row of the theater as fiercely as any other boy and girl in the place.

Sean and Brian had walked us back, holding our hands or putting their arms protectively about us, all the way back to Penny's house. "We must date again," Sean had whispered and I had shuddered, setting off the rustling of my dress and making me feel so very, very feminine. I nodded to him before he kissed me good night with more force and affection than Brian did Penny. Brian was down by the hedge heading home before Sean realized that he had gone. He hugged me then, kissed me tenderly so that shivers of real

excitement went through me and then he let me go, making me promise that I would get in touch with him the next time I was in town.

"You really enjoyed that," said Penny sarcastically as we tripped lightly down to her basement suite in the Shepherd house.

"Oh, I did," I told her breathlessly.

"You said that you could never kiss a boy," said Penny, as we sat on the sofa together and crossed our legs as girls were supposed to do. She liked to talk to me after our little bits of dancing or walking around the mall about the people we had seen and how they had reacted to her when she wasn't looking at them.

"I did," I laughed with her.

"So, it wasn't so bad," said Penny, reaching over and lifting my skirts a little to expose the frill on my slip and my stockinged legs.

"No, it wasn't bad," I admitted, blushing and feeling a real turn-on again as I thought of kissing Sean Unger and how girlish I had felt. I knew that I wanted to feel that way again and I guess that Penny must have sensed that about me as well.

"You enjoyed kissing Sean," Penny said with a grim smile. "He certainly enjoyed kissing you. How did you feel when you were doing it with him? Did you feel like a girl?"

"All trembly inside?" I asked her as Penny had said that that was how she felt when a guy was about to kiss her and she knew that he was going to make a move on her. "Yes, it was like that and then it just kept on going and going."

"Quite the little Energizer bunny," said Penny dryly then and I laughed, tucked in my elbows as I had learned to do, pouted over a lifted shoulder and giggled with the silly, feminine emotions that were coursing through me, making me feel, well, so womanly. I felt as if I was a woman and had met a wonderful man whom I knew that I was going to meet and kiss again.

"Oh dear, girl," said Penny, looking at my flushed face and wiggly body. "You have got it good for Sean Unger, haven't you?"

"I haven't," I said, my face flushing as Penny took hold of my hands and stroked the long acrylic fingernails she had attached to my nails just as she had attached them to her own.

"I think that you are in love with the first boy whom you have ever kissed," said Penny. I shook my long hair and protested that it wasn't true but I knew deep inside me that it was true. I was in love with Sean Unger, another boy. I was in love with the way that he kissed me as if I was a girl. I was in love with the way that he made me feel and I didn't think that anyone else could ever make me feel like that, either.

Penny tried to explain the ins and outs of dating boys. She was serious and treated me as if I was a girl. I listened to her and agreed with her at all the right moments. Oh yes, I knew that I was very inexperienced as a girl and that I shouldn't judge Sean just on one night of being out with him and kissing him.