



ANNA
SUGDEN

A PERFECT
RESCUE

Anna Sugden

A Perfect Rescue



A New Jersey Ice Cats short story

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A Perfect Rescue

“Being on the road on New Year’s Eve sucks.”

Nate Gallimore hung his suit jacket over a chair, loosened his tie and pulled off his leather boots, before slumping onto the hotel room bed.

“At least we travelled from Chicago tonight and have tomorrow off.” Logan Halliday, his New Jersey Ice Cats’ room-mate, tossed him a cold diet soda, before chugging his own.

“Jeez, listen to yourselves. It’s freaking party time.” Kenny Jelinek, another team-mate, rotated his fists and wiggled his shoulders mimicking a dance move. “What happens in Columbus, stays in Columbus, and I plan to make the city keep one hell of a secret.”

“Go for it.” Nate pulled the tab on his can and drank deeply.

“Tracy from Making Your Move reserved us a VIP booth at a hot club nearby. You’re coming, right?”

Nate shook his head. He didn’t feel like celebrating. Never did, after a loss. But, especially not when it was his fault.

His sloppy drop pass had been intercepted, allowing the Blackhawks to score with thirty seconds to go. That had levelled a game the Cats had led since the first period, forcing overtime. Kane had roofed the puck

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past Monty in the shootout, handing the Cats' a gut-wrenching loss. Even though they'd earned a point, all their divisional rivals had won. Toronto had leapfrogged them in the standings and knocked them out of a Wild Card slot.

Happy freaking New Year.

Like he didn't hate December 31st already. People drank too much, said and did stupid things. Hurt others. Hurt themselves.

Hurt him.

He ran his thumb over the little, indented scar on his forehead that was normally hidden by his hair, before curling his hand into a fist and rubbing it against his sternum, trying to ease the ache in his chest. The pale, indented band on his left ring finger was still visible, even after nearly a year.

Perhaps he should be grateful that he wasn't at home, where he'd undoubtedly be wallowing in the past. Better to think about his boneheaded play, than let his mind wander down those dark avenues.

"Come on, man. Forget the damn game. Plenty of time left in the season. Close out the old year, leave that crap behind, and move on." From Kenny's expression, he wasn't just talking about Nate's hockey. That was the problem with friends. They knew too much.

"Maybe," Nate hedged.

Kenny rolled his eyes. "Logan, talk some sense into him."

"I've roomed with him long enough to know

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better than to try.” Logan shrugged, as he changed out of his suit into dark jeans and a gun-metal grey sweater.

“I give up,” Kenny huffed. “At least, get him down to the hotel bar for a glass of festive cheer, so he doesn’t spend the night pouting like a cranky toddler.”

“That, I can manage.” Logan grinned.

“Catch you later.” Kenny slapped the doorframe, then turned to go. “Try to have fun.”

“You’ll party enough for the both of us,” Nate called after him. “I’ll have the hangover remedy ready.”

Kenny’s answer involved an anatomically impossible sex act.

“He’s right.” Logan hung his suit in the closet.

“You can’t mope around up here all night. A couple of beers with me, Vexer, and whoever else doesn’t want to club it, will cheer you up.”

“I’m fine, really. You guys go on, enjoy, and don’t wake me up when you roll in later.”

His friend sighed. “Bro, you haven’t been ‘fine’ all night. Since when have you been so wound up about a freaking mistake? Let it go already.”

“It’s not that so much.” Truth was, the sting had already faded. If only the other pain would do the same. “You know I don’t like New Year’s Eve.”

“Two beers.” Logan crossed his arms, his expression stubborn.

“All right.” Nate hoisted himself off the bed and donned black jeans, a pale blue shirt and a sport coat. Maybe if he nursed the beers long enough, the others

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would find their own entertainment and he could slip back to the room before midnight.

The pair picked up Hank ‘Vexer’ DelVecchio, then headed down to the crowded bar. Luckily, some of their team-mates had snagged a large table at one end of the long room. They’d also ordered pitchers of beer and trays of hot and cold snacks.

The atmosphere was lively, without the almost desperate pressure to be wild and crazy there would have been in a club. Music played, but not so loudly that people had to shout. It was a mixed crowd; some couples, some families and some other large groups like the Cats’ players. Other than the seasonal decorations and the party hats worn by all the wait staff, it could have been any Saturday night.

It didn’t take long for Nate to chill and the dark cloud that had been hanging over him to dissipate. Not that he’d admit it to Logan, but his friend was right. This was way better than his original plan. He might even stay the distance.

A glossy, red, high-heeled shoe, dangling from a slim foot, at the table opposite, caught his attention. For several seconds, he watched the slow up-and-down, as the woman bounced her foot.

As if following a siren call, his gaze followed the path his fingers itched to take, up the shapely calf to where her smooth skin disappeared beneath a shimmering, scarlet skirt, which flirted with her knees. Undaunted by the barrier, he continued the visual

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journey higher. Over the bodice of what was actually a dress, which hugged her luscious curves.

Higher still, past the scoop-neck, covered with red lace, and a pretty, pearl necklace, to the mass of dark, wavy hair, which tumbled around her shoulders.

His pulse tripped, as her head lifted and turned. The warm, hazel eyes, which had been paying more attention to that dangling shoe, than the man she was with, met his. Full lips, the same vibrant colour as her dress, curved into a hesitant smile.

He couldn't help but smile in reply, even as her gaze dropped shyly back to her shoe.

Wouldn't you know? The first woman who'd raised the slightest interest from him in years and she was taken. He bit back a sigh. Unlike his ex, he didn't mess in other people's territory. Especially not on New Year's Eve.

* * *

Be careful what you wish for.

Hayley Irvine stirred her frothy, festive cocktail with the accompanying candy cane and wondered how to extricate herself gracefully from her disastrous date. Ordinarily, she and her best friend, Ryssa, had a safety system in place, in case a plan -- or worse, a man -- went off the rails. They'd had enough experience with jerks, droners and gropers to not to take anyone -- no matter how good-looking or charming -- at face value.

So why had Hayley made the exception tonight?

Because it was supposed to have been a dream

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come true.

Random Carpenter III, millionaire owner of the interior design company she worked for, one of the Top Ten Sexiest Men in Ohio, as well as one of the most eligible bachelors in the whole Midwest, had finally noticed that Hayley was more than just his best project manager. It had taken five years, during which she'd watched him go out with an ever-changing array of beautiful, successful women and wished it could be her.

Hayley had been stunned when Rand had perched his oh-so-sexy butt on the edge of her desk and asked her out on New Year's Eve. She'd played it cool, making him wait twenty-four hours for an answer. During which she'd died a hundred deaths thinking she wouldn't match up to the women who'd gone before her. If they never made it past a one or two dates, what hope did she have?

Now, she knew why he went out with a different woman every week. And why a coyote caught in a trap would rather chew its leg off. Because Rand was a lightweight drinker, who had turned into a self-obsessed droner, an octopus-like groper and a sexist jerk after only two cocktails. He was currently on number four.

Hayley had tried to wriggle out of the date early, but he'd made it clear that her job was on the line, if she embarrassed him by not being by his side at midnight. Ordinarily, she wouldn't have blinked at his egotistical threats, but jobs in her field were hard enough to come by and the local employment pool was shrinking daily,

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with firms closing.

How big a fool was she for not having Ryssa on standby for an emergency extraction? Her friend was at a party across town and wouldn't be back until tomorrow lunchtime, earliest. Hayley had assumed the limo which had picked her up would take her home, so she hadn't pre-booked a cab. Which meant the chances of getting a ride back to their apartment before the early hours were less than zero.

Probably too much to hope SEAL Team Six might be available.

How many trips to the ladies' room she could get away with between now and midnight?

Laughter erupted from the table of guys opposite. A professional hockey team, according to Rand. The New Jersey Ice Cats, not the local team, the Blue Jackets. These weren't the craggy-faced, gap-toothed heroes her Dad and brother worshipped. If she'd known what lurked beneath the helmets and pads, she might have paid more attention. These men were all tall, well-built and gorgeous.

One man had stood out, the moment he entered the bar. Dark and brooding wasn't her usual type, but there was something about him that tugged a chord deep inside her. His stiffly-held body suggested he didn't want to be here. He seemed content to let the conversation flow around him.

She'd bet he wouldn't spend forty-nine excruciating minutes ... so far ... detailing his financial

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investment strategy on a first date. How had she not seen this side of Rand?

Hayley sneaked another peek from beneath her lashes at the hockey player, willing him to glance her way again. She'd caught him checking her out a few minutes ago. To be accurate, she'd sensed his gaze on her. Felt its journey up her leg as acutely as if he'd caressed her, from ankle to thigh.

Then their eyes had met and she'd lost herself in the rich, chocolate-brown depths. Her knees had actually tingled! Embarrassed, both by her reaction and what he would think of her -- she was supposed to be with Rand -- she'd smiled politely, then turned away.

Maybe, if he looked at her, she could send him some kind of signal, so he'd realise her date was a dud. Perhaps he'd even be willing to rescue her. She switched the candy cane over to her clearly ringless left hand and continued to stir her drink.

Unfortunately, that manoeuvre shifted her leg slightly and her shoe dropped off her foot.

Really smooth, Hayley. Her cheeks heated, as she leaned over to pick it up.

But then, that warm sensation brushed over her skin again. As if someone had run his finger over the arch of her foot.

He was watching her.

She slid the shoe back on, then slowly, deliberately, lifted her gaze to meet his. Delight shimmered through her at the heat in those dark eyes.

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The connection was broken momentarily, as he flicked a look at Rand. Once his attention was back on her, she sighed heavily, trying to tell him without words that her date was not going well. His eyes widened briefly. Regret tinged his smile and he gave a mini-salute with his beer bottle, before turning away.

Hayley frowned. He'd obviously misunderstood.

Strangely, disappointment spurred her to action. She was so out of here. She couldn't suffer Rand any longer. She'd take her chances with her job. After all, great project managers weren't easy to come by either.

Since there was no sign of a special forces' rescue, she'd have to make her own escape. The key was to do it nicely, politely and without burning any bridges.

Luckily, a few moments later, Rand had to use the restroom.

"Oh, me too," she said brightly, as she gathered her purse.

His hand shot up, halting her. "I don't want to lose this table. You can go when I come back." He then strode off without a backward glance.

To hell with burned bridges.

She checked her phone. Eleven o'clock. Not a single cab company or driver service could pick her up for another couple of hours. Looked like she was walking home, at least part of the way. Slowly and carefully. She winced at her gorgeous, but totally impractical, shoes. At least she'd worn her long, thick, wool coat.

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Desperate to be gone before Rand returned, Hayley rose quickly, grabbed her coat-check ticket from her purse and headed out of the bar. As she went through the door, she shot a wistful glance back at the hockey player. A tingle of pleasure danced through her -- he was watching her.

If only ...

Halfway across the lobby, she heard Rand's voice and spotted him talking to another guy in front of the corridor that led to the bathrooms. And the cloakroom.

Damn it! Change of plan.

Ducking behind a large, potted, ornamental fern, she flattened herself against the wall. Hayley cursed her red dress, which was probably a beacon through the finger-like fronds. Hopefully, Rand was too drunk to notice her.

Keep walking! She urged her date, as he headed back to the bar, unsteady on his feet.

Luckily, just as Rand was about to pass her hiding place, a big man stopped in front of the plant to check his phone.

Her heart thumped as she recognised him; the handsome hockey player.

Hoping he'd be willing to help, she reached through the plant and tugged his elbow.

"Cover me, quickly," she urged in a low voice.

He didn't hesitate. Or turn and challenge the mad woman hiding behind a fern. As if it was something he did every day, he turned his body, somehow making

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himself seem even bigger and broader.

Rand stumbled past.

Just as she was about to release the breath she'd been holding, Rand turned and came back, stopping in front of them.

He blinked up at the hockey player. "Hey, aren't you ...?" he attempted unsuccessfully to snap his fingers. "Galli-something. Ice Cats. Coughed up the puck this afternoon and gave my Hawks the 'W'."

"Nate Gallimore and you're welcome." The deep voice resonated through the plant leaves. She could feel it vibrating in her chest, then right through her, down to her toes, which curled inside her shoes.

Rand laughed and clapped him on the shoulder. "Lemme buy you a drink. To celebrate. I gottta date, but she won't mind."

The hockey player's tone was as icy as the rink he skated on. "I don't want to intrude on your evening."

Maybe now he understood her earlier message.

"Seeing you will soften her up for me. Know what I mean?"

Nate hesitated, then said, "I have to make a phone call first." He turned Rand towards the bar, walking with him to make sure he got the message.

Weaving unsteadily, Rand pushed through the double doors.

As they swung shut, closing the noise of the bar inside, Rand returned to stand in front of her hiding place. He lifted his phone to his ear, as if making a call.

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“The coast’s clear. At least for the moment.”

Strangely nervous, Hayley smoothed her hands down her dress and stepped out from behind the fern.

“Thanks so much.”

“No problem. You should get out of here, before he comes back out looking for you.”

“I need to get my coat first.” Wistful, wishing she had a chance to get to know this Nate Gallimore better, she stuck out her hand. “I’m Hayley, by the way.”

His warm, firm grip was even more potent than his gaze.

“Good to meet you, Hayley. As you heard, I’m Nate. I take it that was your first date with ... him?”

She smiled at his hesitation. As if he didn’t want to offend her by saying the wrong thing about Rand.

“Yes, and there won’t be a second.” She explained the situation, as they headed across the lobby, towards the cloakroom.

He walked alongside her, using his body to block the sightline to her from the bar. A gentleman too.

Their steps slowed as they neared the corridor. As if neither of them wanted the conversation, or their time together, to end.

“Unfortunately, there probably won’t be a job for me in the new year either.” She stopped, on the pretext of getting some money from her purse.

“Man, I hate guys like him. You’d think with ‘me too’ they’d realise you can’t play games like that.”

“As long as fools like me fall for his charm -- and

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believe me, I'm not the only one -- he'll never learn." She pulled out a couple of dollar bills. "On the upside, it could have been far worse."

"..itch. No-one dumps me like that." Rand's voice, as he pushed his way through the bar doors made them both start.

Hayley froze.

Nate caught her arm, urging her towards the revolving doors. "Walk the other side of me -- it'll be harder to see you."

Knowing Rand would spot her any moment, she hurried alongside Nate.

"Hey!" Rand called out. "Where are you going?"

They didn't stop, diving as one through the revolving doors.

The cold hit her instantly, but she didn't stop, moving as fast as she could in her spiked heels along the shovelled, salted sidewalk towards the parking lot at the side of the hotel.

Glancing over her shoulder, she saw Rand heading to the revolving door. They wouldn't make it around the corner, before he came outside.

"Here." Nate pulled her behind a tall, narrow box hedge. He shrugged out of his sport coat and slid it over her shoulders, then drew her against his hard body.

The fresh scent of bar soap and clean cotton, with a hint of male spice, surrounded her, mingling nicely with the crisp, cold night air and the earthier notes of evergreen and soil.

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“You’ll freeze in that thin shirt,” she protested softly, even as she relished his warmth wrapping around her, easing her chill.

“I’ll be fine,” Nate murmured in her ear, his breath caressing the sensitive column of her neck. “As soon as he’s out of sight, I’ll go back inside and get your coat.”

She huddled closer, just as Rand lurched out of the hotel. He stopped and squinted in both directions. Hayley willed him silently to turn left.

Naturally, he turned right, towards them.

Stumbling past their hiding place, he muttered to himself, “That’s what I get for taking pity on an uptight, plain Jane secretary. Bet she hasn’t had a freaking date since dinosaurs roamed the earth. Explains why she ran off with a washed-up, second-rate hockey player.”

Disappearing round the corner, he yelled, “Hey Ice Cat. She’ll freeze your balls off.”

“At least he has some to freeze off,” Hayley retorted, under her breath.

Nate chuckled.

“Sorry.” She wrinkled her nose. “I didn’t mean to say that out loud.”

“No need to apologise -- the jackass deserves it and more. I’ll give him ‘washed-up’ and ‘second-rate’,” he growled.

She smiled. “Rand got thrown off his peewee team because he couldn’t skate and use his stick.”

“That’s like saying he can’t walk and chew gum.”

“If the boot fits ...” she broke off, teeth chattering,

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as a gust of icy wind slipped underneath Nate's jacket. Pulling the lapels closer, she snuggled deeper into the heavy fabric. "Hopefully, he'll give up and go back inside, before we freeze to death."

"It won't be long. The hotel's footprint isn't that big." Nate rubbed his hand up and down her arm. "If you give me your cloakroom ticket, I can fetch your coat. It's not like he can fire me, if he sees me."

Every inch the gentleman. If only Nate was her date tonight.

An image of how the two of them might have rung in the New Year flashed into her head, sending a blaze of heat through her.

But he wasn't. And it wasn't fair to monopolise any more of his time. Midnight wasn't far off. Besides, she had a long, slow walk home.

Biting back a sigh, she straightened. "Thanks, but there's no need. As fun as it's been, playing hide-and-seek with you, it's silly to let Rand dictate my night any further. He's not worth it. I should end the old one, the way I intend to start the new one. On my terms."

His lips curved, approvingly. "Sounds good to me." He crooked his elbow to her. "Then, let's go back into the warm and get your coat together."

She slipped her arm through his. "Sounds like a plan."

* * *

Half an hour to midnight.

Who'd have thought Nate would be enjoying

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himself so much on New Year's Eve that he didn't want the evening to end?

He smiled, as he watched Hayley chatting cheerily to the coat-check girl. He hadn't been so drawn to a woman in a long time. He wanted to get to know her better. Probably not the best time to start anything -- the Cats would be gone in a couple of days -- but he sensed that if he said goodnight now, he'd miss out on something special. And it wasn't like Ohio was that far from Jersey.

The problem was how to convince Hayley to stay. They couldn't return to the bar. Partly, because her jackass of a date had slouched his way back into the hotel a few moments ago and made straight for the double doors. Although Nate could take whatever the guy tossed at him, and Hayley probably could too, the aggravation wasn't worth it. Besides, his buddies were still in there. They'd like Hayley and she'd definitely fit in with them, but he wanted to keep her to himself for a little longer.

For sure, he couldn't ask her up to his room. That would give the wrong message and be awkward for both of them. He needed neutral ground, somewhere quiet, so they could sit, have a drink, and talk.

Not many places like that on New Year's Eve in a popular hotel.

He was still trying to figure out a solution, when she returned.

She slipped off his jacket and handed it back to

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him. As he put it on, he noticed that even in the short time she'd worn it, the fabric had absorbed the scent of her. Apples and vanilla, with a hint of spice. Yearning tugged deep in his belly.

There had to be a way to make this work.

"I really appreciate you rescuing me, Nate."

Hayley started to put on her coat.

"Glad I was around to help." He took the coat from her, holding it so she could slide her arms into the sleeves, when what he really wanted was for her not to put it on at all. "What will you do now?"

She grimaced at her shoes. "Walk home. If I book a car now, I may get one to meet me halfway there."

"I'll come with you. At least until you get picked up. I don't like the thought of you out there alone."

"Kind of you to offer, but I'll be fine. Besides, I've kept you from your friends for long enough tonight."

"I see enough of them during the year. Leaving them for an hour or two won't matter." He smiled. "If that's okay with you?"

"Of course." She stopped in front of the revolving door to wrap a scarf around her neck and pull on her gloves and a knitted bobble hat. "But you'll freeze to death without a coat."

"I'll get mine from upstairs. Wait here. I won't be more than a few minutes."

He strode quickly to the elevators and pressed the button. While he waited for the car to arrive, he noticed

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a sign for the Executive Club, up on the tenth floor. Open until 1am and unlikely to be busy. Perfect.

He turned on his heel and headed back to Hayley. “I have a better idea. Why don’t you call a cab and wait up in the Exec Lounge with me until it arrives. It’ll be better than trekking the cold streets. Save your feet and those heels.”

Her smile lit up her face, as she pulled off her hat with a flourish. “Sounds good.”

She followed him to the elevator. They said little to each other on the way up to the tenth floor, but stood close together. Not quite touching. Not quite apart. Every time he looked at her, she’d meet his gaze. Then, they’d both look away. A subtle tension, laced with anticipation, filled the air.

As Nate had predicted the room was empty, with the lights on low. A Christmas tree twinkled in one corner. A thoughtful host had put some bottles of champagne in an ice bucket and laid out bowls of nibbles. Hayley took off her coat, scarf and gloves and sat on a sofa near the large windows that overlooked the city, while he poured them each a glass and grabbed some snack bowls. He then joined her on the sofa.

The clock on the wall started to chime midnight. Outside, fireworks lit up the sky.

Nate wondered whether he should hug her. Was a kiss too much? He cleared his suddenly tight throat. “Happy New Year.”

“Happy New Year to you too.” Hayley clinked her

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glass against his. “Here’s to you saving me from the worst New Year’s Eve date in history.”

“I’ll drink to that.” He tapped his glass against hers. “And here’s to you making my New Year’s Eve more fun than it has been in years. In a way, you rescued me too.”

“Thank you.” A pretty blush filled her cheeks.

They sipped their drinks.

Hayley set her glass down on the coffee table and turned to face him.

Their gazes met and held, as the last chime faded away. The faint pop-pop of exploding fireworks was the only sound in the quiet lounge, although Nate’s heart was pounding so hard, he was amazed Hayley couldn’t hear it.

Without looking away, he put his glass next to hers.

She moistened her lips with the tip of her tongue.

He swallowed hard. Then, unable to resist any longer, he leaned forward and pressed a quick kiss to her mouth.

She sighed softly. He wasn’t sure if that was good or bad.

Just as he was about to pull away, she wrapped her arms around his neck.

“Here’s to the perfect rescue, for both of us,” she murmured, before kissing him back.

Maybe New Year’s Eve wasn’t so bad, after all.

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Welcome to the world of the New Jersey Ice Cats!

Books in the series:

[A Perfect Distraction](#)

[A Perfect Trade](#)

[A Perfect Catch](#)

[A Perfect Compromise](#)

[A Perfect Strategy](#)

[A Perfect Selection](#) (Anthology of short stories)

[A Perfect Selection 2](#) (Anthology of short stories)

Short Stories:

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A Perfect Lucky Charm

A Perfect Disguise

A Perfect Reunion

A Perfect Storm

A Perfect Bouquet

A Perfect Plan

A Perfect Picnic

A Perfect Contest

A Perfect Pumpkin

A Perfect Favor/Favour

A Perfect Date

A Perfect Chance

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A Perfect Selection

Can you read just one?

A mouthwatering selection of six holiday-themed, bite-sized romances featuring players from the New Jersey Ice Cats.

Contains: **A Perfect Party**
 A Perfect Lucky Charm
 A Perfect Disguise
 A Perfect Reunion
 A Perfect Storm
 A Perfect Bouquet

A Perfect Selection 2

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 A Perfect Plan
 A Perfect Picnic
 A Perfect Date
 A Perfect Chance

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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.

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.

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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!

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.

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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.

The top half of the image features two champagne flutes filled with bubbly golden liquid, each adorned with a golden streamer. The background is a dark blue bokeh of light spots. The title 'A PERFECT PARTY' is written in a large, bold, yellow serif font, centered over the flutes.

A PERFECT PARTY

Be careful what you wish for

New Year's Eve hasn't been kind to Ice Cats' forward, Nate Gallison. This year, he's responsible for the team's loss. All he wants is a quiet night. But when a sexy brunette in a red dress needs help escaping from the date from hell, he wonders if a little festive hide-and-seek can lead to a magical midnight for them both?

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Romances that win your heart!



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