



# How To Quit Playing Hockey

*Isa K.*

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Mac has never wanted to be out. He's not ashamed of his sexuality--especially after he started hooking up with his teammate, Fritzy. The lies are exhausting, but the risks that come with the truth are enough to convince him to keep his mouth shut.

Fritzy already has a reputation as a troublemaker. He's actually good enough to make to the major leagues ... if anyone will take him and being out and gay makes that even less likely. So, they have to stay quiet for now. Be hockey players today, be gay later.? Mac has always felt that coming out was a personal decision, but this is clearly a business decision.

Unfortunately for him the business of hockey means a lot of homophobia passed off casually and thoughtlessly. His teammate aren't bad guys. His coaches aren't bad guys. The reporters, the fans, the scouts and agents--no one wants to be called a bigot, but nobody thinks about the things they say in jest. Just how much longer will Mac have to stick to business? How many more lies will he and Fritzy have to tell just to hold onto their dreams?

## How To Quit Playing Hockey Details

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## From Reader Review How To Quit Playing Hockey for online ebook

### Teal says

\*\*\* 3.5 stars \*\*\*

I loved the rapport between Mac and Fritzy, who when the story begins are minor league hockey teammates and lovers. They're good to each other, and good for each other. It made me realize how rare that is in the m/m romance I've read, which often features angst and drama and intense emotion, but very rarely the genuine heartfelt affection these two guys shared.

The story was pretty laid-back, which is a plus or minus depending on what you have a taste for at the time. I was glad for it. The hockey side of things felt realistic to me (I'm a fan, but not an expert). I definitely want to read more by this author.

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### Emma Sea says

Not an m/m romance; rather a classic bildungsroman with added hot gay sex. The author highlights the universality and currency of the genre by setting the story in the hypermasculine culture of professional hockey, and using Mac being gay as the societal conflict and opportunity for growth and maturity. A genuine affection for the sport and its men shines through the whole book. By the end I was completely hooked, both on Mac, and on hockey. Through the last 20% I couldn't look away from my e-reader.

It's a well-written story of small, cosily-domestic proportions, that leaves room for some great wit. I am off to enter my favourite quotes in GR.

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### Mandapanda says

I can't resist m/m hockey romance. When this well written story opens local league hockey pros Mac and Fritzy are enjoying the off season and their first time living together as a couple. But everything is in flux. They are teetering on the verge of committing, coming out, being promoted to the National Hockey League and being forced to retire.

The ups and downs of the *out-for-you* plot is grounded by a very sensuous love story. These two guys are always loyal and totally in to each other. The sex scenes are not only hot, but they are full of affection and humour. The shaving scene was a standout! What I liked most about this is that Mac and Fritzy didn't act like a couple of big girls. They weren't babyish about their prospects. It felt real, honest and sexy.

Duh! I just found out that There's Cock In This Book is the prequel to this story.

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## **Lisa Henry says**

Okay, I know nothing about hockey. Seriously nothing. But Isa K obviously loves the sport and I think I kind of do now as well. What I really loved about the depiction of the sport here is that the guys aren't major league. They don't spend their downtime buying sports cars and hot tubs which (rightly or wrongly) is how I imagine major league sports stars spend their days. Mac and Fritzy have Real Jobs. And by real jobs, I mean shitty dead end jobs that pay the bills off-season.

And how sad is Mac's story? He loves the game, but that's not enough. Not everyone can be in the majors, which leaves Mac facing a very uncertain future.

I loved both Mac and Fritzy. These are real men in a real relationship. No attach-penis-on-girly-character-and-turn-her-into-a-guy here. And there is not enough of that in m/m.

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## **Bev says**

[image error]

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## **Sarah says**

While I finished this in pretty much sitting, I did find it hard going.

I did not feel the connection between the characters and found there was no tension or build up.

They're in a relationship right from the get go and I guess the whole plot line is about them coming to terms with being gay and being out as sportsmen in the public eye.

However, for me reading this as a romance novel, I wanted romance complete with hot sexy times, some passion and feelings. Fritzy was just too stoic, too bland and gave nothing at all away. Mac was ok, but had some rather over the top moments that seemed a little out of character. I wanted to be a little more uplifted too, and some of the plot left me feeling pretty sad and a bit depressed.

I finished it and it ends pretty well, but as a whole the book just didn't do it for me.

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## **Val Kovalin says**

I knew nothing about hockey when I first picked up this book, but that didn't stop me from enjoying the story. It doesn't feature any long, involved scenes of hockey games, but even so, I think it will thrill the hockey-loving readers. Those readers with no hockey background might be as fascinated as I was by the vivid, three-dimensional glimpses of the everyday life of a hockey player in the AAA minor leagues.

It's so refreshing that our heroes are not winning the Stanley Cup at the pinnacle of their careers with the National Hockey League (NHL), which is described by Wikipedia as *the premier professional ice hockey*

*league in the world.* When we readers are lucky enough to find good sports fiction, we almost always get the glamour. Here, we see the seldom-shown grunge and obscurity.

Our twentyish heroes play in the minor leagues below the American Hockey League (AHL), which is itself a minor league below the NHL. This far down, they don't get paid in the off-season. From Kindle location 65:

Once the hockey stopped, so did the paychecks. Every summer they had to compete with illegal immigrants and high school kids for the dregs of part-time employment. Landscaping, construction, bartending, retail – lots of retail – all to earn enough money to survive until hockey returned.

The only sport I know much about is boxing. These poor devils in *How To Quit Playing Hockey* remind me of journeyman boxers (aka tomato cans) hired for a pittance per fight to keep the real contenders winning and moving up toward a world title. Why would hockey players (or journeyman boxers) want to hold on by their fingernails to the dregs of a professional career while the rest of the world looks upon them as losers? For love of the game. It speaks volumes about Mac's integrity and big heart that he never once reflects on his fate with bitterness, frustration, or any sense of entitlement. He's a terrific character, which makes the book poignant, but never depressing.

*How To Quit Playing Hockey* opens with Mac, aka Stephen MacDonald, who is only twenty-four. Already, he is questioning his decisions, which have left him with *barely a high school education and a dream job that paid him little more than four hundred a week once the town frosted over*. It's summertime, which means he is working in a crappy pizza parlor in a *small, dying unnamed American town*.

Mac has persuaded the team management to let him stay on as a caretaker at the grungy house rented year-round by the team to contain the unmarried hockey players during the winter season. He can look after the property while the rest of the team scatters back to their hometowns to scrounge for summer jobs.

Fortunately, Mac's secret boyfriend and teammate Fritzy stays with him. Fritzy, aka Leo Fitzgerald, is a talented player who should be in the NHL, but got sent down for beating up a favored player for unspecified reasons. (I'm not sure what positions Mac and Fritzy play, but I think they're both defensemen.) For obvious reasons, Mac and Fritzy are each deep in the closet. But for a few idyllic months that summer, they get to push their single beds together and explore what being a real couple might be like.

Though both Mac and Fritzy are smart, contemplative, caring, and tenderhearted, they are still hockey players and young enough to be steeped in hyper-machismo. Their frequent lusty encounters are hard-edged and laced with playful insults. They try to keep their emotions suppressed beneath their mutual, and considerable, sexual chemistry. Neither can admit that he is in love with the other, though both clearly long to choke out the three little words.

But everything starts to change for Mac and Fritzy around the 28% Kindle mark. The rest of the team returns to start practicing for the upcoming season. Fritzy gets unexpectedly whisked off to play for an AHL team with a shot at the NHL. Mac's team inherits an immature and homophobic asshole named Burgy to play in Fritzy's place, and Mac ends up with the thankless responsibility of turning this young idiot into a team player.

Mac grows increasingly tormented by the difficulties of maintaining a long-distance relationship with Fritzy.

He feels increasing pressure to come out, which means losing his career, or not come out, and risk watching the love of his life drift away. Meanwhile, he knows Fritzy has much more to lose by coming out than he does. Could the conflict and tension in this story get more deliciously intense?

I had some small problems with the book. First, I wish the main setting (the small, dying American town) had been named and explored. Keeping it generic meant missing an opportunity for vivid specificity. Second, non-viewpoint character Fritzy disappears throughout the middle of the book, which makes it less a romance and more a coming-of-age for Mac. Even so, the author does an outstanding job at making Fritzy an appealing and worthy love interest for Mac.

Eventually, we readers receive crucial insights into the immense fear and pressure Fritzy suffers while trying to make the most of his fleeting chance with the NHL. This gives the book's (happy) ending a huge emotional impact, and made my heart ache (in a good way) for both Fritzy and Mac.

Third, I wanted the book to have included the details of Mac and Fritzy meeting each other and somehow evolving from strangers, to friends, to secret lovers. How did they manage this under the noses of their unsuspecting teammates? How did they find the courage to do it in the first place? How did each man even recognize that the other might be gay? I also wanted to know more about Fritzy's background and the specifics of him getting sent down for beating up another player. All this would have made *How To Quit Playing Hockey* a stronger story. But then I discovered that there already is a prequel – a free short story called (I kid you not) *There's Cock In This Book*.

*There's Cock In This Book* is super-hot, engaging, and funny, and answers my lingering questions about Fritzy. However, it isn't the long prequel novel that I wanted. I would be so delighted if the author expanded and revised this short story into a full-fledged prequel novel. I mean, why not? Authors do this all the time. That would be a treat for us readers. Meanwhile, it's still a fun short story, and I recommend you read it before you read *How to Quit Playing Hockey*.

The things I liked in *How To Quit Playing Hockey* are numerous, including the vivid world of AAA minor-league hockey, the immensely appealing Mac and Fritzy, the strong writing, the hot sex scenes, and the unsentimental and witty feel to the story.

I loved the strong supporting characters of Stammer the goalie, Burgy the homophobic teammate, the stoic coach – and Sarah, a gritty “girl plumber” who lacks all social graces, but who hears Mac's confessions and advises him as a friend. Don't miss *How To Quit Playing Hockey* and its prequel *There's Cock In This Book*.

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### **Julio Genao says**

#### **This was fun.**

Isa K.'s voice is both self-assured and impertinent, which inspires confidence right away that you're in good hands until the ride comes to a full and complete stop.

I found Marc to be irritatingly neurotic, and then charmingly neurotic; there's a bit with a ukulele that more or less sealed the deal as far as my opinion of him was concerned. After all, it's not his fault he has a chronic and debilitating nervous condition, right?

Fritzy was adorable. And just when you think he's too perfect... POW! Side order of *YO MAMA SAY WHUT??!*

Well-researched, deftly-paced, and sneakily good-hearted.

Nicely done.

Also: Let's Go Rangers.

That is all.

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### **Chris says**

3.5 stars. Good m/m romance about two closeted minor league hockey players whose idyllic summer together ends with the start of the new season as one is sent up to the majors and the other faces the possibility of being cut from the team and trying to define a post-hockey life.

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### **SueM says**

I can't quite decide how I feel about this novel.

It was good in that I felt the two men - Mac and Fritzy - had a solid and loyal relationship, with the only issue causing them hesitation was whether they should be out or not, especially as Fritzy had a chance to make the big leagues.

But I admit, I didn't really enjoy the story as much as I could have, because for a large section of the novel, the two men were not actually together; they were forced into a long distance relationship, leaving us only to see what was happening in Mac's life. And for me, some of the details of his life seemed over-explored, to the extent that I found myself wanting to skip a few pages ahead. I don't know for sure, but I think I might have enjoyed it more if it had been balanced with more details about Fritzy.

All I do know though, is that it just missed hitting the right spot for me.

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### **Ami says**

I wholeheartedly agree with what my friend Emma said on her review...

I don't think that this is a classic romance fiction about Mac and Fritz. When the story starts, Mac and Fritz are already together. And I never have doubts regarding their love to one another -- even with slight miscommunication in the end. Sure, Mac is insecure about coming out as a hockey player and he also contemplates whether it is the right time to tell Fritz "I love you", but I feel that it has never really been the big issue.

Instead, I feel that the big question here is Mac's love for hockey, whether he has what it takes to stay in the

game and keep loving it. While Fritz seems to get his big ticket, being drafted both ways to the A and N league, Mac is the one left behind. Mac struggles to figure out what to do, if he no longer has hockey in his life (and his lover is away doing NHL games)...

*He didn't know, but he could admit to himself that while they trained for the new season, he did have certain fantasies about retiring from hockey and taking up a new profession where his sexuality didn't matter.*

*Gay plumber. Gay accountant. Gay used car salesman.* (Chapter Five)

There's also the issue about Mac being one of the "veterans", even in his 24-years of age. There are younger people coming, and he doesn't know if he will stay in the team or being cut off. If he does, would coming out matters? Or should he come out now, and see whether the team's reaction will make it or break it for him.

It's a wonderful and thoughtful read as I am reading Mac's journey towards accepting his love to the game and his love for his man, with every single consequences that come along with it. And Isa K. manages to insert great humor too. The ukulele scene in the end, I love that. I also particularly love this part, where Mac's imagining some melodramatic scenarios on why Fritz doesn't answer Mac's telephone call ...

*Fritzy is crushed by his demotion. He has lost his will to live. He's lying drunk under his kitchen table. He's gone on a torrid downward spiral involving crack-addicted gay escorts. He has locked himself in his bedroom and is listening to the Cure while experimenting with eyeliner.* (Chapter 11) \*lol\*

I love it -- a very good sport-related book, that is for sure.

PS: I agree that it is too bad Mac doesn't pursue friendship with Sarah the girl-plumber. I think they can make good friends indeed. Especially since Sarah is the only female secondary character in this book, and she's not at all whiny or bitchy or annoying. That's refreshing, people!

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## **Heller says**

3.75 [rounded up]

This had such authentic locker room feel to it. I really enjoy hockey stories and this for me was probably the best representation of what it's like to be a hockey player working your way between leagues.

You must read the free prequel *There's Cock In This Book* first. That's where we meet Mac D and Fritzy for the first time and they start their relationship. Fun stuff. Even if it has the most ridiculous title ever.

So here we meet the boys again. They're working away at lame summer jobs making ends meet until the hockey season starts again. Fritzy gets word he may be called up to the AHL and potentially the NHL. Good news for him but Mac's prospects aren't as good and he's wavering on the line of being cut from the team.

I really loved their relationship. Very much two young athletes who are rough and ready but there's also a sweeter side to them. The story is told from Mac D's POV and think it falters a bit here because I really needed to know what was going on in Fritzy's head later on in the story:

(view spoiler)

I loved how things progressed for Mac in this story and how his future was being settled. Perfect solution. I also enjoyed how he really wanted to be out and in his relationship with Fritzy.

Lots of chemistry between the two of them. Sometimes hot, sometimes adorable and sometimes raunchy. It all felt right and really suited their personalities.

This is a great sports romance. It has a few moments that stretched believability for me but in the end the characters and storyline really won me over. Definitely recommended if you like hockey player romances!

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### **Smith Barney says**

**I'm such the suck-up for a sport-themed plot..with or without the balls.**

**Short but packs a potent punch and fortunate for me..well-received.**

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### **Hannah says**

3.5 stars.

I am a fan of romance and decidedly *not* a fan of sports, so I was surprised to find that my favorite parts of this book involve hockey culture and politics rather than the central relationship. Isa K.'s depiction of the unglamorous lifestyle of a minor league professional athlete is interesting, particularly since all the books I've previously read about athletes have featured major league players. It is actually a rather harrowing picture. Mac's love for the game is greater than his skill as a player, leaving him in the uncomfortable position of eventually being shut out of the only job he knows how to do. The book is aptly titled because it is, first and foremost, about Mac's struggle to figure out what to do with himself when he can no longer play hockey. Tied into that struggle is the fact that Mac is gay, closeted, and sorta-maybe-probably in love with a former teammate who has a shot at an NHL career.

My biggest problem with this book is Mac, himself. Mac is a passive character -- much too passive to make a satisfying point of view character. Almost every event in Mac's life is something that *happens to* Mac, (view spoiler) not something Mac does for himself. The one time in the novel when Mac actually takes a stand for something he cares about, (view spoiler) it ends up feeling completely out of character for him.

When I finished the book, I was left wondering what I was supposed to take away from it. I haven't learned anything (except how to be grateful for my college education and boring desk job), and Mac doesn't seem to have learned anything (except maybe that if you stand around looking aimless long enough, other people will start making your major life decisions for you), and Fritzy hasn't learned anything (view spoiler), so where does that leave *How to Quit Playing Hockey*? Is this a coming-of-age story, a love letter to the sport, or just a book about imperfect people muddling through their lives as best they can -- a book that doesn't purport to offer any definitive answers to the various questions it raises? My money's on that last one. So I would recommend this book for people who want to read about the messy and awkward lives of ordinary people, not for anyone looking for a touching romance, a feel-good sports epic, or a triumphant "coming out" story.

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**Erin says**

Sometimes my ebook reader can be so cruel. I'm reading along and all of a sudden I turned the page and The End was all that was there. I wasn't ready for it!

I read the story of when these two got together so I was so glad when I saw that their story was going to continue a bit longer. So many things to love about this one. :)

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