

It's up to you...

By Kathleen McDonnell

Introduction

In these pages, you'll meet Deb, her boyfriend Tony, and some of their friends. You'll see them doing the things you usually do – going to school, hanging out with friends. But this is a book with a difference. *You* get to help write the story. *You* get to decide which way the action goes. And *you* get to choose how the story ends. So turn the page, and meet Deb.

Hi, I'm Deb. I'm in grade seven and I'll be 13 in a couple of months, but most people think I look older. My mom and my brother still call me "Debbie" like when I was a little kid. But I use "Deb" now. I think it sounds more my age.

Today I'm staying after school to work on my project for our school science fair this Saturday. It's on these wild ponies that live on this island called Sable Island in the Atlantic Ocean, near Nova Scotia. (That's where I was born!) I've been working on it for weeks and weeks because I really want to win an award. I really like science and I *love* animals, especially horses, and I already know that I want to be an animal doctor when I'm older.

My brother Nick's always bugging me about the way I feel about horses. He does stupid stuff like coming up behind me when I'm not looking and yelling "Giddyup!" or sticking plastic horses in my bed. But he's such a dork, who cares what he thinks?

This is the part of my project where I tell how the ponies got to the island, and how they became wild again. It's really interesting. They were brought over on ships hundreds of years ago and...

Oh! Here comes Tony. He's in grade eight. Seeing him always makes my stomach knot up. I can't exactly call him my boyfriend – not yet, anyway. I mean, he's only walked me home from school three times – four if you count the basketball game last week. (I'm counting!!!) I wonder if he'll ask me today.

"Hi, Deb. Want to walk over to the mall with me?"

"Okay, Tony. I just have to finish up a little more work on my project."

"Hey, I can't hang around. The guys are waiting for me."

"Oh..."

"Come on. You can finish it later, can't you?"

He's right, I still have one more day to work on it. Except tomorrow's Friday and they don't let us stay after school on Fridays...

(If Deb goes to the mall with Tony, turn to page 4)

(If Deb stays at school and finishes her project, turn to page 5)

“Okay, Tony.” How could I say no?

A bunch of the grade eight guys are at the mall having a smoke when we get there. Some girls, too. Lisa and Jackie – they’re in grade eight too. And Angela, she’s in grade seven with me. Angela’s one of my very best friends.

Steve, who thinks he’s cool, starts kidding Tony about me.

“Hey man. You getting any?”

Lisa gives me a drag off her cigarette. It makes me feel a little sick, but I don’t let on. I keep thinking about the science fair. I sure hope I get my project done on time.

(Go to page 6)

“Gee, I can’t, Tony. I have to get it all done this afternoon.”
“Oh. Well, I guess I could wait around a couple of minutes.”
“Sure! That’s all it’ll take.”

I’m so excited he’s staying, but I try not to let on. It makes me kind of nervous, trying to work with him standing around. I keep thinking he’s going to leave any minute. But I’m almost done pasting the photographs.

“Say, Deb?”
“Yeah?” He’s going to leave for sure!
“What’s all this about, anyway?”

I explain to him all about the ponies on Sable Island. He actually seems interested! Usually the only thing he gets excited about is basketball.

(Go to page 6)

After a while Tony walks me home. Number 5! When we get to my house he asks if he can come in for a while. I don't know at first. My mom's still at work, and I'm not sure she'd like it.

(If Deb lets Tony in, turn to page 7)

(If Deb goes in by herself, turn to page 8)

“Sure, come on in.”

We go in and turn on the TV. One of those dating shows is on, where they keep making these jokes about sex. At first I’m nervous, sitting next to Tony on the couch. I’m glad the TV’s on, because I don’t know what to say. After a while he moves closer to me and slides his arm around my shoulders. We sit like that for a while, and then I sort of snuggle up to him. It feels nice to be so close. Then he leans over and tries to kiss me. We’ve kissed before a couple of times, in the park and stuff. But this feels more exciting, here on the couch, by ourselves.

I’m not sure I should kiss him back, or act too eager. But the more we do it the more I like it. It’s a lot more exciting than practising on my pillow! But after a while I pull away a little. I’m worried about my mom coming home.

“I guess I better get going,” Tony says.

Then he puts on his jacket, and just as he’s giving me a goodbye kiss...

(Go to page 9)

“Gee, Tony, my mom’s home, and she said I should do homework after school.”

It’s a little white lie, but that’s okay, because I don’t want to hurt his feelings. I go in and have some taco chips and try to start my homework. But I can’t think of anything but Tony. I think about how he looks and the way his voice sounds. Then I imagine us on a real date, in his dad’s car, kissing. We’ve kissed in the park and stuff, but not real kissing, like you can do when you’re alone. I picture us driving to the mall, where a lot of people go to park. Then he starts kissing me real hard, like they do in the movies. I get all excited just thinking about it, but just then...

(Go to page 9)

My stupid brother walks in!
I pull myself together and start peeling potatoes for dinner. But as usual Nick has to bug me about something.

“So. You fooling around with what’s-his-face?”

“Oh, take off.”

“Watch out little sister. These guys only got one thing on their mi-i-i-nds.”

“Look who’s talking! I hear you bragging to your friends about the things you do with Nancy!”

Suddenly we hear the front doors.

“Cool it!” Nick whispers at me.

It’s mom, home from work. She looks tired, as usual. She works in a hospital, and she’s always having to change shifts. She says she never gets caught up on her sleep.

“Are you two at it again?”

She hates it when we fight, so we try to get along when she’s around. But it’s hard when you’ve got a brother like Nick.

(Go to page 10)

After dinner I clean up the kitchen with mom (while my stupid brother gets to sit and watch the hockey game, of course). I keep thinking about what Nick said. Is he right? Does Tony only want to make it with me? Will he think I'm easy if I let him kiss me? I feel confused and I wonder. Should I try to talk to my mom about it? She might help me sort it all out. Or should I keep it to myself?

(If Deb talks to her mother, turn to page 11)

(If Deb keeps it to herself, turn to page 12)

“Mom, I’ve been hanging around this guy, Tony.”

“Yes, honey, I know.”

“He’s cute, isn’t he?”

“Well, he’s a little young for me. I suppose if I were 12, he’d be a pretty good catch.”

“Oh, mom. You don’t talk about boys like that any more. Anyway, I’m almost 13.”

“Oh, pardon me!”

“Mom...do you think it’s okay to kiss when you’re 13?”

“Well, I don’t know, Debbie. I guess it depends on what kind of kissing you mean.”

I can tell she’s a little embarrassed now, and so am I. But she says she’s glad I asked her about it, and that she’ll get me this book that talks about some of this stuff. By now we’re almost finished with the dishes, so I ask if I can go watch TV for a while, but she says I should finish my homework first. What a bummer!

(Go to page 13)

I figure I won't say anything to her right now. She might freak out and think Tony and I are doing all kinds of stuff we're really not doing. She might even tell me I can't go to the party on Friday. Anyway, we've never done anything bad. My brother is full of it, right?

I ask to be excused from dishes early so I can watch TV, but she says not until I finish my homework. Rats!

(Go to page 13)

Finally it's Friday, the day of Steve's big party. The kids at school have been talking about it all week. I can't believe Tony and I are actually going out together! I just wish it weren't happening the day before the science fair – it's almost too much!

While I'm getting ready, my friend Angela calls me up, crying.

"Oh, Deb. I could just die."

"What's the matter?"

"It's my dad. He found out there won't be parents at the party. He says I can't go!"

"Gee. I'm sorry, Angie."

I try to make her feel better, and I promise to come over to her house tomorrow night and tell her *everything* about the party. But I'm glad my mom didn't ask me if an adult was going to be there. If she doesn't ask, I don't have to tell her, right? And I'm sure glad she's not as strict as Angie's parents. Her dad gets upset if he even sees her *talking* to a boy.

At the party they play a lot of slow music. I feel dreamy dancing with Tony, like I'm floating or something. The party's in Steve's basement, and there's a smaller room off to one side that Steve keeps telling everybody is the makeout room. I see different couples like Lisa and her boyfriend Vince go in there. After a while I realize we're dancing right by the door into the room, and Tony says,

"Want to go in?"

(If Deb and Tony go in, turn to page 14)

(If they keep dancing, turn to page 18)

“Okay.”

I’m curious, but a little nervous too. It feels funny walking in there, knowing everybody at the party is looking at us. It’s pretty dark in the room. Tony and I sit on the floor in one corner and he puts his arm around me and starts kissing me right away. That kind of takes me by surprise, but then I relax and it feels good. Then we start having longer kisses where he puts his tongue in my mouth. French kissing always sounded a bit weird to me, but I kind of like it. After a while I feel Tony sliding his hand up around my breast. I stiffen up and pull away. I’m not really sure I’m ready for that. He tries to touch me there again, but I still pull away.

“Come on, Deb. We’re not doing anything wrong.”

Maybe he’s right, but I feel pretty mixed up. Things are moving so fast.

(If Deb lets Tony touch her breast, turn to page 19)

(If Deb says no, turn to page 15)

“I know, Tony. I just don’t feel right about it, that’s all.”

“Well I don’t know what we’re hanging around in here for.”

Tony gets up and walks out of the room. I follow him, but I don’t know what to say. I can tell he’s pretty mad. He goes to the door where the coats are all in a pile and pulls his jacket out. It almost looks like he’s going to leave the party – without me! He stands at the door for a few seconds with his jacket on, not looking at me.

(If Tony leaves the party without Deb, turn to page 16)

(If Tony stays, turn to page 17)

“Tony?”

“Call me when you decide to grow up.”

I watch him go out the door. Lucky hardly anybody at the party saw us. I still can't quite believe what's happened. I wonder if I should run after him. But I figure I better leave him alone for now.

After a few minutes I start walking home by myself. I sure don't want to stay at the party. Steve's house is only a few blocks from mine. I hope Tony isn't so mad he won't want to out with me anymore. The other guys are always saying he's a hothead, but we've never had a fight before. What's he going to tell them? I wonder. I don't want the whole school blabbing about us.

When I get home my mom's still at work and Nick's out. I think about calling Angela, but I don't really feel like it. I stick a frozen pizza in the oven and turn on the TV.

(Go to page 21)

Finally Tony turns to me and says,
“Want to head home?”
“You mean you’ll walk me?”

When we get outside I ask him if he’s mad at me.
“Nah. You just make a guy feel kind of stupid, that’s all.”
“I’m sorry. I just don’t feel ready to do some of that stuff, you know?”

He shrugs his shoulders and I can tell he doesn’t want to talk about it any more. He starts to talk about the big basketball game coming up next week, the one that’ll decide if our school makes it into the semi-finals. He’s all excited about it and I can tell he’s not really mad at me anymore.

(Go to page 21)

“I’d sort of rather keep dancing.”
“Okay.”

We dance real close for a while longer. Then he asks me to go in the room again. But somebody says it’s a quarter to eleven, and I have to go home. My mom said I could only stay out until eleven. On our way out Lisa, one of the grade eight girls comes up to me.

“What’s the matter, Debbie? How come you and Tony didn’t go into the makeout room?”

Lisa’s always acting like she’s Miss Sophisticated. But it doesn’t bother me. Tony walks me home and tells me all about the great play he made in the game last week. I feel really happy listening to him.

(Go to page 21)

He puts his hand over my breast again and this time I don't pull away. It feels good and I don't really want him to stop. But I'm still confused. Am I leading him on? Will he respect me? Will it get around the school? I feel as if we should stop, but I don't want to hurt his feelings.

Suddenly I hear somebody say it's ten after eleven.
"I'm supposed to be home by eleven!"

We grab our coats and practically run to my house. I feel uncomfortable on the way home. I'm not sure what to say.

When we get there, my mom's standing right at the door in her bathrobe. I nearly die! Tony sees her and takes off right away. I look at my mom. I can tell she's mad – *really* mad.

"What time did I tell you to be home?"

I try to explain that we forgot about the time, but she won't listen. It's really unfair – she never listens to my side of the story.

(Go to page 20)

When I go up to bed I can't fall asleep for the longest time. This wasn't the way my special night was supposed to end! I keep wondering what Tony really thinks of me.

Next day I'm kind of out of it for the science fair. But my project wins a second prize, and my mom comes and says she's really proud of me.

Afterward she takes me out for a hamburger to celebrate my prize. We talk about school and stuff, and then she asks me about the party. I could tell she was looking for a way to bring it up.

"Did you have a good time last night?"

Oh, yeah."

"Are you going to be seeing Tony again?"

"I guess so."

I don't want to tell her the whole story. But I can see she is trying to be nice.

"You know, Debbie, you don't have to do things just because it looks like everybody else is doing them. You can just go at your own speed."

Moms! I swear they can read your mind!

"And remember. You can come ask me about anything. Really."

"I know, mom."

My mom's not half-bad, actually.

The End

When we get to my house we stand in the doorway and talk for a while. We have a goodnight kiss that sends shivers up my spine.

As I walk in the house, I hear low voices in the living room. My mom's still at work, so I know it must be Nick and his girlfriend Nancy. It's dark in the living room, but I can sort of see the outlines of their heads over the top of the couch. I freeze.

"No, Nick."

"Why not?"

"Maybe we should wait until I can go to the clinic and get the pill."

"Look, I'll be careful, I promise."

"But what if I get pregnant?"

"You can't get pregnant the first time."

"You don't know that for sure."

I try to tiptoe up the stairs, so they won't even know I'm there. I almost get to the top. Suddenly there's a loud yowl! I stepped on the cat's tail!

"What's that?" Nick yells.

"It's me, Deb."

"What are you doing home so early?"

"It's ten after eleven."

I rush up to my room. It felt funny, listening to them in the dark like that. I take a long time to fall asleep. I keep thinking about me and Tony. I'm so glad he likes me. But I'm kind of scared too. Will he want to do stuff like Nick wants to? Will he keep on liking me?

The next morning I wake up late, and have to practically run over to the school for the science fair. My project takes second prize! I'm really proud and so's my mom. Tony even comes to the fair, even though he hates science. I feel kind of shy around him today. But that's okay. I'm so glad he came.

The End

