



## Against the Rules

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Veronica Bailey is a woman who lives her life by the rules: as a bank vice president with designs on the top job, she understands that image is everything. She wears the right clothes, dates the right men, and never lets her personal life interfere with her professional goals. She is always in control, but secretly dreams of the “grand passion” that she believes her happily married parents share.

When bank customer Nicholas Trent invites her to dinner, Veronica initially hesitates, then relents, thinking it could be just the thing to ease her breakup with a fellow vice president who seemed perfect for her, but only on paper. With his bad-boy looks, Nick is nothing like the type of man a respectable woman in banking management should be dating. She does her best to keep their relationship under wraps, despite feeling guilty about how that must make Nick feel, until her true feelings threaten to make her finally choose between her heart and her job. Little does Veronica suspect, though, that Nick, the not-so-clean cut philosophy professor, might be keeping secrets from her as well; secrets that could destroy the bright hopes each of them has for their future.

This novel follows the authors 2001 contemporary romance novel, *Second Chance at Forever*; she has also written several short fiction and novella titles. Her writing style is light and smooth, with likeable characters and a comfortable pace. She never misses an opportunity for subtle humor: at one point when Nick is unsure about the plate of angel hair pasta with spinach pesto that Veronica has cooked for him, he prays that “it would be edible enough to avoid insulting her. He had seconds. He would’ve had thirds, but his straining belt wouldn’t have held it.” Later, he falls asleep on Veronica’s couch, dreaming of a romantic encounter with her: “He loosened his jeans, rolled over her ... and fell off the couch.”

*Against the Rules* is a tantalizing modern romance novel. Damschroder expertly draws in the reader with realistic characters experiencing everyday problems; in her hands, Veronica and Nick’s relationship is sensual and romantic, providing a thoroughly effective escape for romance fans. It will be clear to seasoned romance readers how the plot will be resolved, but that won’t lessen the enjoyment for those who like a good story.

While Veronica feels like she’s playing “against the rules” in dating Nick, she learns that the most important rule of all is being true to herself.

AMY BROZIO-ANDREWS (August 18, 2009)

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