



Doubles

Nora Gold

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In the late 1960s, a grieving twelve-year-old navigates the limitations of her group home in *Doubles*, Nora Gold's poignant novella about a derailed girlhood.

Before her mother died, the narrator's life on her family farm was wonderful. But her father, undone by the loss, made their home a nightmare in her absence—drinking, yelling, beating her, and worse. After neighbors witnessed an awful thrashing, child service officials removed her from her home and placed her in group housing instead.

Though the narrator is assured that the change is not a punishment, but is for her own protection, the discord among her new peers unsettles her. The halt to her education disturbs her even more. With no visitors and only prescribed journal entries and a dated math book to keep her company, the narrator, who's quite a genius with numbers and often wise beyond her years, begins to compartmentalize and adapt in the best way she knows how.

In her piquant, observant narration, the girl references popular culture at times, as when Beatles lyrics work their way into a wry journal entry. But she relates much more back to math. In a moment of distress, for instance, she laments: "It feels as though all of the numbers in the world are dying." That she still exhibits innocence despite the circumstances she's survived leads to moments of devastation, as when her sister alludes to the origins of her pregnancy and the truth passes the narrator by. The manifold ways in which the institutions designed to protect her end up failing her, as well as the other residents, lead the novella toward a troubled and troubling ending.

Narrated by a gifted girl who's been near abandoned in a group home, *Doubles* is a stirring historical novella.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (July / August 2026)

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