

Carina Press Blog Tour Program: *The Love Study* by Kris Ripper

Excerpt

“I don’t date people,” Sidney said.

I hid my disappointment relief by forcing a laugh. “Oh, me neither. Mostly. Well. Not for a long time. Like...” I focused on the gentle sweep of their hair back from their face as if it would introduce a new topic of conversation. It didn’t.

“See, that sentence seemed like it was going to be followed by another thought.”

“Um, sorry, I realized I was basically spilling my guts to a stranger. You are totally not obligated to listen to me ramble. Only my oldest friends are contractually bound to deal with me being a hot mess.” Cue self-deprecating smile.

“You don’t seem like a hot mess to me and I don’t feel obligated. What were you going to say?”

What the hell. “Just, for a long time my not-dating policy worked? But lately it’s kind of getting...old. I’ve thinking maybe I should...at least try again. With the dating thing.” I wrinkled my nose. “Then I think that’s a horrible idea because oh my god where do you even start? Apps? Bars? I have no idea where people meet to date instead of hook up.”

Their eyes were light brown behind their red-framed glasses and I felt a bit exposed under their gaze, like maybe the glasses had a filter that could read my thoughts. Right when I was starting to shift uncomfortably, they cleared their throat. “I have an idea. It might be a bit obscene, though.”

I batted my eyelashes at them. “I enjoy the obscene.”

“Would you be interested in coming on my YouTube channel? It’s an advice show. I do one livestream and one pre-taped show each week.”

“Er...”

“An interview would be cool, but what if we did a series? You could come on once a week and talk about your recent dating adventures. I could find you the dates if you wanted, since you’d be supplying me with content.” Now their hands sort of danced in explanation. “And if you’re trying to get back into the dating thing anyway, maybe it’s two birds with one stone.”

My brain flooded with words and images—everything from *danger*, *Will Robinson* to a vision of Sidney and I shaking hands for the camera at an awards show where we’d just won for “Spectacular Advances in Dating Advice”—but I couldn’t seem to speak.

“Yeah, you’re right, it’s a terrible idea.” Their eyebrows were now a straight line behind their red frames. “Excuse my shameless desire to exploit your emotional turmoil for views.”

“Oh, no, I didn’t...I didn’t think that at all. I mean, I guess yes on the exploiting thing, but that doesn’t bother me. I was more...processing.”

“If it makes it any less gross, if I dated, I would absolutely mine my dating experiences for views.” They frowned. “Okay, no, that doesn’t make it less gross. Sorry. This is a nonideal first impression.”

“I like your glasses,” I blurted. “Just, that was my first impression. Well, actually I thought, *Those better not be fucking fashion glasses*, and then when I saw they weren’t I was impressed. They look really good on you. Not everyone can pull off red frames.”

“Oh. Um.” They straightened their shoulders. “Thank you.”