



ANNA  
SUGDEN

A PERFECT  
CONTEST

**Anna Sugden**

# **A Perfect Contest**



A New Jersey Ice Cats short story

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## A Perfect Contest

“I am not parading around in a swimsuit and three-inch heels.”

Ally Fannon thumped down the tub of dirty crockery next to the dishwasher and turned to face her boss. “I was hired to be a waitress, not a contestant in a ridiculous beauty pageant.”

“Miss Firecracker is the highlight of Sandy Cove’s July 4<sup>th</sup> festivities. Aside from being good publicity for the boardwalk businesses, the money raised helps send a local kid to college.” Gordie Fraser crossed his arms across his barrel chest. “When you accepted this job, you agreed to take part in the restaurant’s promotions.”

“I thought that meant wearing sponsors’ t-shirts, not tottering around practically naked.” Not to mention pitting her nearly-thirty-year-old body against girls barely old enough to drink legally. “If I’d wanted that, I’d be a hostess at the Silver Dollar Room.”

As desperate as she was for money, working at the notorious, local strip club would be her very last resort. Sure, it had come close over the past six months, since she’d discovered her soon-to-be-ex-husband had left for parts unknown, cleaning out their joint accounts and leaving behind a mountain of gambling debt. She’d sold off all but the most personal of her belongings and used

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every last penny to pay off what was owed. The Greenwich Village brownstone she'd worked so hard to buy had been replaced by a two bedroom rental, which she shared with Shelby, another waitress, on the not-for-holiday-makers' side of this Jersey shore small town. Worst of all, thanks to Chip's monetary shenanigans, her dream partnership at one of the top financial houses in New York was gone too, replaced by the lunch-to-closing shift at Fraser's Seafood Shack, six nights a week.

At least this was only temporary. She might not get back to the way things were, but she'd do whatever it took to get close. Well, almost anything.

"Come on," Gordie tossed sizzling shrimp in a cast-iron pan, then turned them onto a plate which he slapped in the service area. "It's not like I'm asking you to shake your booty wearing a patriotic g-string and star-shaped pasties. And you only have to wear a swimsuit during the contest."

Ally opened her mouth to argue, but he held up his hand. "All wait-staff have to take part in Miss Firecracker, so you choose -- keep your job or practice your pole-dancing."

Truth was she had no choice. At this stage of the summer, jobs were scarce. Even when the college kids left, there was no guarantee of work. Most places in town closed once the season was over. The Shack stayed open year-round. Plus it paid better than minimum wage, tips were decent and meals were free.

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“Fine. But I won’t wear a bikini and if anyone grabs my butt, he’ll be wearing his beer.”

“Works for me. Don’t forget, the winner gets a bonus of a week’s pay.”

She laughed. “Much as I need the extra cash, I doubt I’ll take home the crown.”

“You never know.” He deftly battered a chunk of cod and dropped it in the fryer. “You’re pretty and you have a nice figure. You may catch the attention of a celebrity judge.”

Ally rolled her eyes. Despite his brusque exterior, Gordie was always trying to fix her up. That was the last thing she wanted right now. Maybe once she was solidly back on her feet. Until then, she was perfectly happy on her own.

“I’m not holding my breath.” She pulled her electronic order pad out of her apron pocket. “Looks like table three is finally ready to order.”

“Don’t forget to make your patriotic head-dress,” he called after her, as she strode out her section. “The spangler, the better.”

She sighed, raising a hand in acknowledgement. How bad could it be? A couple of hours of embarrassment tops. At least no-one she knew would see her making a fool of herself.

\* \* \*

The jokes were wearing thin.

Jordan ‘Match’ Matcheson bit the inside of his cheek as his friends continued razzing him about

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pulling the short straw, literally, to be the celebrity judge for the July 4th contest.

This hadn't been part of the plan, when he and some of his New Jersey Ice Cats' team-mates had rented a beach house at the shore for a week, so they could chill out before pre-season training began. But when the mayor had stopped by and asked if one of them could step in as another judge had pulled out last minute, they'd figured it would be a laugh.

"I bet you'll light up Miss Firecracker." Kenny Jelinek cracked up at his own wittiness.

"Yeah, Match" Blake Spencer chuckled, as he tended the steaks on the grill. "You'll definitely strike up a great friendship."

"Enough already." Jordan leaned against one of the weathered posts on the deck and drank some beer. "You're just jealous because you lost the draw."

"Are you kidding?" Nate Thornley said, from his perch on the deck railing. "We get to watch without the pressure of having to choose the winner."

"Glad I'm not the one who'll disappoint the lovely losers." Blake shook his head sadly.

"We'll cheer them up for you." Kenny sighed heavily. "It's a tough job, but I'm prepared to sacrifice myself for a good cause."

"You guys are full of it." Jordan tossed some popcorn at his friend.

"What are you grouching about?" Kenny caught a piece and ate it. "It'll be the easiest shift of your life."

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All you have to do is watch a couple dozen women in their swimsuits strut their stuff up and down the boardwalk, then vote on the best-looking one.”

“You mean ‘the one with the most creative, July 4<sup>th</sup>-themed head-dress’,” Blake mimicked the mayor’s serious tone.

“That too.” Kenny laughed. “Cue perfect scoring opportunity with grateful winner.”

“I’m not interested.” His divorce had only been finalised last week.

Even though his marriage to Harper had been heading for the rocks almost as soon as they’d said ‘I do’, Jordan had tried hard to make it work. But it’d turned out that he’d been the only one who gave a damn about ‘for better or worse’. In the end, it had been a relief to draw a line under their marriage.

He didn’t rule out dating again, but he was in no rush. For sure, none of the women in Sandy Cove had caught his attention. Probably because most of them looked young enough to be jailbait.

“You’ll be singing a different tune tomorrow night.” Kenny smacked some bills onto the table. “Fifty bucks says you land one of the contestants.”

“I’m in.” Blake added notes to the pile. “You’ll get a dozen phone numbers shoved in your pocket.”

Nate added his share into the pool. “Be sure to share them around. Can’t have all that prime talent going to waste.”

“I’ll take that bet.” Jordan rubbed his hands

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together, confident of a win.

The thought was enough to have him looking forward to the following evening. Maybe it would be fun after all.

\* \* \*

“O-M-G! Have you seen the ringer judge?” Ally’s room-mate, Shelby squealed as she peeked through a gap in the curtains across the restaurant’s open, back doors. “We’ve never had one that sexy before.”

“Gordie said the mayor had hooked in a prime sports star.” Madison, another Seafood Shack waitress, elbowed Shelby aside.

“His friends are all smoking hot too,” Shelby told the gathered group of contestants. “Any one of them can eat crackers in my bed.”

Despite herself, Ally was intrigued and joined the crowd around Shelby to see what all the fuss was about. She may not be interested for herself, but why miss out on good eye candy? With all the oohing and ahing, she expected at least one of the sexy Chrises -- Pine, Pratt or Hemsworth.

Instead, as she looked across the make-shift stage to the red, white and blue judges’ table, recognition punched her in the gut.

Jordan Matcheson definitely wasn’t the cute, but cocky, high school kid she’d tutored anymore; his chest was broader, his jaw more square and those muscles ... wow. But what was her hometown’s favourite, famous son doing here?



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‘Match’ was a big time hockey player for the New Jersey Ice Cats. Now that hockey season was over, shouldn’t he be on an exotic tropical island with an equally exotic beauty? She’d heard about his recent divorce from the former underwear model. Hard not to when everyone back home had gossiped about little else; they’d followed every step of Jordan’s career and personal life from the moment he’d shipped out to one of the top major junior hockey teams. Including his first round selection in the NHL draft and eventual debut with the Ice Cats.

Okay, so she’d kept tabs on Jordan too. Much as she’d pretended she wasn’t interested in the star forward who’d needed tutoring during their senior year to get his math grades up to par, the truth was she’d fallen for him the first time he’d grinned at her.

He’d been arrogant at first, with the confidence of one who’d never struggled to achieve. Yet, beneath the swagger, she’d sensed vulnerability. Even, desperation. It had been his first failure and the consequences could have been disastrous. His coach was a stickler for ‘no pass, no play’. Strangely she’d understood; a whiz at Math, she’d sucked at social skills.

Perhaps the fact that she hadn’t been impressed by Jordan’s stats or trophies had helped them get past the bull of the initial sessions. From day one she’d made it clear all she cared about were the improved grades she’d been tasked with helping him make. He didn’t have to worry about being ‘on’ when he was with her.

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Nor about her gossiping about his weaknesses. What happened in their sessions, stayed in their sessions.

Over time, she'd discovered that beneath the brash, star jock exterior was a nice guy and her secret crush on him had deepened. Embarrassed that she was like all the other girls who fawned over him, she'd worked hard to hide her feelings. Partly because she'd known she couldn't compete. But also because he'd acted like he hadn't noticed she was female, let alone been attracted to her.

Well, there had been that one evening ...

Jordan had received his passing grades and rushed to share the news with her. As they'd celebrated, she'd thought that maybe he'd finally seen past the glasses, braces and outward geekiness to the girl beneath.

"I'm on my way!" He'd grabbed her in an exuberant hug. "And it's all thanks to you."

She'd barely stuttered out a reply, before he'd lifted her off her feet, twirling her around as they'd both laughed giddily. When he'd stopped, she'd slid slowly down his hard body, until she was stood, wrapped in his arms, pressed tightly against him.

Even through their clothes, his heat had seared her. Her skin had tingled. Physically, her feet had been on the floor, but in reality she was floating. She'd tried to act cool, though her pulse had been skittering.

Then his gaze had connected with hers and she'd seen fire in his blue eyes. She'd almost panicked, unable to believe it. Then his head had lowered.

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*He's finally going to kiss me!*

The ringtone of his cell had cut through the highly charged moment like a sharpened blade on ice.

She'd jumped out of his arms like a startled rabbit. He'd checked his phone casually, his gaze shuttered, making her wonder if it had all been wishful thinking.

"Two minutes, ladies," Gordie called out from the kitchen. "Make me proud."

*I can't go out there looking like this!* What if Jordan recognized her?

What if he didn't recognise her, a little voice inside answered. Why should he? She doubted that he'd spared a thought for her over the past ten years.

"Time to introduce our contestants." The emcee's voice boomed through the speakers.

\* \* \*

"Remember, our lovely ladies are scored out of twenty for the patriotic head-dress they're wearing, not for how great they look in their swimsuits."

Jordan ignored the knowing wink the mayor sent the five judges. The blonde woman to his right, who owned a gift shop, sniffed and shuffled her papers, while the brunette beside her, from the ice cream store, glared at the mayor. The tanned guy on Jordan's left, who managed the water sports' booth, gave a double-thumbs-up, as did the liquor store owner.

As the judges were introduced, Jordan's teammates chanted, 'Go, Match' and toasted him with their beers. Jackasses. Payback would be sweet.

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But first, he had a job to do. He should give everyone twenty points and let the other judges make the tough decisions. Only that wasn't how the game was played and he believed in following the rules.

The music started and contestants began to stride out onto the boardwalk, making their way past the judges' table. Their wild, wacky and completely over-the-top head-pieces, and easy smiles as they camped it up, made him realise that none of the women were taking the contest seriously. Slowly, he began to relax. Time to get with the program and have fun. He had a bet to win, after all.

\* \* \*

“Get your skates on, Ally.” Madison, in a stars-and-stripes top hat, prodded her. “Hot hockey players are waiting.”

That really didn't help. Not with Jordan sitting front and centre. Ally was tempted to drop out and take the consequences – would Gordie really fire his best waitress – but couldn't take the risk. Besides, the Seafood Shack staff had gone all out -- Gordie had funded a trip to Michael's and provided some cheap bubbly -- to make sure their head-dresses were bigger, bolder and blingier than everyone else's. The head-dress-making party was the first time Ally had been included as one of the gang, so she couldn't let the other girls down.

Better to get out there and get this over with.  
Squaring her shoulders and raising her chin to

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give the impression of the proud stature associated with her Native American-style, warrior head-dress, Ally stepped through the curtains and into the cordoned off circuit that wound its way through the tables, while Born in the USA rang out. With her gaze firmly fixed on a spot some distance ahead, Ally followed Shelby and her eye-wateringly spangly, Statue of Liberty crown around the path.

Thankfully Ally's costume wasn't as revealing as the others. She'd managed to find a patriotic, red-and-white-striped one-piece, with a little blue skirt dotted with white stars. Plus her head-dress was long enough to reach down her back and cover her butt. Still, she hated the thought of all those eyes on her, checking out every cellulite dimple and ripple of fat.

First time around the walkway, Ally was pretty sure Jordan didn't recognise her. She sensed his assessment, from the glitzy feathers on her head, down to her pom-pommed peep-toes, but had no clue whether he'd liked what he saw. She doubted he was as affected by her, as she was by the brush of his gaze.

The second loop of the circuit wasn't as bad and she began to breathe easier. Only once more around, then the final line-up and she'd be done. More relaxed, Ally got into the spirit of the occasion and even added a jaunty little twirl in front of the judges' table.

As her head came round, her gaze connected with a familiar pair of blue eyes. Amusement lurked and a slow smile curved his lips.

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Ally managed to stop herself from stumbling.  
Damn it. She'd been kidding herself.

Jordan knew exactly who she was.

\* \* \*

Her legs, still the sexiest Jordan had ever seen, were the first clue that he knew the babe in the chief's head-dress. Her luscious curves, which made the other women look stick-thin and shapeless, sealed the deal. Not to mention the fact that the sight of her revved his engine more than anyone had in a long time. He'd thought Ally was lovely back in high school, but she was truly stunning now.

Instead of a skimpy bikini, Ally rocked a one-piece swimsuit that clung deliciously to those curves. Jordan tamped down the twinge of envy for the feathers and tinsel that danced over her butt.

Man, he'd had the biggest crush on her. But from their first tutoring session, she'd made it clear she wasn't impressed by his hockey skills and the only numbers she cared about were answers to math problems. From the way her eyes had widened with recognition, then dismissed him, that was something else that hadn't changed.

"Judges, hand in your scorecards, please," the emcee announced, making Jordan realize the space by Ally's name remained blank.

He scrawled a 20, because 100 wasn't allowed, before passing his scores over to the official tallier, aka a teller from the local bank.

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The emcee's patter kept anticipation building, as the cards were checked and the totals handwritten on a master sheet. Jordan winced at the thought of all that math. Although if it gave him an excuse for some one-on-one tutoring with Ally, he'd take it.

Maybe they could finish what he hadn't had the nerve to ten years ago.

She'd been skittish from their first session, so he'd taken baby steps to get her to relax with him. It had been a novel experience to yearn for a girl who couldn't have cared less about him. No flirting or accidental brushes against him. The opposite -- she'd have bolted like a scared deer if they'd touched. He'd struggled to check his desire, pretending she wasn't his type. But whenever she wasn't looking, he'd gazed at her like a lovesick sap.

How many times had he imagined kissing her? Or her rushing into his arms, the moment their tutoring was done, admitting her unrequited passion for him. It had almost happened, during that final session. He'd used their celebration and exuberance to hold her. Deliberately pressed her tight. Not just so she could appreciate his muscles, but so he could finally have her softness against him.

Closing his eyes briefly, he could still feel the ripple of pleasure that had gone through him. Still smell her scent -- not the cloying sweet perfumes of the other girls -- but a fresh, light fragrance that was a mix of shampoo, soap and pure Ally.

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If only his buddy hadn't chosen that moment to call, insisting Match ditch the nerdy girl and join him at the nearby diner. Before Jordan could explain, Ally had pulled away. The moment gone. He hadn't had another chance, as he'd left town shortly after and their paths hadn't crossed again.

Until now.

His gaze wandered back to Ally. She was studiously ignoring him, but he kept watching her. Fate had clearly thrown them together for a reason.

*If she looks at me, I have a shot*, he said over and over in his head, crossing his fingers under the table.

Her gaze flicked furtively over to him.

Jordan couldn't help smiling. *Game on.*

“Without further ado, this year's Miss Firecracker is Shelby, from the Seafood Shack.”

A raucous chorus of whoops greeted the announcement, as the popular winner, a bubbly blonde, hugged her friends, then dashed on-stage to be crowned with a gold-sprayed, firecracker and tinsel tiara.

Jordan's smile broadened as Ally looked relieved that she wasn't the one who was the centre of attention. That was his Ally.

Only she wasn't ... his, that is. Not yet, anyway. He planned to change that tonight.

Ally disappeared once the contest was over, but he knew she'd be back to finish her shift. Dismissed from his judging duties, Jordan joined his friends, but kept an eye out for her return. Amid more ribald comments, he



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tossed the phone numbers that had been slipped into his pocket onto the table and claimed the pot of wagered money. "All yours, boys."

"You aren't keeping any, Match?" Kenny arched a disbelieving eyebrow.

Unwilling to explain that the only number he wanted wasn't there, Jordan shrugged.

"Plenty more where they came from. Right, bro?" Blake toasted him with his beer.

"For sure." Nate snatched a pink note from the pile. "This one'll do me nicely."

"Ah man, that's who I had my eye on," Kenny grumbled, grabbing a couple of slips of paper. "But I'm sure these ladies will ease my disappointment."

"Not that one." Blake whipped one off him. "She's mine."

The guys' good-natured bickering faded to a background buzz, as Ally reappeared. She'd added a navy-blue, sarong wrap over her swimsuit and switched out her heels for flip-flops.

He hoped she'd serve their table, but another waitress called Madison -- Nate's choice -- took their orders, while Ally worked the other side of the patio, by the bar. Was she deliberately avoiding him?

Possibly. But he'd seen her cheeks flush, when their eyes had met during the contestants' parade. She knew who he was and that he'd recognised her too. And, though she tried to hide it, she kept glancing his way. Maybe she was still shy and didn't want to

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approach him with his friends there. Or she thought he wasn't interested in renewing their acquaintance.

Looked like it was up to him to make the first move. As fireworks filled the sky, and everyone's attention was on the display, he slipped away from the table and headed towards the bar.

\* \* \*

"Never thought I'd see the day when I'd be grading your work, Ally Einstein."

Jordan's use of his old nickname for her eased the tension that had tightened Ally's shoulders since she'd returned to complete her shift. She'd happily switched sections, so Madison could serve the table of hockey players. A cowardly move, which hadn't stopped Ally subtly watching the table, and Jordan.

She hadn't caught him looking at her, but had sensed him watching her too. She'd left the ball in his court, not wanting to be one of the fangirl crowd, then worried he wouldn't approach her. Now he was here, she wasn't sure what to say.

"Never thought you'd see me making a fool of myself either," she said lightly, while wincing inwardly. She'd never been good at flirtatious small-talk.

"You did great. Put those other girls to shame." He reached up and tugged a red, sparkly feather from her hair, which he slipped into his shirt pocket.

Her cheeks warmed at the gesture. "Is that a little hometown bias creeping in?"

"No way. I judged you fairly. You got no extra

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points for being my favourite tutor.” He held up three fingers. “Scout’s honour.”

Ally laughed. “You weren’t a scout and I was your only tutor.”

“Never could put one past you.” He grinned. “I know you’re working, but can I buy you dinner tomorrow? For old times’ sake.”

Thrilled by his offer, she almost accepted before realising she couldn’t. “I don’t get a day off until Thursday and it’s too short notice to change.”

His face fell. “We head back to Newark on Wednesday. I’d delay, if I could, but I can’t.”

Disappointment tugged at her. “Another time, maybe. I’m not going anywhere.”

“Yeah, sure.” He grabbed a cocktail napkin off the bar, scrawled his number on it and tucked it into her sarong. “Call me.”

His touch sent sparks dancing through her. That had never happened with anyone but him. Not even Chip. Was she really going to let this chance slip away?

“I could see if I can switch shifts with one of the other girls,” she blurted out, as he started to walk away.

His head turned and his steady, blue gaze met hers. After a brief pause, he nodded.

“Okay. Let me know either way.” He then returned to his friends.

Ally was rushed off her feet for the rest of the evening. Still, she couldn’t help noticing the steady stream of women making their way to the players’

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table, which had become the centre of the party. Jordan didn't look her way again. Not even when the group left, just before closing.

"Please don't let me have blown it," she murmured to herself, as she grabbed her purse from the employees' room.

"Blown what?" Shelby, still sporting the winner's tiara, asked. "Don't tell me you turned down a date with the hotty judge."

Before Ally could stutter an answer, Shelby continued, "I saw you talking and making cow eyes at each other, but he left alone. So, spill."

"We knew each other growing up." Ally filled her friend in on their past and what had happened earlier. "I need to find someone to ..."

Shelby held up her hand. "Gordie gave me tomorrow off, but you can take it instead."

"Are you sure?"

"Thursday works better anyway. I'll be able to get an appointment at the nail salon."

Ally hugged her. "Thank you."

"So, let the poor guy know already and let's get out of here."

Ally texted Jordan, then locked up as she waited for a reply. When nothing came, her heart sank.

"He's probably busy partying with his friends," she said with an airiness she didn't feel, as they walked out. And with someone who was less trouble than her?

"I don't think so." Shelby nudged her. "I'll see

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you later. Much later.”

Ally didn't hear Shelby leave; her attention was focused on the man leaning against the Seafood Shack's sign. Pulse jumping, Ally couldn't make her feet move.

Jordan straightened and, hands in pockets, sauntered across the moonlit parking lot towards her.

He stopped in front of her, a respectable distance away. “I got your message. I couldn't wait until tomorrow. Hope that's okay.”

She swallowed hard and nodded, unable to trust her voice.

He stepped closer. “We never got to finish celebrating my passing Math grade.”

“As I recall, you had other plans.” Her voice sounded husky. Inviting.

“I was an idiot.” He shook his head ruefully, as he moved closer still, until there was barely a gap between them. “I was scared of ruining our friendship, so I turtled and took an easy out.” His expression grew earnest. “Trust me, the only plan that mattered back then was how to kiss you. I screwed that up.”

“And now?”

Her breath caught in her throat, as he took her hand and drew her to him.

“I think it's time to put that right. Don't you?”

She sent a silent thank you to Gordie for making her take part in the Miss Firecracker contest, then wound her arms around Jordan's neck and pulled his head down towards hers.

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Welcome to the world of the New Jersey Ice Cats!

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### **A Perfect Distraction**

#### **A face-off—head vs. heart**

For Jake Badoletti, this year is all about his career. He has a rare second chance to make the most of being a pro hockey player, so no parties, no scandals. Too bad he's met a woman who could sideline those plans. Maggie Goodman is not his usual type—right down to being a single mom. Still, the sizzling connection with this gorgeous brunette can't be ignored.

With a little juggling and a lot of focus, Jake manages to have the game *and* Maggie. Then his performance on the ice suffers and a scandal erupts. Now he can't afford the distraction of Maggie...even if she is perfect for him.

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## **A Perfect Trade A win-win negotiation?**

Truman "Tru" Jelinek's life is pretty much off the rails. With his professional hockey career on thin ice, and his personal life falling apart, he's ready to implement some serious changes. Helping Jenny Martin—the only girl he's ever loved—make her dreams a reality is a good place to start.

There's just one problem: Jenny doesn't want his help. She barely wants to speak to him. But Tru is prepared to negotiate a deal that even Jenny can't refuse. As trading favors turns into sharing passion, he has to face the truth that when it comes to Jenny, the game is far from over.

## **A Perfect Catch He's the perfect catch...for now!**

When it comes to romance, Tracy Hayden is *not* looking for a rematch. She's had epic passion—and problems!—with professional hockey player Ike Jelinek. Brilliant on skates and magic in bed, his too-traditional-for-her views were like a bucket of ice water on their affair.

Then an injury takes Ike out of the game, and everything changes. Suddenly he needs her services-providing business—even though he once claimed it was their biggest problem. Tracy's determined to be professional, despite the sizzling attraction between them that won't go away. Maybe they need a second fling to fix that!



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### **A Perfect Compromise Theirs is a game of give-and-take...**

Schoolteacher Issy Brandine has a plan to build a stable, secure future for herself. No settling for second-best. Anything more than a sultry Caribbean fling with hotshot hockey star Jean Baptiste Larocque isn't part of the plan. A New Jersey Ice Cat with the ultimate hockey trophy in his sights won't fit into her low-key lifestyle. Except a surprise pregnancy changes everything.

Issy knows her child deserves more than a part-time dad. With JB's eyes on the championship that will redeem his career, compromise is out of the question. But love—and the baby between them—might prove that nothing is impossible.

### **A Perfect Strategy Is there really life after hockey?**

If there's one thing Scotty Matthews knows, it's hockey. Unfortunately, the former New Jersey Ice Cats captain isn't proving successful at life after hockey. His wife's left him and he's lost his post-ice job as a media commentator. All he's got now is a big empty show house.

If there's one thing Sapphire Houlihan knows, it's that she never wants to be tied down to anyone or anything ever again. Unfortunately for her, a wonderful one-weekend distraction with Scotty turns into something much more complicated... Because he's a guy who wants way more than one weekend.



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*Secret crushes ... unfinished business!*

The last thing Ally Finnon wants is to strut her stuff in a swimsuit and patriotic head-dress for the annual Miss Firecracker contest. But she'll lose her job if she doesn't. The last thing recently divorced, Ice Cats' forward, Jordan 'Match' Matcheson, wants is to interrupt his summer break and judge a beauty contest. But he drew the short straw, literally. Could this finally be the chance for the former high school friends to get together and make sparks fly?

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