

DOUBLE TROUBLE RJ NOLAN

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*Excerpt*

*By*

**RJ Nolan**



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# Double Trouble

## *Excerpt*

### CHAPTER 1

**T**HE STADIUM WAS rapidly filling as Kris Rawlings and Jerry Parks made their way to their seats. It had been their tradition since high school to attend the first baseball game of the season each April between the San Diego Padres and Los Angeles Dodgers. This year, Jerry was hoping his beloved Padres would make a decent showing. In recent years, the team had finished near the bottom of the rankings. He still bragged about the 1984 season when they competed against the Detroit Tigers in the World Series, even though the Padres ultimately lost the series.

Jerry ran into Kris's back when she stopped abruptly. Peering around her broad shoulders, he saw what had captured her attention. In the row they were heading for, three people were already seated. A man and woman were sitting together. It was the beautiful brunette sitting next to them that had obviously caught Kris's attention.

"Save the eye candy for later, Kris. Let's get in our seats," Jerry said, urging Kris forward.

Kris made her way carefully past the couple and then, tripped over the dark haired beauty's feet. The woman looked up and their eyes met briefly. Kris allowed her gaze to glide down the woman's body; she was even more gorgeous up close. Her long hair was braided and resting over her shoulder. Kris's eyes made it back up to the woman's breasts and stopped. They were full and straining against the material of her shirt. She unconsciously licked her lips as she wondered if they were as soft as they looked.

Kris finally met the woman's warm brown eyes and blushed when she realized that she had been blatantly ogling the woman. The woman allowed her eyes to run up and down Kris's tall body, returning the perusal. She appeared to take in Kris's heavily muscled legs displayed beneath khaki shorts as well as her well-toned physique encased in a tank top. Short blond hair and vivid blue eyes completed the stunning package. Kris was uncharacteristically flustered by the woman's open appraisal. She stumbled over her own feet this time, and murmured an apology as she finally made it to her seat. She flopped down into the chair and lowered her face into her hands in mortification.

Jerry met the brunette's sparkling eyes as he carefully maneuvered past her legs. "Don't mind my butch friend; she's usually not so boorish. She must've been stunned stupid by your beauty."

Kris lifted her head enough to pin Jerry with a glare, then growled at him.

"What... what did I say? It's true, girlfriend."

"Shut up and sit down, Jerry," Kris said. She glanced over at the woman apologetically. Sure, she loved to look at women, but she was usually more subtle. When the brunette smiled at her, Kris felt her face color again.

Jerry was having a great time. He hadn't seen his friend this flustered by a woman since she was first coming out in high school. He checked the seat numbers and grinned. He sat down next to the dark haired beauty, then called to Kris.

"Hey, Kris, our seats are over here."

Kris looked up and groaned when she realized Jerry was sitting next to the beautiful woman she'd just ogled. She got up, mumbling to herself, and made her way over to sit next to Jerry.

Jerry ignored Kris when she flopped down next to him. Turning to the woman seated on his other side, he offered his hand.

"Hi, my name is Jerry, and my less than articulate friend over there is Kris."

"Hi, Jerry," she said with a smile. "I'm Erin and these are my friends, Larry and Rita."

Jerry shook hands with everyone, then turned and elbowed Kris in the ribs.

"I'm Kris, nice to meet you, Erin." She offered her hand to Erin, who took it and held it just a little longer than necessary. Kris then greeted Larry and Rita.

Everyone settled back in their seats. Jerry kept up a running conversation, asking questions and telling them how he and Kris attended every opener between San Diego and LA.

Finally, the game started and the crowd noise became too great for real conversation.

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Kris only had half her mind on the game. She couldn't help sneaking peeks at Erin. She appraised the way Erin was dressed in faded jeans, a tight T-shirt and high top sneakers. Of course she couldn't tell by looking, but she couldn't help wishing there was a chance she might be gay. Kris sighed and turned back to the game. Her luck never ran that way. The woman was probably straight as an arrow.

After listening to Jerry whine for two innings, Kris finally got up and bought them both some beer. When she returned to her seat, she found Jerry had moved over, leaving the seat next to Erin open. She glared at him but he looked at her innocently.

As the game progressed, Kris silently debated with herself. Erin intrigued her and though she couldn't quite say why, she wanted to get to know her better. They had spoken casually

during the game and she was incredibly funny, and articulate. She wasn't wearing a wedding ring either. Kris had checked.

Rita decided it was time for more beer and convinced Erin to go with her. They were just coming back when the Padres hit a triple. Erin hadn't regained her seat but was standing in front of it with three beers on a tray. The crowd surged to its feet. A man seated in front of their row knocked Erin backward when he jumped up. She tried to keep the beer from spilling and, at the same time, remain on her feet. She wasn't successful in either endeavor. A cup of beer landed in Kris's lap as Erin's feet slid out from under her and she started to fall.

Kris gasped when the ice cold beer soaked her shorts. Seeing Erin about to fall, she instinctively reached out and wrapped her arms around Erin, pulling her onto her lap. The rest of the beer spilled over both of them. As the crowd settled back down, Kris sat with a still stunned Erin in her lap. Rita jumped out of her seat and stood facing Erin and Kris.

"Are you alright?" Rita asked.

Erin shook her head still a bit stunned from almost falling. She was covered in beer and could feel it running down her sides and between her legs. She suddenly realized just where she was sitting. Her face flamed in embarrassment and she scrambled off Kris's lap.

She turned to Kris. "I'm so sorry..." she started to apologize, then caught a glimpse of Kris's shorts. She looked like she had wet her pants. Erin couldn't help it, she started laughing.

Kris growled at Erin, which made her laugh even harder. "Laugh it up, Erin. You look worse than I do."

Erin looked down, seeing what Kris had said was true. She was soaked. Her T-shirt was plastered to her body and the front of her jeans was saturated and dripping beer onto the ground.

After everyone had had a good chuckle at their expense, Kris and Erin decided to head to the restroom to try and clean

up some of the damage. Erin was momentarily startled when Kris stood to her full height. Erin knew she was tall for a woman at five-eight, but Kris was considerably taller.

Kris grinned at Erin's surprised expression knowing the cause. At six-one, her height attracted a lot of attention. Kris glanced down at the man who had caused Erin to fall and spill the beer. He was oblivious and hadn't even bothered to apologize. She waited for him to take a drink of his beer, then she stepped forward, ramming her knee into the back of his head. His face went forward and he spilled his beer down the front of his shirt.

He spun around in his seat and glared at Kris. "Hey, watch it!"

"Oh, sorry," Kris said sweetly, plastering an innocent smile on her face.

Erin slapped her hand over her mouth to keep from laughing. She reached out and grabbed Kris's hand.

"Let's go, before you get into any more trouble," she said, pulling Kris toward the aisle.

"Hey, I didn't do anything. He's the jerk who didn't even apologize."

Erin just laughed and led Kris by the hand toward the restrooms. Kris was struck by how comfortable and right it felt to hold Erin's hand.

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They tried to dry as much of the beer off themselves as possible but it was a lost cause.

Erin grimaced, pulling her soaked shirt away from her body. "I smell like a brewery," she said.

Kris laughed. "Yeah, I think I'm going to call it a day. I don't see how they're going to pull this one out anyway."

"I agree. Not exactly how I planned on spending my day out. Of course, it wasn't all bad," she added, winking at Kris.

The wink did it. Kris decided to take a chance. What was the worst thing that could happen? Erin hadn't been angry when she'd ogled her earlier. If the woman was straight and got offended, then Kris would just write the experience off and walk away.

"So, I was wondering if maybe, you'd like to have dinner with me tonight?" Seeing Erin hesitate, Kris hastily added, "if you don't have any other plans, that is."

"I'm sorry, Kris. I have to pick up my kids from my ex-husband. He just had them for the day. I don't think I could get a babysitter at such short notice."

"You have kids?" Kris stammered. *Boy, you really misjudged this one, she chided herself, not only an ex-husband but kids too!*

Erin smiled brightly. "Yes, twins. A boy and a girl, Christopher and Jenna."

"Well, maybe some other time." Kris was disappointed, she felt strangely drawn to Erin. It had been a long time since any woman had interested her for anything except a quick lay. She knew she would never see the woman again, and besides, she was obviously straight.

"Is it the kids?" Erin asked, disappointed by Kris's response. She'd felt an immediate attraction to the tall blond and wanted to get to know her.

"Huh?"

"It's okay. I understand if you don't want to go out with me because I have children. I try and let women know right up front I have kids and how important they are to me."

Kris wasn't sure what to say. She was confused, and it showed on her face.

Erin suddenly laughed. "Oh, I get it. You thought you were off base; kids, ex-husband... big ole straight girl, right? Well, I can assure you, you're right on base. I'm gay."

"You are?" Kris said, her surprise evident.

"Yeah, I'm gay. I just made a mistake. I married my ex for all the wrong reasons."

Kris grinned. She wanted to get to know this woman and wasn't put off in the least about her children. She loved kids.

"So, how old are your twins?"

"They'll be four in June. I don't know where the time has gone. Every day is an adventure, some days more than others." Erin laughed, indicating her wet clothes.

"I remember when my niece was that age," Kris said, smiling fondly in remembrance. "She's eight now. My brother and his family lived here in San Diego 'til Lindsay was four. I don't get to see her much anymore. My brother's in the Navy and they move around a lot."

"That's a shame. They grow up so fast," Erin said.

"So, how about dinner some other time?" Kris tried again. She didn't want Erin to get away without making plans for a date with her.

"That'd be great. Would a weeknight work for you? I could probably get Alice to watch the kids one evening this week."

"A weeknight is fine with me." Kris quickly fished in her back pocket for her wallet with her business cards. She patted her pockets, then looked sheepishly at Erin. "Got a pen?" Erin pulled a pen out of her purse and offered it to Kris with a smile.

Kris wrote down her home and cell phone numbers for Erin, then handed her the card. "Why don't you give me a call and let me know what day would work best for you?"

"Got another card?" Erin asked.

Kris looked slightly puzzled but handed over another of her business cards. Erin flipped it over and wrote her personal information on the back before handing it back to Kris.

"I'll give you a call as soon as I get in touch with Alice."

A brilliant smile lit Kris's face. "Great! I look forward to it."

They had stopped just inside the tunnel to make their plans and exchange information. As they made their way back to their seats, neither could tame the big smiles they were sporting. When they reached their seats, they were met by curious stares from their companions.

Things broke up quickly when Kris and Erin both expressed their wish to call it a day. Goodbyes were said all around before each group went its separate way.

Jerry noticed that Erin and Kris shared a parting grin. His interest was piqued when Erin winked at Kris before turning away.

## CHAPTER 2

AS THEY MADE the trip home, Jerry watched Kris stare out of the window of the truck with a stupid grin on her face. Finally, he couldn't stand it anymore. "You scored, didn't you?" he asked with a smirk. He wasn't surprised. It wouldn't be the first time Kris had taken someone she had just met into the bathroom for a quickie. Not that he could blame her, Erin was gorgeous. Most straight men they knew envied her luck with the ladies.

Kris's head swung around and she stared aghast at him. "What? No! Of course not."

Jerry's eyebrow quirked in surprise, not because she hadn't scored, but the fact that she sounded so appalled at the very idea.

Kris couldn't believe Jerry would think she would do something like that with Erin. Sure, she'd done it in the past but Erin was... Erin was different. She shook her head, unable to understand it herself.

Jerry looked at Kris curiously. "So, what happened?"

"She told me about her ex-husband and two kids," Kris said, trying to keep a straight face.

"Oh, man... I'm so sorry. She was fine too."

Kris couldn't hold it in any longer and started to laugh. "That's what I thought too. She quickly informed me she was family. Soon as she can get a babysitter for her kids, we have a date!"

"Kids, as in more than one?"

"Yeah, twins – a boy and a girl."

"Are you sure about this, Kris? I mean, you sure you want to get involved with a woman with kids and an ex-husband?" Jerry was shocked. This wasn't Kris's usual type.

Kris turned to her friend her expression turning serious. "I know... I can't explain it. I just feel drawn to this woman... I want to get to know her. And I don't mean just to bed her. It's really strange."

He could see her confusion and smiled reassuringly. He had never seen Kris react to a woman this way. First, she was flustered by Erin, then she admitted that she wanted to get to know her. After what happened with "the bitch", Jerry didn't even want to think her name, Kris hadn't been interested in any woman for anything more than a quick romp between the sheets. Maybe she was finally ready to move on with her life and let the past go. "Well then... you should give it a shot my friend. Just be careful."

"I hear that," Kris said.

Kris spent the rest of the trip home lost in thought about Erin, and wondering when she would see her again.

## CHAPTER 3

**K**RIS LEANED BACK and took a sip of wine. She was stretched out on her couch relaxing after showering and then making a quick dinner. Her thoughts once again turned to her encounter with Erin. There was just something about the woman that intrigued her. She wasn't quite sure what to make of it.

For the past four years, Kris had been happy with casual encounters. She had lost her heart once and vowed never to let that happen again. But something drew her to Erin. It scared her now that she had time to think about it, but at the same time it was too strong to ignore. Kris was pulled from her thoughts by the phone ringing.

Picking it up, she checked the caller ID. *Scott Patterson? I don't know anyone by that name.* She set the phone back on the coffee table and let the answering machine pickup. There was a pause as the message finished, then she heard her.

"Hi, um Kris, this is Erin... from the game."

Kris snatched the phone off the table. "Hi, Erin, I'm here!" She was unable to hide her excitement. "Sorry, I didn't realize it was you."

"Screening your calls, huh?" Erin laughed.

Kris blushed and started to stammer.

Erin laughed again. "No problem... I do it too. I'd forgotten the phone is still in my ex-husband's name. I never bothered to change it."

Not wanting to hear about Erin ex-husband, Kris quickly changed the subject. "So, did you manage to get rid of the beer smell? Jerry whined that the inside of his truck smelled like a brewery by the time we got home."

Erin chuckled. "You should've heard my kids, 'You stink, Mommy!' Neither of them would hug me and they walked around holding their noses 'til I showered. But I've since been given the duo's seal of approval, so I think I managed to finally get rid of it."

Kris laughed quietly at the image of the two kids' antics. "Sounds like they're a handful."

"Well, I can honestly say there's rarely a dull moment around here." Erin quickly got down to why she'd called. She knew most women were bored hearing about other people's children. "Anyway, I spoke to Alice and she's free to watch the kids on Tuesday, if that would be good for you. Um, if you still want to go out."

"Tuesday works for me," Kris said. She was encouraged when she heard Erin's audible sigh of relief. She wasn't the only one looking forward to this date. "What time should I pick you up?"

"How about I meet you somewhere?" Erin countered, sounding a bit nervous.

*Shit... she's in the closet.* Kris groaned internally. She had been out since high school and would not hide who she was or pretend to be something she wasn't for anyone. Wanting to give Erin the benefit of the doubt, she tried again. "I'd be more than happy to pick you up."

Erin took a deep breath before responding. She had lost the chance at a few dates with what she was about to say. "If you don't mind, I'd just as soon meet you at the restaurant. To be honest, I don't like to introduce my kids to the woman I'm dating until I get to know her a little better. I hope you understand."

Kris didn't respond right away. She wasn't sure if she was offended and couldn't help wondering if Erin was being totally honest.

Erin sighed when Kris didn't respond. She tried again, hoping she would understand. "Kids get attached so easily, and they don't understand when someone doesn't come around anymore," Erin said. From her tone, it was obvious that she was speaking from personal experience.

Kris felt relieved. She respected Erin's honesty and her concern for her children.

"I can understand that. Do you like seafood? We could meet at Anthony's in La Mesa around six," Kris said.

"Sure, I'd like to check that out. I've never been there. We usually go to the one at the Embarcadero."

"We could go there, if you prefer."

"No, Anthony's in La Mesa sounds fine. That's actually closer to me. I look forward to it, and thank you."

"For what?"

"For understanding about my kids. Most women don't," Erin admitted sadly.

"Not a problem," Kris said. "Your kids come first and they should."

"I'll see you on Tuesday then."

Kris and Erin both sighed as the call ended. They were now nervous and excited about their upcoming date.

## CHAPTER 4

**K**RIS TAPPED HER fingers on the table nervously as she waited in the bar for Erin. She had arrived early and decided to have a glass of wine to relax before Erin appeared. Looking down at her clothes, she hoped she was appropriately dressed. A dark blue polo shirt and cotton khaki pants covered her lean frame but she wondered if a fancier shirt would have been a better choice. Kris couldn't remember the last time she was so nervous before a date, then again, she reminded herself, she hadn't been out on an official date in a very long time.

She turned toward the door when she felt the hairs on the back of her neck stand up. Erin was just entering the restaurant. She was dressed casually too, in pants and a short sleeve button down shirt. Kris breathed a sigh of relief. She took a moment to watch Erin walk gracefully to the reservation desk before rising to meet her.

Erin was checking out the décor of the waiting area when Kris approached.

"Unique, isn't it?"

Erin jumped at the sound of Kris's voice, then smiled as she continued to look around. They were standing in what appeared to be an undersea grotto with rocky walls decorated with sponges, mussels, starfish and clamshells. Moray eels stuck their heads out from small caves dotting the wall. Dangling overhead was a school of fish and octopi draped themselves over the light fixtures.

Erin chuckled. "That's one way to describe it."

"Check out the bar," Kris said, pointing to her left.

The bar seemed to have been carved out of rock, forming a cave with bottles of liquor and assorted bar ware residing in recessed niches in the back wall.

"It always reminds me of the nautical version of a Fred Flintstone bar," Kris said, making Erin laugh.

The hostess announced Kris's name and informed her that their table was ready. As they made their way into the restaurant proper, Erin continued to look around. Most of the seats were vinyl upholstered booths. Some were decorated with bright purple seats and seashell cushioned backs, while others had vibrant colored seaweed streamers and teal seats. The primary colors of the whole place seemed to be purple and teal with a healthy smattering of yellow, red and green. Rocks decorated like a coral reef surrounded the booths. If that wasn't enough, sitting prominently on each table was a large chunk of rock with convenient slots to hold the salt and pepper shakers as well as sugar packets.

"What were they thinking?" Erin asked, taking her seat.

Kris snickered. "Well, it did earn them a well deserved Onion."

"Onion?"

"Have you ever heard of the Orchid and Onion awards?" Erin shook her head. "It was an annual event sponsored by a local chapter of the American Institute of Architects. They used to give out the awards every year for the best and the worst in local architecture, landscape architecture and interior design. The awards were suspended two years ago. I personally think it was because so many of the Onion recipients complained. Anyway, Anthony's was awarded an Onion the year they remodeled."

Erin glanced around again, laughing. "I agree. It was well deserved." Her laughter stopped abruptly. "Oh, that's beautiful."

Kris followed Erin's line of sight to see what had caught her attention. A tile mosaic took up most of the wall opposite them. It was twenty feet long and five feet high. It depicted

Neptune and a mermaid riding in a chariot pulled by two white stallions through a seascape of seahorses, swordfish and other assorted marine life.

"That," Kris said, nodding toward the beautiful mosaic, "and the glass wall," she pointed to the floor to ceiling wall next to their booth, "along with the lagoon are about the only original elements left from before the remodeling."

Erin turned to look out the glass wall next to their table. She had been so stunned by the interior she hadn't even noticed the large lagoon outside the window. It had a large fountain in the center illuminated by multiple lights. It was a peaceful, tranquil setting to enjoy their dinner. She laughed outright when she spotted the large whimsical fish heads extending from the side of the building spouting water into the lagoon.

Their perusal of the lagoon was interrupted by the arrival of their waiter.

"Good evening, I'll be your server tonight. Would you like to start with a cocktail? We're offering a new drink called Blue Ocean Potion. It comes in a souvenir fishbowl glass with a goldfish-shaped straw." The waiter picked up a display placard from the table advertising the drink.

Erin glanced at the description of the concoction. "I think I'll pass," she said with a polite smile.

Kris stared at the advertisement for a second then looked up at the waiter. "Can we get the glasses without anything in them?"

"Sure, you can buy just the glasses if you like."

"Great, we'll take two," Kris said. She glanced over at Erin and saw her puzzled look. "I thought you could take them to Christopher and Jenna. I bet they'd get a kick out of them."

The brilliant smile lighting Erin's face told Kris she'd done well. "Thank you," Erin said, incredibly pleased at Kris's thoughtfulness. She met Kris's eyes and quickly got lost in their vivid blue depths.

The waiter cleared his throat, reminding Erin and Kris that they had an audience. "Drinks?"

Kris encouraged Erin to go first. "I'd like a glass of the house Merlot."

"Sounds good. I'll have the same," Kris said.

Erin reached over and clasped Kris's hand where it rested on the table. "That was sweet of you to order those glasses for my kids." Erin smiled appreciatively at Kris. "Thank you again."

"No thanks are necessary. It's not a big deal." Kris was happy Erin was pleased but hadn't done it for any other reason than because she thought the kids might have fun with them.

Erin squeezed Kris's hand one more time before releasing it. "It is to me."

The waiter arrived with their drinks and a basket of piping hot bread and special spicy cheese butter to go with it.

"Are you ready to order?"

"No. Give us a few more minutes," Kris said, picking up her menu. "What sounds good to you?" she asked Erin after perusing the menu for several minutes.

"I'm partial to anything with shrimp," Erin said.

They spent some time discussing the merits of different dishes before finally making up their minds.

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After the waiter took their order and departed silence reigned as each woman buttered some bread and sipped her drink. Neither made eye contact, each seemed to have suddenly been struck with a case of jitters.

Finally, Erin broke the silence with a soft laugh. "I know why I'm nervous. I've only been out on a handful of dates since my divorce, but what's your excuse?" she asked with a teasing tone. She was surprised when a vivid blush covered Kris's face.

Kris was embarrassed that her nervousness was so apparent. She wouldn't meet Erin's eyes as she tried unsuccessfully to think of something to say.

Erin was immediately contrite. "I'm sorry, Kris. I was just teasing."

Kris looked up. She felt bad upon seeing the concerned look on Erin's face. "No, you're right, I am nervous." She took a deep breath before continuing. "I haven't been out on a date in a very long time. Guess I'm kind of out of practice," she admitted sheepishly.

"You've gotta be kidding," Erin said, obviously surprised. "No offense, but I find that hard to believe."

"Why?" Kris was taken aback by Erin's response.

"Just look at you! You're gorgeous and you have a body that won't quit," Erin said, then blushed furiously when she realized what she had said. "Not to mention the fact that you're smart, fun to be around and own your own business," Erin added quickly.

"Nice save," Kris said. *She thinks I'm gorgeous!* she crowed internally, her self-confidence bolstered.

Erin laughed, her face still bright red.

"Let me return the compliment. You're very beautiful." Kris's eyes dropped to Erin's breasts, "and talk about a body that won't quit," she said huskily, unconsciously licking her lips.

The blush that had just started to fade came back in full force. Erin felt a thrilling tingle at the look on Kris's face.

The waiter interrupted with their dinners. When he walked away, they started to laugh, the earlier tension broken.

Having regained her confidence with Erin's admission, Kris smiled at Erin as she started the getting to know you process of every first date. "So, what do you do for a living when you're not hanging out at the ballpark?"

"I'm a Medical Transcriptionist. I work out of my home for a local company that provides transcription services for several local hospitals. That way, I'm able to work and still be home with Jenna and Christopher."

"It's great that you have a job that permits you to be at home with your kids. How long have you been a transcriptionist?"

"Almost four years. I started not long after the twins were born," she said. "I originally wanted to be a kindergarten teacher. I got my degree and teaching certificate but never got to teach a class of my own," Erin added, surprising herself. She normally didn't tell people about her teaching ambitions.

"Why not?" Kris asked, interested.

"I got pregnant."

Kris couldn't miss the sadness in her voice.

"So, I take it they weren't planned?"

"No... definitely not," Erin said, her eyes clouding over with the admission.

This time it was Kris who reached out to rest her hand on top of Erin's, giving it a comforting squeeze. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to bring up bad memories."

"No, it's okay. As I told you before, marrying their father was a mistake but I've never regretted having Christopher and Jenna. I hope someday, when they're older, I can start my teaching career."

"What about you?" Erin inquired with a quick change of subject. She didn't want to talk about her ex. "So what made you decide to start your own computer company?"

"You know, now that I think about it, I don't remember telling you what I do," Kris said, arching an eyebrow at Erin in question.

Erin laughed. "You gave me your business card... remember?"

"Oops... forgot about that," Kris said with an embarrassed chuckle. "Let's see... where do I start?" Kris paused to think for a minute before answering. "I went to college and majored in computer science. At first, I thought I'd just be happy doing tech work. You know repairing computers, fixing software glitches... that type of thing. I took a basic programming course and was hooked. My company writes and installs custom security computer software. Most of our work is in the aerospace industry. There's a big problem with industrial espionage. I work with companies to secure their computers from external and internal spying."

"Wow, that must be fascinating work," Erin said.

"It gets interesting sometimes, especially when a company calls us in after they've had a problem. Usually, we have to track down the suspect employees and any software they may have installed before we get down to work. Actually, writing a program can be tedious but we've been at it long enough to have several templates which we customize for each client's needs. That way we don't have to start from scratch every time."

From there, the conversation turned to common interests. They discussed movies they had recently seen. Though in Erin's case that was pretty much confined to recent Disney releases. They were both pleased to learn that they shared a love of 1950s rock and roll music and anything related to science fiction. Kris told Erin of her extensive collections of Oldies music and her huge movie library. The conversation was easy and relaxed without any uncomfortable silences that could happen on first dates.

The waiter returned to ask if they wanted dessert.

Erin and Kris looked down at their plates in amazement. They were surprised to see they had eaten without noticing, having been so engrossed in getting to know each other.

Kris looked over at Erin questioningly.

"I'm pretty full."

"They have great New York style cheesecake... with strawberries," Kris tempted.

Erin hesitated for about half a second, then laughed. "You twisted my arm, but how about we split a piece?"

"Make that one piece of cheesecake with two forks," Kris instructed the server.

Erin glanced down at her watch. She looked up at Kris in shock. "Do you realize we've been here over two hours?"

"No kidding?" Kris said, a quick glance at her watch confirming Erin's observation. "What time do you need to be back?" Kris knew Erin had a babysitter but she would probably need to be home soon.

"I told Alice I'd be back by ten. She has to work very early tomorrow."

Kris was disappointed. She didn't want the night to end. She was consoled by the fact that Erin wore the same look of regret.

Kris was just about to ask for another date when their dessert arrived. She waited until the server left.

"Could I see you again soon?" Kris asked. "Maybe we could go to dinner, then a show?"

Erin smiled in response. "I'd like that very much, Kris."

As they shared dessert, they made plans for their next date but Erin had to wait until she could talk to Alice before making a final commitment.

The waiter set the bill on the table just as they were finishing dessert and brought over the two fishbowl glasses and straws Kris ordered. Both women laughed at the glasses which did look like miniature goldfish bowls.

"Thanks again for these. The kids are going to love them," Erin said as they got up to leave.

Kris took care of the bill and they made their way outside.

"Did you park down here or up there?" Kris asked, pointing up the hill to the upper parking lot.

"I parked up there," Erin said, heading toward the upper lot.

Kris caught her hand and led Erin to a path she hadn't noticed before. The narrow walkway was surrounded by bamboo. "This leads up to the parking lot too," Kris said as she led Erin forward.

Instead of climbing up the steep hill, which Erin had walked down earlier that evening, there were several sets of steps leading up. Kris stopped on a large landing overlooking a stream spilling into the lagoon outside the restaurant. Tall bamboo surrounded the landing with only a small area trimmed back to afford a view of the stream. The stream was illuminated by hidden lights, making it sparkle. It was secluded enough that they couldn't be seen from below and someone would have to be on the steps directly above to spot them. Kris knew the parking lot was well illuminated so she had stopped them with a specific purpose in mind.

Erin gazed at Kris questioningly when she drew them into a corner of the landing. She hadn't been this close to Kris since she had unexpectedly ended up in her lap at the baseball game.

"I thought maybe we could say goodnight here," Kris said. Her voice, normally low and husky, seemed to have dropped even lower. Erin shivered at the tone as a delicious tingle swept her body.

"You okay?" Kris asked in concern, placing her hands on Erin's shoulders.

"I'm good," Erin finally managed to stutter. She had never been affected by anyone like she was by Kris. She could feel the heat emanating off Kris's body and it was attracting her like a magnet. Unconsciously, she took a step forward bringing her body into contact with Kris. The resulting sensation caused both women to gasp.

Kris looked deep into Erin's dark brown eyes. Even in the dim light, she was close enough to see the golden flecks mixed with the brown.

"I'm going to kiss you now," Kris said as she lowered her head.

"Okay," Erin whispered just as their lips met for the first time.

The kiss was soft, their lips just barely brushing. Erin groaned and pressed closer to Kris. The second kiss was firmer, with just a hint of passion behind it. When Kris broke contact and pulled back, she gazed down into Erin's dilated pupils. Kris's hands slid off Erin's shoulders and she wrapped her arms tightly about her, drawing her even closer. She could feel her heart pounding and it was matched by the rapid beat of Erin's heart against her breast.

Erin rose up on her toes, her hand going to the back of Kris's neck. She pulled her down into another kiss. Feeling Kris's tongue begging for entry against her lips, Erin opened her mouth to the welcomed intruder. She heard a moan as Kris's tongue slipped inside but wasn't sure who made it. At this point, she didn't much care.

The sound of children's laughter alerted both women to the fact that they were about to have an audience. They pulled apart reluctantly, both breathing heavily. They separated just as two young boys came charging down the stairs followed quickly by their parents. They smiled and nodded to the couple and their children as they passed.

Once they were gone, Kris tried to take Erin back into her arms but Erin backed up quickly. Kris looked at her in concern.

Erin smiled reassuringly. "One more kiss like that and I won't be able to drive home."

Kris smiled in understanding; she was pretty worked up herself. "I had a good time tonight."

"I did too, Kris. I promise I'll speak to Alice as soon as I get home and call you tomorrow."

"Come on, I'll walk you to your car." Kris reached out to claim Erin's hand.

When they reached Erin's van, they lingered next to it, neither wanting to leave. Kris wanted so badly to kiss Erin again. She glanced around the parking area at all the people getting out of their cars and making their way to the restaurant. It was busy even on a Tuesday night. She settled for a quick kiss on Erin's cheek.

Erin had seen Kris look around and knew why she had chosen the secluded landing to say goodnight. Erin climbed into her van and rolled down the window. "Goodnight... talk to you in the morning," she said before reluctantly driving away.

Kris watched until Erin's taillights disappeared before making her way to her own vehicle.

## CHAPTER 5

"GOOD DATE?"

Erin jumped at the unexpected voice. She had been standing in the kitchen lost in thought about her date with Kris.

"You scared me, Alice," she admonished the older woman. "I thought you'd fallen asleep upstairs. And yes, I had a very good time."

"I figured as much since you were staring off into space with a big smile on your face."

Erin looked over at her mother-in-law and scowled. Well, technically she was her ex-mother-in-law. "I was not."

"Yes, you were," Alice said. "How did things go?"

Her relationship with Alice was very open and honest from the beginning. Sometimes, it was hard to remember she was her ex-husband's mother. She had been very supportive of Erin when she divorced Scott. Alice had stood by her side and informed her son that he was an idiot. Even when Erin confided to her that she was a lesbian, her support had been unwavering. It had been a welcome change from her own mother who never supported her no matter what she did.

"It was great. We really hit it off. She seems to be such an open and caring person. She even ordered these souvenir glasses for the kids just because she thought they'd get a kick out of them," Erin said, showing Alice the two goldfish bowl glasses.

"Good. You need to find someone, Erin. You've been alone too long. The kids are getting older and don't demand anywhere nearly as much of your time as they once did. Find a good woman and settle down."

Erin shook her head in disbelief. "Your son would have a fit if he heard you talking like that. Aren't you supposed to be encouraging me to get back together with Scott?"

"He may be my son but Scott doesn't deserve you. Not after the way he treated you while you were pregnant and right after the twins were born. I thought we raised him better," Alice said, shaking her head in disgust at her son's behavior. In retrospect, she and Robert had catered to Scott too much when he was growing up.

"I realize now we shouldn't have pressured you to marry him. You could never be happy together." At the time, Alice thought she was doing what was best for Erin and Scott. She had not known Erin was gay, but now that she did, it made all the difference in the world. Alice had personal experience with the tragic consequences of trying to force someone to be something they weren't. Although she had died when Alice was a teenager, she still grieved for her Aunt June. Her mother's sister had committed suicide after her family refused to accept that she was gay and tried to force her into an arranged marriage.

Alice walked over and laid her hand on Erin's forearm. "I think of you as the daughter I never had, and if being with a woman is what makes you happy, then that's the way it should be. I'm just happy you allow us to share your life and the lives of our grandchildren."

"You know I would never stop you from seeing the kids," Erin said.

"I know, Erin. And Robert and I are eternally grateful for that," she said, reaching over to hug Erin. "Enough of this serious stuff. I need to head home, six a.m. comes early."

"Oh, before you go, could I ask you to watch Christopher and Jenna on Friday night?"

"Got a hot date?" Alice asked.

"Only if you watch the kids," Erin countered, grinning.

"No problem, why don't you let them spend the night?"

"You don't have to do that. We're just going to dinner and a show. We shouldn't be too late."

Alice scowled at Erin. "Okay, let me put this another way. Robert and I would appreciate it if you'd let the kids spend Friday night with us."

Erin hugged Alice conveying her appreciation. "Thanks."

After they said their goodbyes and Alice headed home, Erin glanced at the clock in the kitchen wondering if it was too late to call Kris. Finally, deciding she didn't want to appear too anxious, she chose to wait until morning.

\* \* \*

This ends the Excerpt of Double Trouble

## About The Author

**RJ** NOLAN lives in Southern California with her life partner. They share their home with their Great Dane. RJ has always been interested in storytelling. She has been actively writing for the last several years. You can contact RJ Nolan at her Web site: <http://rjnolan.com>.

## Other Titles By This Author

### **All Gone** – Lesbian: Mystery

#### **Summary**

**D**r. Kody Garrett is a young veterinarian new to the North Park Animal Clinic. After the untimely death of her previous employer and mentor, she came to work for Dr. Herbert Donaldson. While she enjoys her work at the clinic, she has been less than happy with her new employer. His poor attitude and constant criticism has taken its toll on Kody. For the first time in the eight months that she has worked for the clinic, Dr. Donaldson is leaving Kody in charge of the clinic while he attends a medical conference. She is determined to prove to her boss that she is capable of the responsibility with which he has entrusted her. The young vet's confidence is shaken when less than twenty-four hours after being left in charge of the clinic, previously healthy dogs begin to die unexpectedly.

BJ Braden is a seasoned Animal Control Officer. When she is called by Dr. Garrett concerning the unexplained animal deaths, her suspicions are immediately aroused.

Risking the ire of her boss, Kody teams up with BJ to solve the mystery of what they soon learn are a rash of animal poisonings in their city going back several years. Amidst their growing attraction to each other, they struggle to protect the animals to whom they have devoted their lives.

A new rash of poisonings sets the pair in high gear and eventually costs Kody her job when she defies her boss and continues to help BJ investigate the newest animal deaths. Kody's life is further complicated by one of the veterinary technician's growing obsession with her. The woman relentlessly tries to pursue a personal relationship with Kody.

When Kody repeatedly turns down the woman's overtures, she begins to stalk her.

Kody and BJ's relationship grows even as events begin to spiral out of control. While dealing with the threats of the stalker, the two continue to pursue the pet killers and eventually bring them to justice.

## Back Cover Summary

### **Double Trouble** – Lesbian: Romance

**L**ITTLE DID KRIS know that the traditional first baseball game of the season played each April between the San Diego Padres and Los Angeles Dodgers would change her life. Tripping in front of the dark-haired Erin and caught ogling to boot, was only the preamble for the tall blond, as both ended up splashed with beer in the stands and laughing good-naturedly about the accident and clean-up. So begins what is bound to open old wounds and make both women stronger as they find in each other a connection – love, lust, trust, kids and trouble times two – that will decidedly make their relationship a rocky one but ultimately worth every hurdle they overcome.

\* \* \*

**T**hank You, for reading an Excerpt of  
**Double Trouble.**

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