



## High-Stakes Bachelor (The Prescott Bachelors Book 1)

By Cindy Dees

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Wannabe stuntwoman Ana Izzolo can't believe she's landed a starring role in actor-producer Jackson Prescott's new film. A plain-Jane nobody and a megastar? Their on-screen chemistry is electric, burning up the celluloid...but offscreen, Ana is stalked by danger.

Like a true Hollywood hero, Jackson whisks her to his oceanfront mansion, practicing love scenes while keeping her safe. But when their real-life relationship starts mirroring the movie's leading couple, the confirmed bachelor fears he may fall for the doe-eyed ingenue. If the stalker doesn't get her first...

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### Editorial Review

#### About the Author

Raised on a horse farm in Michigan, Cindy Dees dropped out of high school at 15 to attend the University of Michigan where she earned a B.A. in Russian and East European Studies. She became a U.S. Air Force Pilot, worked at the White House, and was a part-time spy during her military career. Her first novel was published in 2002, and she has published over forty more since then with HRS and HQN. She is a 5-time RITA finalist and 2-time RITA winner and has won numerous other awards.

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Anabelle Izzolo looked around at the gorgeous young women waiting their turn to go out on the mat and wrestle with a stuntman. At barely five foot two, she noticed how her eyes were at chest height to the mob of leggy, boobtacular, Hollywood-starlet-wannabes who'd shown up for this audition. Crud. She had no business being there. It had seemed like a good idea when she'd signed up for it. But now that the moment was upon her, she felt a giant humiliation coming on.

Thing was, the write-up on the open casting call had been specific in saying that a fight sequence would be auditioned. She was trying to break into the business as a stuntwoman, so a fight was right up her alley. Of course, she wasn't going to get the acting part, but she was hoping to catch the casting director's eye and nab a bit part for some stunt work.

Yet another blonde bombshell went out onto the green gym mats and prissied her way through the fight sequence. God, none of the girls could even make a proper fist, let alone throw a decent punch. You had to drive through the elbow and down the arm into the knuckles. Put your weight behind it. Of course, this fight sequence was more about grappling and falling than throwing punches. Still, Ana was embarrassed on behalf of all women to watch the other girls muff their way through fake fighting.

The stuntman and casting director looked bored out of their minds. Whenever a superhot blonde with impressive cleavage came along, they perked up a little. But that was the extent of it.

"Next!" an assistant with a clipboard called.

"Hold up," the stuntman complained. "I need to piss."

The casting director huffed. "Make it fast."

A male voice, familiar to her from movie theaters, piped up. "I'll take over fighting until he gets back."

Ana turned, gaping. *OMG. Jackson Prescott in the flesh.* The star of the movie being cast stepped out of the shadows beyond the stage lights. He was a muscular, bronzed god of a man with sun-bleached hair and golden-hazel eyes that leaped off a movie screen and melted hearts all over the movie-going world. And in person...well, he was even hotter. Squeals, followed by an audible series of sighs, went up from the crowd of starlets. Ana was a little ashamed to realize she'd contributed to the collective swoon.

"Who's next?" Jackson asked the clipboard girl.

"That would be Number 127."

*Oh. Crap.* That was her. Ana lurched forward. She caught her foot on the edge of the raised stage and narrowly avoided face-planting as she stumbled into the wash of down lighting.

"You sure you want to try fighting?" Jackson joked. "Maybe you should master walking first?"

A titter of laughter went up from the Barbie doll brigade, and her face erupted in heat. She opened her mouth to make a clever quip back, but no sound came out. Instead, she raised her hands defensively in front of her and settled into a fighting stance.

"Okay, then," Jackson murmured. He stepped up to her, and she was abruptly struck by how much taller and more muscular than her he was. The guy had to be pushing six foot four. And he was so pretty she had trouble tearing her stare away from his face. The combination of boyish charm and masculine confidence was mesmerizing, and his eyes were a warm golden-green that almost seemed lit from within.

"Let's do this," he rumbled low and sexy.

Her insides twisted with shocking lust that distracted her just as he pounced. She barely dodged in time as his fist flew at her face. Wow, he was fast. The swiftness of the leg that swept her feet to the side caught her by surprise, too, and she slammed to the ground on her back as he jumped on top of her.

Her breath whooshed out on a grunt of shock and pain as she fought to draw the next one. Jackson straddled her stomach, pinning her down with his superior weight.

A brief look of disappointment crossed his face. She was supposed to have swung back at him with her fists and rolled aside before he could land on top of her, but she'd blown the move and let him pin her arms. He looked like he'd already mentally checked her off the list and moved on to the next starlet in the audition. In fact, seeming supremely bored, he went off script and reached down to wrap his hands around her neck as if to punctuate her failure.

But as his fingers tightened around her larynx, panic roared to the fore. Black night closed in on her, and she gasped for air as other big hands tightened around her neck. *Dying. She was dying.* Helplessness washed over her. She had to find a way to fight off her would-be killer. Had to live—

*Fight, Ana. Live.* She kicked her right leg up frantically, jamming her toes into the back of his head sharply enough to make him turn her neck loose and block her next kick with his forearm. She dragged in a rasping breath.

*Get. Off. Me.*

She fought like a tiger, twisting and turning violently between his knees, wrenching an arm free. She threw a punch at his face and connected solidly with his jaw. He lurched back and she tore her other arm loose. She flailed at him like a wildcat, unreasoning rage joining her panic.

He blocked her blows, which flew at him thick and fast, until he managed to catch her left wrist in his right hand. He yanked it over her head. She got in one last body blow with her right fist before he snagged that wrist, as well. He yanked it up, stretching her out flat beneath him. He sprawled on top of her, using his superior weight to physically subdue her.

Not that she went down without a fight. She wriggled and writhed beneath him, seeking a weakness, desperate to throw him off.

A chuckle vibrated in her ear. "Fiery little thing, aren't you?"

Startled, she froze beneath her attacker—no, wait.

Beneath Jackson Prescott. Audition. Movie. Fake fight. Not trying to kill her.

She went limp beneath him, and his big body pressed down on her, overwhelming in its hard planes and bulging muscles. One of his thighs pressed intimately between hers, and his chest crushed her breasts until she couldn't draw a full breath. His face was about eight inches from hers. And the bastard was grinning down at her.

If sparks could actually fly from a person's eyes, then they were crackling forth from his, all gold and green and smoking hot, snapping back and forth between the two of them as she glared back at him. She registered disbelief as something deep and unwilling inside her responded instinctively and powerfully to the man's raw sex appeal.

"Thank you, Number 127," the casting director called.

With a quick flex of muscular arms, Jackson did a push-up over her and jumped to his feet. "Nice fight."

Vague shock at having survived the attack washed over her...no, not an attack. Just pretend. She sagged against the mat, emotionally exhausted. *She'd made it. She was still alive.* "Thank you, Mr. Prescott."

Memory of that horrible night retreated back into its dark little cave in her mind. The lime color of the green screen set replaced the impersonal blackness of a cold night sky.

"Call me Jackson." His gaze slid down her body as she lay between his feet, taking in every detail of her appearance with disconcerting thoroughness. He held a friendly hand down to her. Embarrassed, she skipped his hand and jumped to her feet, shooting him a patently fake, everything's-peachy-keen grin.

"You're not what I expected," he commented thoughtfully.

"Um, neither are you. I thought I'd be fighting one of the stunt coordinators. I was hoping to pick up some stunt work."

"I think you may be destined for more than that," Jackson replied, his voice a purring caress down her spine.

Ho. Lee. Cow. Was he flirting with her? With a sound-stage full of Playboy Bunny blondes to choose from?

"I'll put in a good word with the producers for you," he remarked drolly as if it was some kind of inside joke.

She frowned, not sure how to take that. Confused, she dusted off her rear end and headed offstage. The other stuntman returned from the restroom and took Jackson's place on the mat as the other actresses closed in around Ana aggressively, demanding to know what it was like to roll around with Jackson Prescott.

One especially gorgeous girl hissed, "You think you're so special getting to audition with Jackson Prescott."

This job's mine and no one's going to steal it from me."

Wow. Venom much? Ana sidled away from the nasty woman and slung her cheap nylon gym bag over her shoulder. She turned for the exit, but clipboard girl was right behind her. Ana drew up, startled.

"Is the phone number on your head shot the one Mr. Prescott should use to call you?"

Ana blinked, stunned. "Yes. That's my cell phone."

"Keep it turned on," the assistant murmured under the background noise of the last audition finishing and the mob of auditionees dissolving into chatter.

She nodded at the assistant, uncomfortable. She had no desire to be the flavor du jour for a megastar who would use her and throw her away like a soiled tissue.

"Oh, good. You're still here." She looked up to see a handsome man. Early thirties if she had to guess. Shaved head. Nice physique under a tight T-shirt. Was he talking to her? "Hi, Miss."

"Izzolo," clipboard girl supplied.

"Miss Izzolo," he said. Apparently, he *was* talking to her. "I'm Adrian Turnow. I'll be directing the movie—"

The rest of what he said faded out as shock rendered her numb. Adrian Turnow in the flesh? He was one of the hottest directors in the business. Every film he worked on was movie gold. Dang. When Jackson Prescott said he would put in a good word for her, he wasn't kidding!

"—time this afternoon for a test shot? We'd like to see you on camera."

Her? They wanted a test shot with her? She was just looking for some stunt work. "Um, sure," she mumbled.

Cameramen were moving around the set, shifting a boom camera out over the green mat and setting up two big cameras on rolling rails along two sides of it. The last of the blondes were filing out. Lighting guys were talking about technical stuff that might as well be Greek to her, and a half dozen people were running around with rolls of extension cord over their shoulders and tablet computers in hand. In short, it was chaos.

A tall, lean, African-American man stepped up to her. "Number 127?"

"That's me. Although I usually go by Ana," she replied, flummoxed.

"I'm Tyrone. Makeup. Let's get you over to my chair and make you smashing for your screen test."

"Can you tell me what's going on?" she asked in a small voice as he stared critically at her.

"Callback, sweetie. You blew Jackson's socks off in your audition."

"Callback? Me?" The notion refused to compute.

Tyrone smiled warmly as he dabbed her face with bronzing powder. "Great skin. Too pale for the camera, but we can fix that. You're whiter than Wonder Bread, girlfriend. I bet you blush beet-red at the drop of a

hat."

"Sometimes I blotch, too," she confessed.

He tsked and instructed her to look up and not blink as he deftly applied eyeliner and mascara. "Your bones and coloring could take a full glamor face and heavy color, but I'll let you in on a little secret. Adrian and Jackson both go for the natural look. I'm going no makeup with your look."

"Thanks," she mumbled behind unmoving lips as he applied lip gloss. For doing a no-makeup look, he sure was putting a lot of makeup on her.

"Take a peek."

She turned in the chair and looked at the lighted mirror behind her. *Whoa*. "Is that me?" she breathed. She looked fresh, young...and kind of beautiful.

"It's not a trick mirror," Tyrone retorted.

Her shoulder-length blond bob, which was not at all like the current fashion of long, flowing, wavy locks, swung around her face, the tips turning in a bit to frame her jaw. Her gray-blue eyes looked huge, and her lips were just pink enough not to get lost beneath her cheekbones.

"Camera's gonna love you, baby," Tyrone said encouragingly.

"Thanks. Let's hope the director does, too."

"Jackson's coproducing this film. You gotta impress both him and Adrian to get this gig."

Ahh. Hence Jackson's earlier joke about putting in a good word with the producers. "Got it. Thanks, Tyrone."

"Go get 'em, kid."

She stepped out onto the bright green mat and looked around. The atmosphere was electric. She could get hooked on this. Choosing to reinvent her life in the film industry had been a great decision.

A cell phone rang, and she looked up in time to see Jackson Prescott scowling down at his caller ID. He rolled his eyes and moved away from the mat to take the call. She figured it must be a woman to have elicited that look of disgust. Last night's lay, maybe?

Her stomach dropped in disappointment. It wasn't like she was ever going to be in his league, though. And if she got a part in the movie, he'd also be her boss. This put him firmly off-limits. She couldn't recall which actress the tabloids had him matched up with this week. But he went through women like chewing gum.

Clipboard lady from before came over to her. "Hi, I'm Sheila. Adrian's assistant. The guys want to shoot a combat sequence with weapons. I see from your résumé that you've studied kendo, so I assume you're okay with that."

Ana had obsessively studied various martial arts ever since the attack two years ago. The fast-moving Japanese form with bamboo swords was, in fact, one of them.

On cue, a kid who must have been with the prop department trotted up to her and handed her a foam club. It looked like driftwood on steroids. She swung the craggy piece experimentally. It had about the same heft as a baseball bat. "It's heavier than a kendo sword, but I can handle it."

The brunette moved away, and a man approached her. "I'm Crash. Fight choreographer."

"Not a reassuring name for a man with your job," she responded drily.

He grinned. "I specialize in car stunts. But today, I'm gonna teach you a quick fight sequence with that toothpick."

She paid close attention as he walked her through the choreography until she had the sequence memorized. Gradually, they sped it up to full-out. It was a dance between the two of them, really.

Adrian signaled that he was ready to shoot, and Jackson pocketed his phone. He joined her on the mat and someone passed him a king-size club, which he swung a few times, getting the feel of it. Apparently, he already knew the choreography.

"Places, everyone!" Adrian called. "Quiet on set, please."

She stepped into the middle of the mat and took up a fighting stance, feet apart and knees bent. Jackson did the same, towering over her. Lord, just being close to him made her heart beat faster. The guy was like a high-powered electromagnet.

"Almost doesn't seem fair to beat up a squirt like you," he teased.

She snorted back, rising to the bait. "Big, clumsy lunk. You're gonna have to catch me first."

He grinned at her taunt and leaped at her. He was flipping *fast* for a guy his size. *Step. Swing. Dodge, slide left. Spin. Jump. Swing. Swing.* She chanted the choreography in her head by rote.

*Ka-pow.*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Melvin Hayes:**

Nowadays reading books become more than want or need but also turn into a life style. This reading behavior give you lot of advantages. The benefits you got of course the knowledge the actual information inside the book that will improve your knowledge and information. The details you get based on what kind of book you read, if you want drive more knowledge just go with knowledge books but if you want feel happy read one having theme for entertaining like comic or novel. Often the High-Stakes Bachelor (The Prescott Bachelors Book 1) is kind of guide which is giving the reader erratic experience.



**Many Shirley:**

People live in this new day time of lifestyle always make an effort to and must have the free time or they will get large amount of stress from both daily life and work. So , when we ask do people have time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not just a robot. Then we ask again, what kind of activity do you have when the spare time coming to you actually of course your answer will probably unlimited right. Then do you ever try this one, reading publications. It can be your alternative with spending your spare time, the particular book you have read is High-Stakes Bachelor (The Prescott Bachelors Book 1).

**Steve Pinson:**

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**Leah Humphries:**

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