

**Boys Will Be Boys; Girls Will Be Happy**

By Kristen E. Asmus

527 words

All I ever needed to know about the difference between the sexes I learned from playing with Lego.

When I was a child, my little brother, Robbie (as I called him then; it's Robert now), was first my baby, then my best friend. We spent a lot of time together, playing with his toys. "His" being the operative word here; there would be no dressing up Barbie dolls or competing at jacks for him.

Besides, I liked his toys. I was jealous when he, like our older brother before him, was given his own, giant yellow Tonka dump truck. Why didn't I get one? I liked to play in the dirt in the back yard, digging holes and building roads, too. And the back of the dump truck was a perfect place for Barbie and Skipper to ride.

I had the most fun "playing Legos" with Robbie. We'd spend hours stretched out on the living room carpet with hundreds of pieces of Lego dumped out beside us. I liked to build houses and people. This was back in the days before the Lego company made special parts (hands, heads, feet) for "real people," so our people always looked a little like penguins, with sloping triangular faces and feet. I built houses with kitchens and living rooms and bedrooms. There were always places to sit and little Lego penguin-people interacting. I built winged Lego hovercraft, too, so my people could zoom through the air, on their way to the store or the park.

Robbie built people, too—pilots, mostly, for his space ships. He built buildings, too—towers, mostly, that he could blow up. Robbie would take his space ships on strafing runs over his buildings, and the Legos would fly. Next, he'd head to my houses. There was nowhere for my Lego people to run! I had no defense system—my hovercraft were merely pleasure vehicles. Crash! It was too late; my peaceful scene would (once again) be destroyed.

No matter how many times I begged Robbie to “play nice” and have a pretend picnic with my penguin-people, he always ended up creating some kind of destructive scenario. No house or picnic bench would be left standing. Penguin-people often lost their heads.

It may be generalizing to say how we play is a true indication of gender differences for all people, but I know one thing: it was spontaneous behavior. No one stood over us, telling Robbie to act one way and me to act another. No one told Robbie to like war better than peace, conflict better than picnics, destruction better than interaction. No one told me that people should be happy in their little houses with white Lego-brick fences. No one said, “Make sure the kitchen is well-equipped.” We both just naturally gravitated to what made us more comfortable, what was more fun.

I stopped “playing Legos” with Robbie when I started high school, so I could spend more time with my friends. Robbie moved on to even more exciting horizons: he would spend hours building intricate models of destroyers and submarines, only to bundle them with firecrackers and blow them up in the creek.