



Reluctant Press presents:

Cat & Doug

Briana Vermont



ILLUSTRATIONS BY DAVID McKINLEY

A 'HER TV' E-BOOK

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Cat and Doug

By Briana Vermont

Voluptuous Russian super spy Sonja Vavoom shot the last of the guards, then hiked her skirt as she raced up the stairs to the next level. Dashing American agent Tom Steel stepped lightly up and onto the receptionist's glass-top desk, placed a hand up to the next floor, and then deftly lifted himself up and over the railing, landing in front of Sonja as she rounded the corner.

"Nice moves," said voluptuous Russian super spy Sonja Vavoom.

"Thanks," replied dashing American agent Tom Steel. "I've been practicing. So, let's make out."

Tom grabbed Sonja, kissing her passionately.

"This is not the time," Said Sonja. "We're in a building full of enemy agents, dude!"

As if on cue, two enemy agents came around the corner. The first sighted on Sonja. With her arms pinned by Tom's embrace, there was nothing she could do. The bullet hit her in the shoulder, the force sending both Sonja and Tom to the floor. Released from Tom's embrace, Sonja was able to pull out her Glock-18 9mm (select fire model), and easily dispatched both guards.

"Ah, no, look what you did! You got me shot, dude!" complained Sonja as she stood, checking both directions for more guards.

Tom laughed, still seated where he had landed on the ground. "You should pay more attention."

"Ya, well, *you* should pay more attention," Sonja responded.

Sonja started down the hall to the next corridor, as Tom picked himself up from the floor and followed. Sonja easily picked off two more guards as she rolled into the corridor, firing her Glock-18 9mm (select fire model) from floor level at the startled agents.

"Still using that Glock?" said Tom as he joined Sonja in the corridor. "You should get yourself one of these."

Sonja looked at Tom with his Russian GM-94 43mm multi-shot grenade launcher. "Dude, where did you get that?" she said, obviously impressed.

"Off that last guard we shot," he replied. "Told you, you should pay more attention! So, you ready to make out yet?"

"Oh, jeez, just get over it already," said Sonja. She led the way down the corridor, opened the next door and automatically shot the guard standing behind it. "We're supposed to be finding the President. Which of these doors do you think we'll find him?"

"I know where he is," said Tom, taking the lead. Tom headed directly to a door and opened it, revealing the President, as well as three enemy agents. The agents fired at Sonja, who was standing directly in the opening, hitting her in the leg.

"Dude, you could have warned me!" she yelled as she returned fire, dispatching all three agents. "Now I've got a bullet in my leg! Seriously, I can't take many more bullets."

Tom laughed. "You still look okay to me. So, makeout time?"

"Ah no, not in front of the President," she said, fending off his advances. Sonja disengaged herself from Tom, and approached the President. She was only halfway across the large office, though, when the President suddenly blew up before her eyes. Turning to face Tom, she saw that he was holding a smoking grenade launcher.

"Dude, you just killed the President of the United States, with a grenade launcher!" she chastised him. "Why would you do something so lame?"

"Our orders were to find the President. So, we found him. Next we have to shut down the nuclear reactor, and trust me, you don't want the President tagging along on a mission like that. Seriously, I've done this before. He's slow, and wanders off if you don't watch him, then you have to rescue him all over again. It's best just to kill him right away."

"Okay, if you say so," said Sonja. "So, which way to the nuclear reactor?"

Tom didn't have a chance to reply, as two agents entered through the door, and another three crashed through the plate glass windows. Sonja was shot again, this time in the chest. Sonja and Tom fired wildly as they dove for cover, behind the desk.

"Why is it always me who gets shot?" complained Sonja.

Tom laughed, as bullets whizzed past their heads. "Hey, while we're stuck here, we might as well make out, right?"

"At least wait till we've killed all the guards," replied Sonja as she looked around the desk, killing one of the guards lined up across the room. "Seriously, dude, I really can't take many more bullets."

Between the two of them, they were able to finish off all the guards. "Okay, you want to make out, now that nobody's shooting at us, let's do it and get it over with," said Sonja.

Tom just looked at her. "Nah, it's no fun when you just agree like that," he said.

Voluptuous Russian super spy Sonja Vavoom and dashing American agent Tom Steel fought their way to the building's nuclear power plant. Sonja and Tom were both hit mul-

tiple times as they found their way through the maze of interconnecting corridors, filled with armed guards. Standing in the control room, Tom faced Sonja.

"Almost done the mission," he said to her. "Last chance to be able to tell all your hot, Russian, super spy girlfriends that you made out with Tom Steel in a nuclear power plant."

Tom grabbed Sonja, kissing her passionately. But as Sonja looked up, she saw one more guard behind the railing on the floor above. There was nothing she could do with her arms pinned.

"Dude, there's a sniper!" she yelled.

Tom spun around, using Sonja as a shield. Three bullets hit her, square in the back. Tom lined up a shot on the guard, and fired. The guard tumbled over the railing, crashing to the floor below.

Sonja slouched to the floor, lying back in a pool of blood. "You got me shot again!" she yelled. "Dude, I am seriously bleeding out this time."

Tom laughed. "Sorry, dude," he said to her. "So, maybe we should hurry and make out while we still can."

Sonja laughed. "You are seriously warped, dude." Then everything went black. Cameron set down his controller on the couch, and stood.

"No, dude, sit down. Let's play again," said Doug.

"Dude, it's three in the morning. I need to get some shuteye," said Cam.

"One more. Come on, just to the secret base, then we can save it," Doug tried.



Cam sat down, and picked up the controller. "Okay, but only if I get to be Tom Steel."

"Nah, I don't like to be the girl," said Doug. He hit the Replay button before Cam had a chance to hit Select Characters.

"Okay, but seriously dude, stop trying to make out with me. Every time you do that I get shot."

Doug just laughed, as he flipped through the opening scenes. He found the start of the action; Dashing American agent Tom Steel approached the voluptuous Russian super spy Sonja Vavoom, seated at the bar.

"So what else you got to do in this town?" asked Cam, as he had Sonja stand and follow Tom out of the bar, into a waiting taxi.

"Anything we ever did back home, we can do here," answered Doug, never taking his eyes from the screen.

"So have you got a beach? Aw, man, get off the makeout button already!"

Doug laughed. "You know we've got a beach," he answered.

"Aw right! Surfin', dude!" cried out Cam.

"Sorry no surfin'. It's only a lake, not the ocean, dude."

"Oh, ya," said Cam. "But maybe we can just go to the beach for the rays tomorrow."

"Not tomorrow, I've got classes in the afternoon. But Saturday, definitely," Doug told Cam as he steered Tom Steel's car into a lamppost.

"Cool," said Cam. "You got somewhere I can hang out and play video games tomorrow?"

"Sure, there's video games at the mall. I'll show you where it is," said Doug as he sprayed enemy agents with machine gun rounds.

"Dude, watch what you're doing! You just shot me," complained Cam.

Doug laughed. "You're not paying attention again."

The two played in silence for a while. Eventually Cam asked, "So what about this girlfriend of yours? What was her name - Larry? We gonna see her at all this week?"

"Her name's Lacie, and no, we won't see her," Doug answered sharply.

"Why, where is she?" asked Cam.

"I broke up with her," Doug replied, pretending to be absorbed by the game.

"Woe, bummer dude," said Cam. "If we're going to the beach on Saturday, though, and there's no surf, then we should invite a couple chicks to go with us, don't you think?"

Doug hadn't laughed once during this conversation. Something had definitely hit a nerve. "Look, dude," he said. "Lacie's got a lot of friends on campus. She was totally stressed when I broke up with her, so she blacklisted me. No chick on campus will even look at me. So there's no way I can get a date for myself, let alone you."

"Woe, totally egregious," said Cam.

"Tell me about it," replied Doug. The two played on in silence, as Cam thought about the problem.

"She shouldn't be able to do that," Cam finally announced.

"No argument here," agreed Doug.

"We can't let her get away with it," added Cam.

"I'm with you," said Doug unenthusiastically. The two continued playing in silence, as Cam continued to think.

"What if Lacie found out you were going out with another girl?" suggested Cam. "Then she'd know she lost, and everyone would stop blacklisting you."

"Ya, well that's kind of the problem, isn't it?" said Doug. "No girl will go out with me."

"So, I'm here for a week. While we're just hanging out, people will see us. Later, you can tell everyone I was your girlfriend. Lacie finds out, all her friends know about it, you're off the hook, dude!"

Doug just looked at his friend. "You're not a chick, you're a dude, dude."

"Ya, but you tell everyone that I'm a chick. So who's gonna know?"

"So, you want to dress up like a chick all week?" asked Doug.

"No, no way dude!" replied Cam. "You're not getting it. I don't have to dress up or anything. Look at me, dude. I'm short, thin, and have long hair. I get mistaken for a chick all the time. So we just hang out like always, but later you can tell everyone I was your girlfriend."

Doug laughed. "You don't look that much like a chick," he said.

"Sure I do. You remember that Hallowe'en in grade 10, when I went out as a French maid?"

Doug laughed again. "That was grade 11."

"I was in ten, you were eleven."

"Oh ya," said Doug, laughing. "You had everyone fooled. Remember that old lady who told you off? 'That costume is not appropriate for a young lady,' she says! But there's no way I'm hanging out with you if you're dressed like that."

"You're still not getting it. I don't have to wear a dress or anything. I get mistaken for a chick all the time just wearing shorts and a T-shirt. I'm telling you, this will work," said Cam. "I can even sound like a chick if I have to. Listen to me, I'm like, a total airhead," he said in a chick's voice.

Doug really laughed at this. "That's hilarious. How do you do that?"

"Oh, m'gosh, it's like, my impersonation of Karen Spencer," said Cam.

"Karen Spencer," said Doug, remembering. "She really was a total airhead." Doug paused the game, and saved. "You seriously need some sleep, dude. It's five in the morning, and you are not thinking right."

"Okay, but we'll talk about this in the morning," said Cam.

"Ya, hopefully we'll both have forgotten this whole conversation in the morning," replied Doug.

The two friends climbed into Doug's bed, and were instantly asleep.

Doug woke the next morning, but Cameron was nowhere to be seen. Doug checked his alarm clock. "Nine thirty. We just barely went to bed. Where's he gone already?"

Doug sat on the side of the bed, rubbing his face. Eventually he managed to stand, and left the bedroom. The floor was quiet; it seemed that no one else was up yet. He made his way to the bathroom he shared with three other guys on the floor, only to find it locked.

Doug pounded a couple of times on the door. "Hey, open up. You're not supposed to lock the door." Doug heard the lock being opened, and walked into the bathroom.

"Dude, what are you doing?" Doug asked incredulously.

"What's it look like I'm doing?" replied Cam.

"It looks like you're shaving your legs in my bathroom, but that can't be right," said Doug.

"Hey, it's okay. I shaved my legs all last spring, when I was biking," Cam told him.

"So why are you doing it now?" Doug had to wonder.

"It's like we talked about last night. People will see us hanging out this week. So next week, when they say, 'Who was that you were hanging with?' you can say, 'Oh, she was my girlfriend.' Then Lacie loses, and you're not blacklisted."

"Dude," said Doug, shaking his head, "I seriously do not think you've thought this through."

Cam was finished with his legs. He washed off the excess cream and toweled his legs dry. Then he went to Doug's room to change into baggy shorts and a loose T-shirt, and waited for Doug to come back.

"So, dude," said Cam as Doug entered the room. "You've got classes this afternoon, right?"

"Ya," replied Doug, "so you're pretty much on your own today."

"That's cool. You said there's a mall, with an arcade. Maybe you can drop me off there and we'll meet up later."

"Sure," said Doug, having some doubts. "You're not going to do anything weird at the mall, are you?"

"No way," said Cam. "I'm telling you, this is all I have to do. We just hang out like usual, and by this time next week all your problems are over."

"I seriously doubt that, but you gotta promise me. This is all you plan to do, and from now on we just hang out like usual, right?"

"I swear it, dude. So show me this arcade."

Doug got dressed, and led Cam out of the residence and to his car. He was oddly self-conscious, after Cameron's weird proposal, and watched other people's reactions as they passed. There weren't many people out this morning; most students were either still in bed or already in class. However, of the few guys they did pass, most of them seemed to check Cam out.

On the way into the mall, it happened again. A man exiting the mall looked up as they approached, focusing in on Cam. Doug watched him as they passed. The man looked away as soon as they passed, but didn't look again to check Cam out from behind. Doug opened the door to the mall, and let Cam through.

"You're right," said Doug.

"Probably," agreed Cam. "About what?"

"People do mistake you for a girl," said Doug, looking carefully at Cam for the first time.

"Well, duh," said Cam. "That's what I've been telling you."

"So why don't you cut your hair, dude?" asked Doug.

"Hey, it's my hair!" said Cam, as if that was answer enough.

"But guys don't look twice. They don't check you out from behind."

"So, what are you saying?" asked Cam.

"I'm saying, you're not a very pretty girl," answered Cam.

"Dude, I never said I looked like a pretty girl, just that people sometimes think I'm a chick," said Cam, slightly offended. "And I'm glad, too. I don't want guys checking me out!"

"And I don't want everyone thinking I'm dating an ugly chick," said Doug, half to himself.

"Hey," said Cam in his own defense. "I just said I'm not pretty. 'Not pretty' is not the same as ugly. At worst, maybe I'm plain."

"Plain can be fixed," said Doug. They were in a department store, and at that moment were passing by the cosmetics department. Doug walked over to the counter and looked at the items for sale.

"Maybe you should get a lipstick, or something," Doug said.

"Dude, that's not the plan," said Cam. "Remember, we're just going to hang out? You're the one who didn't want me to do any more."

"Can I help you, sir?" asked a saleswoman from behind the counter.

Doug got a mischievous look in his eyes. "Not me, I'm just the guy with the money. But maybe you can help her." He turned to Cam and pulled out his wallet. "I'm not going to stick around for a complete makeover. Here's my credit card, get whatever you need, and I'll be in the electronics department when you're ready."

Cam's mouth just hung open, speechless. Doug turned to the saleswoman. "So, will she be beautiful when you're through?"

"Don't you worry, she's going to be gorgeous. We'll be about half an hour." She looked at the credit card, sitting on the counter, as if it were her new bank account. "Make that an hour."

Doug walked away, leaving Cam with his mouth still hanging open.

"Sit right here, sweetheart. Have you ever had your colors done? You're a winter tone, which means you should use intense, rich colors. Cool blues, bright reds, hot pinks. Here, let me check you with my color chart. Don't be so nervous!"

Ninety minutes and \$120 later, Cam finally got away from the cosmetics saleswoman. He had had to do his airheaded-bimbo routine the entire time, while the woman applied every form of goop known to woman on his face. At some point she figured out that Cam didn't know how to apply his own makeup, so she turned the experience into a lesson. She had Cam apply his own makeup, over and over again until he could do it right. Cam was now an expert at eyeshadow, eyeliner, mascara, lipstick, and a dozen other pencils, powders, and lotions. She sold him one of everything, along with a complete set of applicator brushes. It was the most humiliating experience of his life. The only redeeming thing was, at least it was Doug's money he had wasted.

Doug was not in electronics as promised, naturally. Cam wandered all over the store looking for him, finally finding him in sporting goods. Cam was furious, but waited, standing behind Doug, until Doug turned around. Doug tried to get past this girl who was blocking the aisle, but she wouldn't move. When he finally looked up and recognized his friend, he couldn't help laughing.

"Oh, man, look at you!" he laughed.

"This was so not the plan, dude!" Cam shouted back.

Doug was still laughing. "I'm sorry dude, but it's funny. Come on, it was a joke. Lighten up." Then Doug took a good look at his friend. "Hey, dude, I take back everything I said before."

"What are you talking about?" Cam asked.

"About when I said you were an ugly girl. You're not ugly at all. Not even plain. Dude, you are really cute."

"Dude," said Cam with disgust. "That is not something that one dude wants to hear from another dude."

"But it's true," said Doug, actually becoming slightly smitten. "And getting angry just makes you cuter. Your face goes all pink, and your lips all pouty. You're one of those girls who's so tiny and perfect, you know she couldn't hurt you no matter how angry she gets."

"I'm not one of those girls. I'm not any kind of girl," replied Cam as he turned and stormed away. Doug followed him, trying to calm him down.

"Hey, slow down. I'm sorry, okay? I was just surprised at how you looked, that's all." Doug caught up to Cam, grabbed his hand and forced him to stop. "Please, I'll make it up to you. What do you want?"

Doug wasn't ready for the impact of Cam's sad face, however. He continued to hold Cam's hand as he spoke, Cam's eyes downcast and his lower lip quivering. "I just want to go somewhere and wash my face."

Doug had to force himself to remember, this was Cam he was speaking to. "Sure, we can do that right now," he said soothingly.

"Then we just hang out, and stick to the plan," Cam said.

"Just hanging out is great," replied Doug. "With or without the plan."

Cam smiled, which made Doug smile, for reasons he would rather not think about. Still holding Cam's hand, he led him from the department store, through the mall toward the washrooms. He noticed a couple of guys check out Cam, and this time they did turn to check him out from behind after they passed. A number of confusing emotions passed over Doug.

"I bought you a present," Doug said.

"Really? What is it?" asked Cam, starting to feel better.

"Check it out," said Doug, handing a bag to Cam.

Cam opened the bag, curious. Inside he found a DVD. "Blue Surf!" he read on the cover. "This movie is awesome! Babes in bikinis and tubular waves, thanks dude!"

"I figured we'd watch it tonight," said Doug as he enjoyed watching the play of emotions across his friend's face. He wasn't looking forward to letting Cam wash off the makeup, but there really wasn't any way around it.

"Excellent idea," said Cam. He slipped the DVD into his shoulder bag as they continued walking through the mall.

"Dude, where did you get the purse?" asked Doug.

"It's not a purse, it's a shoulder bag," replied Cam.

"You can call it whatever you want, but it's a purse."

"The label says 'Unisex'. So it's not a purse, okay? It's for men or women," said Cam.

"So, if it's not a woman's purse, where did you get it?" Doug persisted.

"Back in the women's department," admitted Cam, to Doug's renewed laughter. "Look, that saleswoman told me I needed it, okay? She said I had to carry all this stuff with me everywhere, and I couldn't put it in my pockets, okay? Would you please stop laughing?"

Doug wiped his eyes, and managed to stop laughing. "Sorry, dude."

"It's not a purse," persisted Cam. "It's a shoulder bag. And I'm going to keep using it."

"To carry your makeup?" said Doug, his laughter resumed.

"How far to the washroom, anyway?" said Cam.

Doug regained his self-control. "It's just down there, on the left," he told Cam as he looked far down the mall and pointed. However, what he saw was much closer than the washrooms.

"Oh, no, move it, over here, hide!" he said, pushing Cam across the aisle toward a shop.

"What are you doing, dude?" asked Cam.

"There's someone we don't want to meet," said Doug, but he could see it was already too late. He had been spotted, and they were coming over. "Start channeling your inner Karen Spencer," he whispered to Cam.

"Doug, fancy meeting you here," said Lacie coldly.

"Hi Lacie, hi Mindy," said Doug to the two girls, standing between them and Cam. "I thought you weren't speaking to me."

"We're only being polite. Speaking of being polite, are you going to introduce us to your friend?"

"Friend?" said Doug, attempting to hide Cam behind his back as he looked around the mall.

"Yes, friend," replied Lacie. "As in, the young lady whose hand you're holding so fondly?" Doug and Cam suddenly realized they were, in fact, still holding hands, and dropped them immediately.

"Oh, friend," said Doug nervously, not sure how to proceed. "That's just Cameron," he said, to stunned silence.

"Catherine," said Cam. "Like, hi," he ditzed, holding out his hand.

"Yes, Catherine," said Doug, still in shock. "Not Cameron, nothing like that. Cam for short."

"Cat for short," said Cam, shooting a look at Doug. "Like, everyone calls me Cat."

"Cat, I like that," said Mindy in a friendly manner as she took Cat's hand. Lacie was still not ready to be friends, however. No one at the university was supposed to go out with Doug, as long as she had anything to say about it.

"Are you going to school here?" Lacie asked Cat.

"Like, no way," said Cat. "Doug and I were, like, best friends forever in high school. I just graduated this year, and I came up for a visit."

Lacie was taken aback by this comment. She turned to Doug and asked, "You had a girl for your best friend all through high school?"

"Um, yes?" replied Doug.

"Oh, so you're just friends," said Mindy. "Lacie thought maybe you were Doug's girlfriend," she said to Cat.

"No, nothing like that," said Doug nervously, although no one heard as Cat replied.

"Oh, but I am!" said Cat, grabbing Doug's arm and hugging him to her. "We were, like, just friends, before. But this morning, when he picked me up from the train, he was so ro-

mantic, and he said now he knew I was the one girl for him, and he like wanted to be so much more than friends!"

"Oh, that's so sweet," said Mindy.

"You had a girl, for your best friend, all through high school?" said Lacie.

Doug was beginning to sweat, and wanted desperately to leave. "Well, nice getting caught up with you, Lacie, Mindy. We've got to go now, I've got a class in twenty minutes." Doug started to leave, pulling Cat along behind him.

"What are you doing while Doug's in class?" asked Lacie.

"Oh, I'm going to, like, hang out at the mall," said Cat without thinking.

"Then you should come with us!" said Mindy.

"No!" said Cat, suddenly realizing that hanging out at the mall was exactly what these girls planned to do. "That's okay, I'll, like, hang on my own."

"No," said Lacie. "You're coming with us." She wanted to find out more about this relationship.

"Doug?" said Cat plaintively, hoping he could fix things.

"Sounds good to me, gotta go, bye," he said, turning to make a run for it.

"Doug!" said Mindy sharply. "Come back here!"

Doug came back sheepishly, wondering what she could possibly want. When he obviously didn't understand, Mindy said to him, "She's your girlfriend! Say goodbye properly."

"Um, goodbye, Cat," said Doug. "See you later," he added as he turned to leave again. This time, Mindy grabbed him by the shoulder and forcibly turned him to face Cat.

"Doug, can't you see, she wants you to kiss her!" Mindy told him.

"Who, me? No," said Cat.

"Um, I don't, I mean," said Doug.

"Wait a minute," said Mindy. "You two have never kissed, have you? Oh, this is so precious; you're both so nervous! Wait, don't kiss yet."

Cat and Doug didn't have to be told to wait. Mindy rummaged through her purse, and eventually came up with her camera phone. "Okay, go ahead," she said, framing the happy couple on the screen.

Cat and Doug just stared at each other. Finally, not knowing what else to do, Cat held his breath, threw his arms around Doug and kissed him, long and hard. Doug managed to kiss him back, at least part of the time.

Doug eventually broke away and said, "Okay, I've really got to go. See you later." With that, he turned and ran down the mall to the nearest exit.

"This is so cute!" said Mindy. "Cat, come here and see the picture I took of you and Doug!"