



## Soft Hands

*Ariel Bishop*

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## **Soft Hands** Ariel Bishop

He's always hit them and quit them...

Xander Richards, a winger for the Wisconsin Wendigos, has a reputation for never sleeping with the same person twice. Some say it's 'cause he doesn't have any heart, but if you asked him at his most honest it's because his heart isn't his own: he's hopelessly in love with his best friend and former linemate, who's now happily married and traded away to Seattle last season.

Playing the ice has always come easy...

When Xander asks out Jordan Darling, team trainer and massage therapist, he doesn't expect to get shot down. It's a first, but it only makes Xander that much more determined to make Jordan his. But Jordan wants a relationship, not just the one-night stands that make up Xander's sexual life.

Just when he thought his heart was on ice, love comes skating in...

What Xander doesn't know is that Jordan has been nursing an unrequited crush on him for over a year. Lonely without his best friend, when he finally opens his eyes to what is right in front of him, the chemistry is undeniable. And for once, it keeps Xander coming back for more

Is Jordan the other half of his heart? Will Xander put his player days and ways behind him? Or will he push Jordan away to find someone who deserves him?

Find out in this steamy sports romance novel, filled with heart-stopping moments, heart-pounding sexual tension, and two hearts that just might be what the other needs.

## **Soft Hands Details**

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# From Reader Review Soft Hands for online ebook

## Chris Kottner-Kirschner says

Xander Richards spielt Eishockey und bekannt für seine vielen Männer- und Frauengeschichten. Ernsthafte Beziehungen hat er nicht. Dazu ist er emotional gar nicht in der Lage, da er noch immer seinem früheren Teamkollegen und besten Freund nachtrauert. Doch Justin hat das Team gewechselt und ist nun glücklich verheiratet. Xan gönnt Justin und Brooke ihr Glück, doch ihn lässt es jetzt einsam zurück. Brooke weiß wohl um Xanders Gefühle und versucht ihn dazubringen endlich neue Freundschaften einzugehen. Doch für Xander ist das nicht so einfach. Außerdem gibt es einen neuen Mann, der ihn doch sehr reizt.

Jordan Darling ist Mitglied des Trainerteams und Heilmasseur. Für ihn ist es immer eine Gradwanderung, wenn er Xander auf dem Tisch liegen hat um ihn durchzukneten. Er mag den Spieler, will jedoch nicht eine weitere Kerbe an dessen Bettpfosten werden. Und deswegen lehnt er auch ein Date mit ihm ab. Das macht irgendwie Eindruck auf Xander, der es nicht gewöhnt ist zurückgewiesen zu werden.

Auch Jordan ist einsam und würde sich gern endlich mit einem Partner niederlassen. Seine dumme Schwäche für Xander verbaut ihm jedoch etwas den Blick auf andere Männer. Doch Jordan hat seine Prinzipien, auch wenn es nicht einfach ist Xander zu widerstehen. Der fühlt sich ebenfalls zu Jordan hingezogen und beginnt seine Nähe und auch Freundschaft zu suchen. Ein gefährliches - für Jordans Herz - Spiel beginnt.

Eine lockere und amüsante Geschichte, die im Sportmilieu spielt. Viel Tiefgründiges wird man hier nicht finden, aber die Geschichte liest sich sehr leicht und ist perfekt für einen faulen Nachmittag, wenn man sich über die Helden nicht besonders viel Gedanken oder Sorgen machen möchte. Xan und Jordan sind sehr unterschiedliche Helden. Und so sind natürlich auch ihre Erwartungen und Bedürfnisse sehr unterschiedlich. Das führt natürlich immer wieder zu Spannungen und ausgerechnet Xan zeigt sich einmal mehr als kleine Pussy. Jordan hingegen ist sehr diszipliniert und fokussiert. Sein Herz beschützen kann er dennoch nicht. Aber da Xan zum Glück am Ende ja doch noch in die Hufe kommt, gibt es natürlich ein schönes Happy End.

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## John-Torleif Harris says

### Good story

I know that as an erotic romance, this book is going to contain more sex than is typical, but there were several scenes in this book that felt more like they were inserted because we hadn't had one in a while rather than flowing with the story.

Xander and Jordan weren't as interesting a couple as I wanted them to be, but I enjoyed reading this story and plan on reading the next.

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## AussieMum says

This was a nice and fairly straightforward romance, where a hit-it-and-quit-it guy realises he's demi-

romantic. There's little to no hockey but I liked the characters so I'm happy enough to continue the series.

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### **namericanwordcat says**

I really enjoyed some of the smaller character details of this sports romance.

This is a erotic romance in the way that we see the one of the heroes together with other people before getting together with his forever guy. I think this took away from the overall story really and would have much preferred those encounters be off page.

Once the romance gets going it is really sweet and hot.

It is a great friendship and a great romance with nice layers to the characters that I don't wish to spoil.

The next books in the series looks to be poly.

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### **Natosha Wilson says**

I loved the push and pull between the two men in this book. This was a good read and I enjoyed every moment of it. Ariel Bishop did a great job of writing this book. The only thing that I can say that I did not like about this book is the fact that the transition from one moment in time to the next was not there. Instead of making a new paragraph, the moments in time just kind of ran together and confused me a few times through this read.

Xander is a true playboy. He is not one that does repeats with men or women. He believes himself to be in love with his best friend but what he does not realize is, the love he feels for Justin is not real, true love but the love of a best friend.

So when Xander feels and overwhelming attraction to Jordan, he believes it is because he only wants to get in his pants. When Jordan turns him down and let's Xander know that he is looking for something that Xander cannot give him, a relationship, Xander is thrown by this.

Even still Xander does not give up hope. Instead he decides to become friends with Jordan instead. This friendship is easy in some ways and not so easy in others because both men are so attracted to one another. When both men finally give in to their attraction, it is mind blowing for both of them. The only problem is Xander still knows he is not what Jordan needs or wants because he is still not the relationship type.

Can two men that want each other but want different hinges find a way to make things work between them? This was such a great read. I truly enjoyed this book and would have given it a 5 star rating but the transition I talked about earlier is what kept me from doing so. Other then that, this was definitely an incredible read. I really enjoyed it. I look forward to the next book in this series.

Was given this galley copy for free for an open and honest review

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## **Nanna Sander says**

3.5 stars.

Both characters were a bit of a conundrum to me. Jordan goes from being kinda subdued to being assertive, while Xander goes from being an out going player-type to being submissive and shy. It left me a little baffled and confused since they almost switched roles.

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## **Kendra T says**

I am a total sucker for books featuring hockey players. I also only read M/M romance, so having girly parts in the first chapter threw me for a bit of a loop. Luckily, they didn't last long and weren't seen again (haha).

Xander is a self-proclaimed bisexual with no desire to settle down. He's a hot shot hockey player, and lives the crazy life. Jordan is one of the team's trainers, and is fortunate enough to have to massage hockey players every day (I think this could be one of my dream jobs..lol!) He is very attracted to Xander, but is more interested in relationships than in one night stands. When Xander asks him out, he turns him down because he doesn't want to be a notch on the bedpost. Over time, Xander and Jordan just become friends, until they slowly become much more. There was a lot of slow burn for these two.

I loved Xander's discovery of himself, and Jordan's patience (and eventual almost loss of patience). These two were so great together, and I loved watching them develop together. I loved how the couple was biracial, and the author did not shy away from gently mentioning Jordan's race up a couple of times. It was refreshing to see some diversity.

The author did a great job setting up the next book in the series, and I can not wait to see them all come together. Hopefully I'll get some more Xander and Jordan as well!

*I am voluntarily reviewing a free advanced reader copy of this book received from the author*

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## **Annelie says**

4.5 stars

Xander is one of the hockey players on the Wisconsin Wendigos, he flirts with everyone and never sleeps with people twice and he has only had romantic feelings for one person and that is his straight best friend. Jordan is a massage therapist for the team, he has had a crush on the flirty forward Xander since forever and he really wants a relationship.

For Jordan it's sweet torture to work on a half naked, moaning Xander and keeping it professional is something he constantly has to remind himself of. Then one day Xander asks him out and Jordan immediately shoots him down. To have Xander for a night would be a fantasy, but Jordan doesn't want to be

another one of Xanders one nighters.

To be turned down is quite a surprise for Xander, it even stings a little and he can't help that he's getting back at Jordan with little touches and a lot of moaning on the massage table. And he still gets the boot a second time with Jordan explaining that he doesn't want just one night.

Xander doesn't know why that bothers him and in a Skype session with his best friend Justin and Justins wife they give him the advice of getting to know Jordan instead and make a friend since they are not longer in the same city and Xander is lonely (on a side note, the wife Brooke is just awesome).

When Xander decides to follow their advice and he and Jordan starts a friendship they find out that they both like the same things in books, films and tv shows. And while they are getting on really well the sexual tension grows until they can't keep their hands of each other. Now they just have to decide where this is going.

I really like this book (hockey books are one of my favourites), Xander and Jordan are hot together, the side characters are awesome, the sexual build up is great and I love the demiromantic thing.

I received an ARC of the book for and honest and unbiased review

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## **JD Crittendon says**

### **Sexy Love!**

From a crush to friends to lovers is Xander & Jordan love story.

A light read, full of sexy fun. Observations: this author loves the words 'stupid and dumb', a bit of overused to me. I also wonder about Brooke's relationship to Xander. They seem like best friends beyond Justin. I like to know more.

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## **caroline wilson says**

I received this book from the author for an honest opinion

I really enjoyed this book I especially enjoy hockey books and with the winter Olympics on at the moment its the perfect accompaniment. Xander is a hockey player for the Wisconsin Wendigos, play boy who never sleeps with the same person twice and has a mind frame of sleeping with anyone he fancies as long as they don't encroach emotionally they can have him physically. The only person he's ever loved is his best friend who's happily married to a woman. When Jordan who is the wendigos massage therapist takes his fancy he's stunned when he turns him down not once but twice, no one has ever done that.

Jordan has had a secret crush on xander since he started working at the wendigos and when xander asks him out he's over the moon but still turns him down as he knows xander is a have your fun and leave them type of guy and he's hoping for so much more.

Having Jordan turn him down just makes him think about him more and its not until they decide to form a friendship that they realise how compatible they actually are.

I enjoyed both these characters and the secondary ones added a bit of humour to the mix. The book is set in the hockey world but its not the main draw of the book instead its the slow unveiling of the romance between the two characters. I enjoyed this and am looking forward to the next.

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## Ashley says

This had everything that I wanted in a book. There was tension between the man characters, attraction, pining, figuring things out and actual romance that led up to the steamier scenes! And I read it all in one sitting. I loved it, don't judge.

One thing you should know, there is a scene in the beginning that involved a female so if you're a stickler for the books needing to be 100% M/M it might bother you. Honestly I forgot about it until I sat down to write my review.

Xander Richards is what you immediately think of with a pro-athlete. He takes care of his body, lavishes in the attention given to him and relishes in his sexuality. What I found quite interesting was he's demisexual. Like how awesome is that? I consider myself a demisexual so to see someone write about it had me excited.

Then there's Jordan Darling, a Louisiana boy. Oh my gosh, does this get any better? (I live like an hour from Baton Rouge so I spazzed a little) There were a lot of little details that definitely showed he was from the south. His calls with his Nana, the food, and the sense of family he has.

Jordan fights his attraction to Xander because he doesn't want to be another one night stand. He wants more. He fights that attraction at every turn and corner because Xander is constantly there. Any scene that had Jordan massaging and working Xander's shoulder was delicious to me. They had to fight their attraction, remain professional and not do anything inappropriate.

What I absolutely loved? The fact that Xander was a geeky hockey player. He loves to read and watch all the shows I like. It was nice to see a more introverted relationship portrayed throughout this. I just wanted to shake them at times and say, "talk to each other!". But they get figure their stuff out.

So the question, should you read/buy this? Yes. If you like hockey with your romance read this!

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## J. Taylor says

4.5

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## Sarah Allen says

Soft Hands is a great comfort read if you appreciate MM romance in a world of diverse ethnicities and sexualities...oh yeah, and some pretty hot smut. The book wastes no time diving straight into a steamy sex scene between Xander, one of the main characters, and his latest partners from the night before, setting the scene for easy and enjoyable sex throughout the story between eager partners who are great at communicating (during the act, at least) and always mindful of safe sex practices. In-between hotter interludes we get the sweet story of Jordan, a physical trainer and massage therapist for a professional hockey team who has a healthy social life and steady career but longs to find someone to settle down with, who is unfortunately crushing on Xander, the forward on his hockey team who prefers to take a different



partner (or two) to bed every night and thinks he's incapable of falling in love...or at least incapable of falling in love with anyone besides his married best friend who was just transferred to a different team.

Though Xander and Jordan seem like their romantic goals are completely incompatible, it's a treat watching them strike up a nerdy friendship over books, TV shows, and cooking, interspersed with loaded massage therapy sessions and punctuated by angsty, guilty fantasies, wanking, and one-night stands until the sexual tension becomes too much.

If you're into supportive and protective friends and family, some gentle exploration of identity, slow-burn friends-to-lovers romance, praise-heavy dirty talk, teasing, and the occasional hint of power dynamics and consensual roughness, I highly recommend this book. The author's voice always makes you feel like you're in good hands, with just enough angst to keep things interesting. Don't let the hockey setting fool you - you don't need to appreciate the sport in any greater capacity than as an excuse for well-muscled men to need shirtless massages daily from other well-muscled men. Often while moaning suggestively.

This is my first book from this author, an ARC I received at no expense to the author in exchange for a review.

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## **Andrea (Catsos Person) is a Compulsive eBook Hoarder says**

NTS: Challenge Title—>Interracial couple

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## **Cadiva says**

### **Good solid sports romance**

This is a good, solid sports romance in that wonderful fictional land where professional ice hockey players can be bisexual or gay without the world caring.

It'd be great if that ever translated into real life but until then, books like this one will do the job. It does it relatively well, there's a couple of odd hiccups, but overall I enjoyed this romance.

It's a well crafted slow burn friends to lovers in essence. It takes time to develop and I liked that Xander took a while to realise he was demi-romantic.

There's not really much given over to the sport element in this book. The ice hockey element is just there as background noise really but it works for this narrative.

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