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## Double Trouble

by Richard Lewis

Looking back, I can't explain why I did these things. I was love's luckless fool, my inner voice drowned out, falling headlong into oblivion and fatally attracted to those unable to love me.

It all started with the beautiful but deadly Mandy, an older woman with a seven-year-old daughter. Everyone loved Mandy, her light shone like the harvest moon. Only later would I discover the dark side, seemingly reserved just for me.

I knew we weren't really suited but enjoyed her attention and we saw each other for a while, until it petered out. Having assumed we'd both moved on, she appeared at my work one day, telling me she was pregnant. I was poleaxed, as if hit by a missile.

I had my doubts about being the father but somehow, we got back together and there I was, sleepwalking into the abyss.

Four years later, unable to take the relentless criticism, or her daughter's penetrating resentment towards me, I left. I was devastated about leaving Tilly, our lovely three-year-old but there was nothing else for it.

A year later, I met the seductively, delusional Hannah. She reeled me in like a dumb mackerel in a line. Incredibly, another older woman with a young daughter. We started going out and seemed to have much in common, not least, enjoying a drink or three.

One day, while out walking, my head was turned by a young, flaxen-haired beauty. Hannah went ballistic.

“Why are you looking at her, don’t you find me attractive? You don’t love me, you bastard.”

She started lashing out with her fists. I knew she was insecure and tried to reassure her, though I have to admit, the extreme behaviour was not attractive. Having made one bad mistake in the relationship department I was not about to make another and told myself it was over, though, me being me, hadn’t been clear with Hannah.

The next week she called, inviting me for lunch. I wasn’t doing anything, so against my better judgement, unable to say no, I went. We got on well and after a few drinks, fell into bed. I have to say, the sex was always great and I found myself hooked once more.

Two months later, I had a late-night call. It was Hannah.

“I’m pregnant.” She said, excitedly.”

“Fuck no.” I replied, thinking, ‘this can’t be happening again.’

I felt terrible about Tilly, not having me around and couldn’t bear the thought of another child without a regular father, so we moved in together. There were good times but when it was bad, it...was...bad!!!

Thinking it would make her feel more secure I asked her to marry me. It made no difference, neither did things improve when the baby arrived. I had to create a safe room, locking myself away for hours.

Then one drink fuelled evening, we had a big fight. I pushed her away to protect myself and she started screaming, at which point, her daughter, who hated me, called the police.

Two constables arrived, understandably concerned for Hannah and her daughter and seemingly uninterested in my side of the story. I felt my legs had been cut off when they told me I had to leave the house. I never returned.

But then there was Sophie.