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Nicole McLaughlin

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Jen Mackenzie has been knocked down more than a few times, but she always gets up and makes sure she has the last word. It's the reason she now considers herself equal parts self-sufficient and free-spirit. But since losing her job and trying to help her mother beat cancer, real life—and her occasional careless choices—have begun to catch up with her. Her one saving grace: The Stag, a boutique distillery that has become Kansas City's go-to wedding venue. The only catch: One of the owners, TJ Laughlin, happens to be the one man who somehow manages to make Jen feel inadequate.

TJ has secretly had a thing for Jen since high school. Now, as her new boss, it's a daily struggle between revealing his feelings and wringing her beautiful neck. Only one thing is for certain: he can't stand idly by and watch the woman he cares for struggle. She may be convinced that accepting TJ's help is a weakness. But all he sees in Jen is beauty and strength, inside and out. As things finally heat up between them, can TJ find a way to convince Jen that love is about give and take—and having it all, together?

Maybe This Time Details

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From Reader Review Maybe This Time for online ebook

Linda says

Three stars for "Maybe this Time", yes low for me but mostly because I had a hard time liking the heroine in this story. I wanted to, I should have, Jen Mackenzie is from the proverbial wrong side of the tracks; she is stuck working two part time jobs after losing her full time that she loved due to financial concerns, her mom has cancer and she tries her best to be there and supportive for her mom to spite not having a great relationship to start with, to state it simply she is the underdog.

I should like her, I should be rooting for her however the more I read the less I was. Why well Jenn's attitude makes it hard to like her and hard to be sympathetic toward her. I believe the author's goal was to make her a likable character whom you are sympathetic toward while seeing her as a strong woman trying to make her own way which I did see at times. Well enough ranting about what I did not care for, let's try what I did.

I liked our hero Tj, who in all appearances has it better than Jenn, comes from a wealthy family, now has his own business with friends which employs Jenn which to spite Jenn's attraction to him is some of what makes her prickly toward him. However TJ's world is not all sunshine and roses he has issues to; a mother who drinks heavily a father who has been distant. TJ has had a crush on Jenn since high school so when he breaks it off with his current girlfriend and both he and Jenn are single he finally goes for it; but prickly Jenn does not make it easy for the guy who wants to give her everything. These two go back and forth and just when you think a happy ending may be looming an offer of a dream job for Jenn comes in a different state. Boom" like that your trapped in the story line yet again because you need to know will they get their heads. So yes hard heroine to like, a little wish washy but very likable hero but I still found myself engrossed in their hard won relationship story.

Did I enjoy the story, overall all yes.

Arc graciously provided via netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Jen Ryland says

I'm all for unexpected heroines. Snarky, rumples, shy, awkward ... bring them on.

But I felt that this book was a real mismatch of cover and story. I downloaded this expecting to get a sweet, romantic wedding story. Instead, I got a first chapter set back in high school where the main character asks the probable love interest if he jerks off with his left hand. Because he's left-handed. Me: okaaaaay then. At least I'm not the worst conversationalist ever.

It's possible I could have liked this book if I'd gone in with different expectations. Maybe the cover should have showed the sleeve of tattoos on Jen's left arm... I think that would have better reflected the tone and vibe of the story (at least the part I read.) The love interest describes her as a "gothic Cinderella" who wears heavy makeup and changes her hair color often. That sounds cool and unconventional, and that's what I think the cover should have conveyed.

DNF.

Read more of my reviews on JenRyland.com! Check out my Bookstagram! Or check out my Jen In Ten

reviews on Youtube - get the lowdown on current books in 10-30 seconds!

I received a free advance copy of this book from the publisher for possible review.

Julie says

Physically speaking, Jen was this vibrant burst of color with her clothes and her tattoos. Yet her personality was extremely prickly-especially with TJ. I mean talk about having a chip on the shoulder! Jen had that in spades. Like massive chip. Between mommy issues and berating the one who got away, Jen's pride and sheer stubbornness got old after awhile. I understood where she was coming from, but it didn't mean I had to like it. I found myself wanting to yell at her to put her big girl panties on, take some responsibility, and grow up! Preferably before the end of the book..

TJ was Jen's polar opposite. He was subdued in dress and personality, but his empathy and brains made it easy to like the guy. Once they sort of set their past issues behind them, TJ gave Jen just about everything possible. Sometimes it was material, other times it was just basic emotional support, but when he laid his heart on his sleeve and offered it to her, her response was so..so... ugh. I'll just say I felt really bad for him.

In the overall scheme of things, TJ and Jen both had serious communication issues and high expectations of each other that were..ummm, I think a bit unreasonable considering the newness of their relationship. In retrospect, I think Jen was way more than TJ could actually handle. Yes, they had physical chemistry, but the emotional aspect wasn't clicking and gave their "love" an unbalanced feel.

This was a tough book to rate. Individually speaking, I rather enjoyed all the characters, including TJ's business partners and Jen's grumpy mom and really wanted to give four stars. However, I wasn't buying into the attraction between Jen and TJ and that was the whole purpose to the book! The angst between them dragged out too long while the rushed ending wrapped things up with a tidy bow that left me feeling unsatisfied. I've read other books by this author and enjoy her writing immensely; unfortunately, this particular story didn't work for me.

I voluntarily read and reviewed an advanced copy of this book. All thoughts and opinions are my own.

Cathy Geha says

Maybe This Time by Nicole McLaughlin
Whiskey & Weddings #2

Jen McKenzie and T.J. Lawrence have known and had crushes on one another since middle school. The timing has never been right before but after fifteen years of interest unfulfilled it seems the time might finally be time for the two of them to get together. So, with T.J. breaking up with his current girlfriend and Jen not with anyone the two start the mating dance with bickering and b*tching and eventually a bit of romance, support, trust, caring and sharing.

Jen and T.J. both have had issues with their parents though I never really got to the meat of why the two and

their parents were not close. Jen has always had the dream of being on Broadway and does have talent but it has, for the most part, not panned out for her and instead she has been on the small stage and teaching closer to home while T.J. has done well in business and with the distillery and is ready to put roots down.

I am not sure why Jen and T.J. are so attracted or why they have not acted on the interest but when they do it seems to work for them and all comes out right in the end...perhaps too easily, in fact.

I enjoyed catching up with T.J, Dean and Jake and wonder how Alex, Dean's sister, will do in the future. Charlotte's ex, John, was mentioned in passing and I wonder if he will have a book of his own eventually, too.

All in all this was an alright story of a woman that pretty much put herself first until she needed to step up in a bigger way for her not so appreciative mother it was also the story of two people that have wanted to be close but never felt the timing was right before. Jen was not as hard or as easy as she appeared to be in parts of the book just as T.J. was not as uptight and nerdy as Jen thought he was.

Thank you to NetGalley and St. Martin's Press for the ARC – This is my honest review.

3-4 stars

Heather andrews says

TJ's woman just frustrates him at times, "he slammed his hands down to his sides, hard enough to hold the covers down tight so that she could see the bulge below his waist. "This is the result of waking up next to you. Obviously, there is nothing repulsive about that idea." TJ is not a bashful man, "If someone is lucky enough to drive by, then they'll see me effing you against the wall." I loved this book TJ was just everything.

Book Gannet says

Wow, someone has a chip on their shoulder. I think Jen was supposed to be a sympathetic character because her mother has cancer, she lost her dream job and she's barely scraping by financially, but that aforementioned chip ruined everything. Because Jen feels incredibly hard done by, as if the world owes her something.

Except it doesn't. Yes, her mother is sick and she's horrible to Jen, but Jen isn't all that great back and she only visits her daily, she doesn't live with her, take care of her or have to pay her bills, so really, it could be worse. Her dream job loss was sad, but she doesn't exactly do anything to find another one. As for those money worries, they're her fault. She knows she's bad with money and she was reckless and impulsive with credit cards through her twenties, not hit by disasters and unexpected bills, so really, she wasn't all that sympathetic. Perhaps if she hadn't been so angry at the world, I might have cared more. Mostly I just didn't like her.

Not least because of how judgemental she was. She has a real issue with people judging her, but it seems the only person doing any judging is Jen. She's horrible to TJ without any reason for it. Yes, there was

something he said back in school, but as the prologue shows, she had it in for him before that. Because he was rich and good looking and apparently a nice guy. Clearly, he's a monster. Also TJ's girlfriend is horrible too because she's small and upbeat and touches her guy a lot. Obviously the woman is a demonic cheerleader.

Well, Jen, you're over thirty now, so maybe it's time to leave high school behind and, I don't know, grow up?

So why, oh why, oh why, was TJ so hung up on her? It never made any sense. She's rude and obnoxious to him, has been rubbing her love life in his face for years, and is happy to flirt with guys she has no interest in just because he's around. People say she's sweet and lovely, but I saw no evidence of it. The woman is an immature mess and had very few redeeming qualities.

TJ isn't perfect either, to be fair. He has daddy issues and caveman tendencies, and a habit of doing things because he knows best, but he's also generous and loyal and protective and a good friend, so at least he has some balance. Jen had nothing but negative traits, the only positive thing being that TJ loved her, and really, for me that wasn't enough.

Personally, I thought the job offer was the best thing that could have happened. I didn't blame her for wanting to follow her passion. If it's that strong, giving it all up for someone is usually a bad idea and leads to bitterness. Which is why she should have talked to him about it like an adult, not thrown it in his face, along with another old secret, because she wanted to win an argument. For me the best ending in this book would have been her leaving and TJ getting on with his life... which is not the kind of ending most romance readers are after, but really, these two and a HEA wasn't believable.

Throw in the ridiculous way she just accepts TJ would pay off her whopping debt and I was done. This book didn't work for me. I didn't like Jen at the start and it only got worse as the book progressed. TJ was okay, but I never got what made Jen so special and worth all those years of devotion. The first book in this series (Maybe I Do), was really good, with interesting characters that I enjoyed a lot, this one wasn't and after initial high hopes I was left sadly disappointed.

(ARC provided by the publisher via NetGalley.)

Kathleen says

Thanks to author Nicole McLaughlin, publisher St. Martin's Press and NetGalley for an eARC of MAYBE THIS TIME (WHISKEY AND WEDDINGS #2) in exchange for an honest review.

Jen tries to live as a free spirit and steer clear of close relationships. TJ, her boss has had a crush on Jen since high school. Jen is initially unaware of his feelings for her, and hides her feelings for him by 'smart talking' and flirting with other guys.

Will TJ tell Jen about his feelings for her?

Will Jen let TJ know her true feelings?

Does Jen know what she really wants?

What does Jen find out during the house fire?

After the fire, do circumstances change for the better? Or are things worse than before?

Read the book to find out!

Deanne Patterson says

TJ has had a crush on Jen since high school. With Jen's scrappy, resilient personality is there even a chance of a romance between her and TJ? Her mother is battling cancer, she loses her dream job and she is really struggling financially. Her life's choices are starting to catch up with her but she always seems to land on her feet time and time again. As her new boss can TJ break through her prickly exterior to the soft romantic woman inside and make her see she needs him as much as he needs her and that it's not a sign of weakness?

Pub Date 27 Feb 2018

Thank you to NetGalley and St. Martin's Press for a review copy. I was not required to write a positive review.

Tami says

A sweet contemporary romance. They've known each other since HS. He's always had a little crush on her. He's also now her boss.

This review is based on the ARC provided by the author and/or the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for my honest opinion.

Alison says

Jen MacKenzie is your typical girl from the wrong side of the tracks, living in a bad apartment, no full-time job, drowning in debt, tattoos, no college education. She was poor but happy teaching theatre in a local community college until the funding ran out, now she's juggling two part-time jobs and struggling to make ends meet.

TJ Laughlin was the Andrew McCarthy to Jen's Molly Ringwald in this variant in *Pretty in Pink* (or *Cinderella*, if you are old school). The son of wealthy parents he was one of the popular kids at school, handsome, glossy, well-dressed and gleaming smile.

Years later TJ is a joint owner of the The Stag, a boutique distillery that has become Kansas City's go-to wedding venue. Jen has been part-time tending bar on a Saturday night and acting receptionist while the regular woman is on maternity leave, she's not thrilled to be working for someone who looks like he smells something bad every time she walks into a room but a job's a job, right?

TJ has lusted after Jen from afar ever since school, he even watched every single one of her Am-Dram productions. But his snobby friends and family deterred him from ever approaching her. Now, years later, working with the woman of his dreams is sweet torture.

I liked this but I didn't love it. My ARC had lots of grammatical errors (which I am sure were corrected before it was published). It was so blindingly obvious from the get-go that TJ liked Jen that her obliviousness appeared deliberately obtuse. Yet she continued to delude herself that TJ hated her, TJ looked down on her yadda yadda. Denial, denial, denial. TJ was just as bad, he didn't get the courage to speak up until another

man looked likely to sweep in and steal Jen.

Overall, it felt like Nicole McLaughlin was trying too hard to be even-handed, Jen had family issues, TJ had family issues, Jen had a secret, TJ had a secret etc etc.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher via NetGalley in return for an honest review.

Rejane says

I despise people who acts like the world owes them anything because they were wronged somehow. And then, proceeds treating people rudely and being a bitchy because life is unfair.

By the looks of it, our fmc is rude, inconvenient and disrespectful not forgetting immature

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Cindy says

TJ and Jen , what fun and hopelessly in love characters! I am a sucker for a good romance and love the lead up to the hopefully happy ending. This was a nice and well written book with fun characters. I was a bit frustrated at times with Jun but adored TJ. I have not read any other books by this author before but look forward to the next book!

Jaime Fiction Fangirls Book Review says

This is the second book in a series and my first time reading this author but I don't feel like I missed anything that might've changed my reading experience had I read the first one. We'll find out though because after finishing this story, I'm definitely going back to read the first.

I enjoyed this story a lot. Mostly I just really liked TJ. He was a real sweetheart and I loved how he openly loved and cared for Jen, even when she couldn't, or wouldn't, see it.

I love a good romance where the hero and heroine have been pining for each other for a while but have both been too stubborn or oblivious to take the plunge, but not so much that they haven't dated other people or lived in the meantime.

Jen and TJ's relationship is plagued with communication problems. Not miscommunication but rather a lack of communication at all. I found this aspect of the story very realistic and wanted to see how they navigated their way through it. I think they both handled it in a mature, calm way which would seem ideal, however, I was hoping for a little more emotion from them both. Go figure that I would actually be hoping for a little more drama before their story wrapped up.

Overall this was a really enjoyable story and I liked the author's writing and character building. I will definitely be reading more from her in the future.

♥ WishfulMiss ♥ says

I almost did not finish this one because Jen rubbed me the wrong way. I don't think the author planned to create a character that was so judgmental and whiney (I hope) and this could be a case of "It's not you but me" here but she was not an heroine I could root for.

The story is about Jen and TJ. Jen works as a bartender/receptionist for The Stag, a bar co-owned by TJ and their two other friends, Dean and Jake. We're told that Jen has held a torch for TJ since high school but because of her insecurities and misguided assumptions about him, she's gone out of her way to antagonize him and now, twelve years later, they have a prickly work proximity acquaintance.

But that all changes when TJ catches her at a vulnerable moment and both their walls come down. Jen realizes that TJ isn't as disapproving as she always thought and TJ finally voices his interest in her. Things move pretty quick for them when Jen finds herself homeless and struggling with her mom's cancer making a comeback.

I didn't hate all of it but I still am left with a bag of mixed feeling over both MCs.

What I liked:

I'm a sucker for the strong silent types and TJ was that with a sprinkle of adorably awkward. Although when it counted, he didn't mince words or pull his punches. I liked him.

I liked him and related to him but I couldn't quite grasp what he saw in Jen. Like what was it about her (other than a pretty face) that he found so irresistible? For the last twelve years, he's crushed on her silently with everyone knowing (except the h, of course) and taken so much attitude and snarkiness from her, I'm convinced any normal person would have buried any lingering infatuation with her and just moved on. But I guess TJ is loyal to a fault because he takes it all in stride and still finds it in himself to fall in love with her. All while she's antagonizing and poking fun of him! I guess miracles really do happen!

What I didn't like:

At this point, I think it's pretty obvious I didn't like the h. Jen's name should be changed to Debbie, for Debbie Downer. She is definitely the bemoaning, throws-her-own-pity-parties kind of girl. She complains about her job, her lack of trust, her dismal love life and loves to play the blame game. She has trust issues because of her mother, she doesn't believe in love because of her mother and her absentee father, she's stuck in a rut and doesn't know what she's doing with her life because *drum roll* her mother!

I wasn't a fan of her mother either (she was a bitter and angry woman) but I got tired really quick with Jen constantly complaining about her and bringing up all the things Jen did to relieve her own damn guilt to really care. Their relationship was super messed up but this woman was still her mother and she was dealing with the return of cancer and facing her mortality. I think snapping back at her and constantly expecting praise for checking up on her (which any remotely decent human being would do) was too much.

Then there's the awful way she behaved and treated the H. Jen likes to think she's a mind reader and can interpret your body language and thoughts perfectly and accurately. She also likes to put words in your

mouth.

For more than a decade she's treated TJ to her full on bullying attention over her own misconceptions and assumptions. Instead of talking it out or asking what he means or even just shutting up and waiting for a response would have cleared this up a long time ago. But our h does none of that. She makes up her mind that the H thinks she's trashy, not his type and disapproves of the way she looks without once having a full conversation with him. The H could have literally been having a heart attack, face all scrunched up and she would have assumed he was frowning his disapproval of her, yelled something sarcastically mean and stormed out. She was so dramatic and too quick to jump to the wrong conclusion. It was super frustrating.

This girl has huge insecurities that she nurtures for years, really low self-esteem and a chip on her shoulder a mile wide. She needed to fix herself and I just didn't feel she ever really dealt with any of her emotional baggage.

Would I recommend?

This didn't work out for me because it had too many of my personal pet peeves, but the writing is solid and this author knows how to write an amazing book boyfriend. TJ was definitely the highlight of this story. He was really a sweet and caring guy. I enjoyed him.

*** * * *ARC provided for an honest review* * * ***

I voluntarily read and reviewed an advanced copy of this book. All thoughts and opinions are my own.

SAFETY INFO: (view spoiler)

Dísir says

While I definitely liked Nicole McLaughlin's first book in this series, 'Maybe This Time' was a different kettle of fish unfortunately. Perhaps what made it worse was that I'd been wanting TJ to find his HEA particularly after pining after someone who absolutely didn't deserve him at all.

There were so many aspects of the story that simply didn't gel with me, though my primary issue lay with Jen, who rubbed me the absolute wrong way from the start. It began with the childish taunting she did of TJ—if this isn't the childish equivalent of taunting the one you secretly have a thing for like—, the self-pity, the lashing out at people who didn't deserve it all because she felt trodden down by life.

If I had any sympathy for the acrimonious struggles she faced with her mother and being stretched in all ways, that wore off quickly enough in her overcompensation for it by generally being a bitch to others, particularly TJ, who had (inexplicably) been panting after her for so long. That she tried to measure against herself against the women she thought TJ liked, then justified her own insecurities by putting TJ's date down convinced me that this wasn't a 'heroine' I could ever root for, much less even grow to like when she'd actually thrown her hookups in his face in the previous book and then being defiant about being late at work because of it.

For most part, I thought Jen pretty much acted like the whole world owed her something, and seemed petty over almost everything. And lordy, how I loathed her. I didn't like how TJ had given up his own job for her, when she'd all but selfishly left him to pursue her own dreams. Mostly, I felt sorry for TJ, who seemed to be at the losing end of the deal, couldn't understand what the hell he actually saw in her, and generally thought of their romance as a lacklustre one that I couldn't see working out down the line.

And that pretty much clinched it for me. I couldn't quite go on anymore after that, especially when I detested this so, so much. It's a review that's clearly against the grain, and admittedly, my strong reaction is one that shows my own issues with the type of characters I can and want to get on board with in romantic fiction. That said, I think I'm still cautiously optimistic about Jake's story though—he and Alexis do seem to be headed down a path that isn't pretty—though I'm still feeling burnt by this particular installment.

*ARC by the publisher via Netgalley
