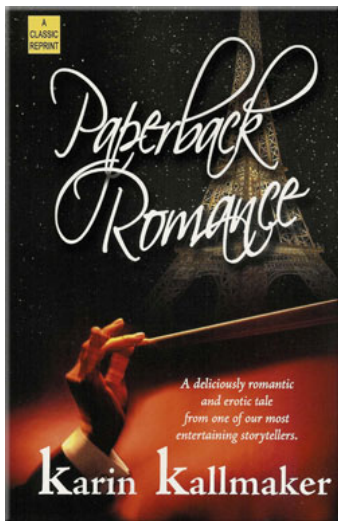

Excerpt from PAPERBACK ROMANCE



PAPERBACK ROMANCE IS
A CONTEMPORARY
LESBIAN ROMANCE BY
KARIN KALLMAKER.

PRINT AND EXCLUSIVE
EBOOK FROM:



KARIN'S BOOKS AT BELLA:
[PAPERBACK](#)
[EBOOK](#)

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL
Uncorrected proof

FROM CHAPTER SIX

Carolyn could only hope that the masseuse put Carolyn's perspiration and high color down to the vigor of the massage, and did not attribute it to her blonde hair and Nordic figure. She recalled suddenly how flustered she had felt around Samantha and her dark beauty. How warm ... yes, she was definitely entering a warm period. A highly tactile period when everything from the rough towel under her to a silk blouse sent shivers through her body. The flustered thoughts about

Samantha recalled similar flustered thoughts about Alison, and then Nick of course came to mind again. She refused to hope for a message when she got back to her hotel.

There were four messages. The last three were marked "urgent."

"How does a gala sound?" Nick's voice was not its usual abrupt tone – much warmer, in fact.

"Well, I've got a concert tonight ... not yours, I'm afraid," Carolyn said as naturally as she could manage. The massage had left her energized and strong.

Nick made a disparaging noise. "Rubbish, I'm sure. Well, maybe you could just drop in and ... that'll give us a chance to compare schedules. I'd love to sightsee with you again. Why don't I leave a ticket to the gala for you at the door and maybe we could slip away and make plans."

"A gala sounds interesting," Carolyn said finally. "Tell me where."

"*Schloss Mirabell* ... do you know where that is?"

"I walked by it this afternoon. I'd love to see the inside. I'll be there." Well, Carolyn told herself, if she had something to look at and explore, then seeing Nick would probably have less impact on her composure. Right.

A gala called for her best outfit, she decided, which was a raw silk suit in black she had bought on impulse in Madrid. She belted an elegant strand of silver links that

Alison had given her around the tunic, and tucked the pants into her calf-height boots. She surveyed herself critically. She hoped she looked cool and aloof. "You're a dame who can stand it when the going gets tough," she told her reflection. She wondered if this outfit was something a self-respecting lesbian would wear.

Lesbian, lesbian, lesbian, she asserted as she stared at herself. Color flared in her cheeks. Get used to it, she thought. Come on. "Hi, I'm a lesbian," she said to her reflection. The woman in the mirror looked too perky to be a lesbian. Carolyn wondered if she would look better if she got her hair frosted. She tried to picture herself as a blonde, or a redhead. Something exotic. Something that looked more like a lesbian somehow. "If you're a lesbian, prove it," she told the woman in the mirror.

The woman in the mirror blushed and kept on blushing. Carolyn wondered if lesbians blushed. Nick had blushed, but Nick wasn't ... no, just because she wore men's clothes did not mean she was a lesbian. But why had Nick kissed her ... oh, it was hardly a kiss. Dwelling on it was making her crazy. "Every woman you meet is not a lesbian," she told herself sternly. She had thought, throughout the day, she had seen literally hundreds of real, substantial, gorgeous women she was certain were all lesbians. She sighed, then realized the time and hurried away from her reflection and the telltale blush.

The ticket Nick had promised was waiting for her, and she was given admittance to the main building of the baroque palace. With a sigh, she walked slowly up the marble Cherub's Staircase to the main ballroom. Once there she found no sign of Nick so she fought her way to the bar and returned to the vaulted windows of the main ballroom hall with a glass of champagne. She sipped and wrinkled her nose as the bubbles tickled. The skyline was low, but punctuated with steeples and spires silhouetted in the last of the evening light. In the reflection of the glass she gazed over the crowd and tried to pick out any woman who looked like she might also be a lesbian.

No one stood out from the crowd. One woman was particularly lovely – slight and graceful like a dancer with pale golden hair. Couldn't possibly be a lesbian, Carolyn decided, but nevertheless she could feel heat suffusing her face and she imagined slipping the spaghetti straps off the milky white shoulders. Stop that, she commanded herself. It's rude. She refocused her eyes and concentrated on the skyline for a few minutes.

At last she spotted Nick nodding politely as three older men all talked at once around her. Carolyn found it incredible that no one had guessed Nick was a woman when it was so obvious to Carolyn now. But then Nick

was unusually tall for a woman, and with that height, the severe expression, long nose and very short hair, there was little to betray the truth. Her hands might have, but now that Carolyn thought about it, she'd never studied them when Nick wasn't wearing white gloves. Carolyn stared at the jacket which concealed every hint of womanly attributes. The striped tie and stiff white shirt dropped without swelling from neck to waist. The tuxedo slacks were cut fashionably baggy so neither from the front or back did Nick's figure look anything other than masculine. Carolyn successfully controlled a blush as she contemplated seeing Nick as nature had made her.

Across the room Nick suddenly looked up and caught her staring. Nick gave her a guarded smile and within a few minutes headed her way. Just as Nick stepped up to her someone called Nick's name. Carolyn and Nick both looked toward the voice. A flashbulb went off and Nick swore.

"Bloody hell. I'm sorry, I didn't mean for that to happen. Maybe when we first met it would have been okay, but not now."

Carolyn was blinking, trying to get her eyesight back. "Who was that?"

"Some society reporter, no doubt. Let's hope something else is more interesting for tomorrow's paper."

Carolyn let Nick guide her out to the balcony,

then along the curve until they were away from the open doors and brilliant lights of the party. They were partially screened by potted trees.

"Nick, what did you mean it would have been okay in the beginning?"

"What?"

"The photograph."

"Oh." Nick flushed. "Oscar likes to see my picture in the paper."

"Or you do." Suddenly, Carolyn understood. The dinner in Munich, the kiss, the ticket tonight ... they *were* just blinds for the press. "You were just using me, weren't you?" Carolyn leaned away from Nick although her body told her not to.

"I was past that idea when we first went to dinner."

"I don't ..." Carolyn stiffened as Nick put her hands on her shoulders "... believe you." The stiffness became a shudder. "Oh God, don't touch me."

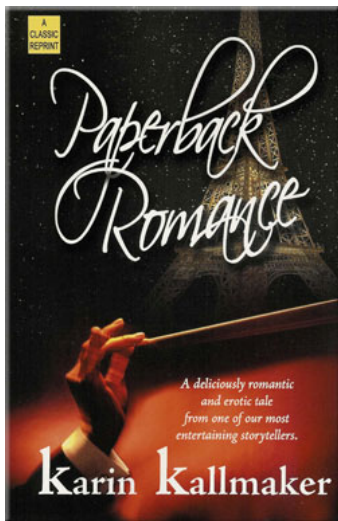
"Carolyn ..." Nick's voice faded away.

Carolyn thought it was Nick who leaned closer, but as her arms found their way around Nick's waist she wasn't sure. She only knew that Nick's lips were on hers, tender and soft. Carolyn moaned and pulled Nick as close as possible. She cupped Nick's cheek, then her hand slipped to Nick's throat, earning an answering moan from Nick.

Why is she kissing me, Carolyn asked herself, but

even as she thought it she knew the answer didn't matter. She leaned into Nick, coiling herself in Nick's arms, ready for more of this incredible sweetness. Her mouth invited Nick to explore. Nick kissed her deeper and harder. Carolyn, still thinking coherently in a very small part of her brain, wondered if Nick knew Carolyn was kissing her because she knew Nick was a woman.

Excerpt from PAPERBACK ROMANCE



PAPERBACK ROMANCE IS
A CONTEMPORARY
LESBIAN ROMANCE BY
KARIN KALLMAKER.

PRINT AND EXCLUSIVE
EBOOK FROM:



KARIN'S BOOKS AT BELLA:
[PAPERBACK](#)
[EBOOK](#)

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL