

*Bright Lights  
of  
Summer*

*By*  
**Lynn Ames**

## **BRIGHT LIGHTS OF SUMMER**

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### **CREDITS**

EXECUTIVE EDITOR: LINDA LORENZO

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## **Dedication**

To my dear friend, Dot Wilkinson, National Softball Hall of Famer, 19-time All-American, 3-time World Champion. You have the biggest heart of anyone I know. I love you. You will always be family to me.

To Estelle “Ricki” Caito, National Softball Hall of Famer, 3-time All-American, 3-time World Champion, and Dot’s partner of 48 years. Thank you for gracing the cover of this book. As Dot often tells me, that’s what a real softball player should look like.



## Acknowledgments

A work of historical fiction such as *Bright Lights of Summer* requires copious amounts of research. I was most fortunate to have access to numerous original source materials—newspaper clippings, photographs, game programs, and first-hand accounts. The single book I used for background information was the excellently researched and written, *The Path to the Gold*, by Mary L. Littlewood.

I have no words to explain what Dot Wilkinson means to me. Quite simply, Dot is family. Her remarkable memory, incredible collection of historical artifacts, and her willingness to make all of it available to me made the richness of this account possible.

As is true with all of my books, I owe a debt of gratitude to my beta reading team. I am so blessed to have folks who read along with me, critique the story, give me detailed feedback, and make my work so much better.

Then there's my extraordinary editor, Linda Lorenzo. We've been working together for the last half-dozen of my titles. With every book, I learn more as a result of Linda's skill and ability to explain the whys and wherefores of every change/correction. Her steady guidance and sharp eye give me absolute confidence in the finished product—this book you're holding in your hands right now.

To Ann McMan, the genius behind TreeHouse Studio, who created the beautiful cover and all supporting materials for *Bright Lights of Summer*, I am so blessed to have you and your lovely wife, Salem, in my life. Working with you is a dream. Thank you for making everything I do look like a million bucks. I love my North Carolina family.

Finally, to you, the readers, I extend my deepest gratitude. You are so generous and kind. Thank you for reading, thank you for recommending my books to others, thank you for sending me feedback and posting reviews of my work, and thank you for joining me on this journey.

Enjoy *Bright Lights of Summer*.



## Author's Note

It is my distinct honor to call National Softball Hall of Famer Dot Wilkinson “family.” Our love, respect, and deep affection for one another transcends generations, geography, and all other differences.

Considered by many to be the best female catcher in the history of softball, Dot generously and graciously spent countless hours and days with me discussing her life during the heyday of the game. She provided me with copious amounts of research material, introduced me to her ball-playing friends, and gave me permission to add fictitious players to the roster of her team, the vaunted, 3-time World Champion P.B.S.W. Ramblers.

That brings me to this very important point. This is a work of fiction. Diz and Frannie are fictional characters and wholly my creation. Any interaction between them and the real individuals within the story is fictitious.

While Dot magnanimously allowed me to add fictitious players to the Ramblers, I am by no means implying that Diz and Frannie's experiences were the experiences of anyone, living or deceased, connected to the Ramblers or any other softball organization at the time.

Much of the framework of this book is historically accurate and factually authentic—the teams, many of the games played, the trips taken, the locales, etc. Ford Hoffman managed the Ramblers from the team's inception in 1933 until into the mid-1950s. The team's roster in the 1940s included Amelina “Amy” Peralta, Marjorie Law, Louise Curtis, Virginia “Dobbie” Dobson, Jean Hutsell, Jessie Glasscock, Kathleen “Peanuts” Eldridge, Zada Boles, Mickey Sullivan, Mildred Dixon, Delores Low, Shirley Wade, and, of course, Dot Wilkinson. Every game I describe is factually correct in terms of the score, the opposing pitcher, and opposing players. In many instances and wherever I could find supporting research, I recreate the exact manner in which games were won or lost. The locations of games and the mode of transportation used on road trips also are accurate.

And yet, as the disclaimer on the copyright page of the book reads: This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and

incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, businesses, companies, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

I do hope you enjoy *Bright Lights of Summer*, my extended love letter to Dot and to all of her teammates and contemporaries who gave so much to the game.

~ Lynn Ames



# Foreword

By Dot Wilkinson

3-time softball world champion, 19-time All-American,  
member of the National Softball Hall of Fame

## *About the Game*

Softball means everything to me.

My parents gave me the genes and my coach and mentor Ford Hoffman taught me to be a good athlete and a successful businesswoman. Softball gave me many, many special friends and a great partner for forty-eight years, Ricki Caito.

I love the game and hope I have given back as much as I received in pleasure and friends. I wish I could do it all over again.

It's not about winning, it's who you meet and keep along the way.

## *About My Friendship with Lynn Ames*

My relationship with Lynn Ames began several years ago when she picked up me and fellow Hall-of-Famer Billie Harris to do an interview on women in sports for her television show.

Later, Lynn gave me one of her books to read. I really enjoyed that and have read all of her books since, many times over.

We go out to lunch once a week and spend some special times together, like Thanksgiving and Christmas. Lynn and I talk about many things. We are family.

I know this book is going to be special for me, as it will be for many other women who have played softball and other sports.

Thanks, Lynn.

Love you,

Dot



# CHAPTER ONE

**Phoenix, 2014**

**T**hank you for agreeing to see me, Ms. Hosler. I can't tell you what it means to me to be able to talk to a Hall of Famer like you."

"Oh, please. Call me Diz, dear. Mrs. Hosler was my mother." Diz smiled, and the blue of her eyes stood out in sharp relief against the wrinkles in her face. Her gnarled fingers curled around a cup of steaming coffee. She leaned in and blew on the liquid. When she looked back up, her eyes were clear, her vision focused on the woman sitting across from her. "I don't get much chance to talk about the old days anymore. Almost all of my friends are gone and most of those that are left aren't doing that well in the memory department." She tapped the side of her head to emphasize the point.

The interviewer leaned forward in the booth. She reached out and laid a hand on Diz's arm. "That's exactly why I want to do this. I want people to know what the heyday of women's softball was really like, not the made-for-the-movies version."

Diz laughed, the sound soft and low.

"Did I say something funny?"

"I can't remember the last time I met someone your age who was so passionate about the history of the game."

"Well, I—"

"I like your earnestness and the fact that you recognize that the darned movie only covered the smallest fraction of what was going on at the time. It's all anyone seems to know about women's softball from the 1940s. Aggravating." Diz harrumphed.

"I imagine it is. So let's set the record straight."

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Diz narrowed her eyes and cocked her head to the side, studying the other woman. “You’ve got spunk. Good. We’re going to get along just fine.”

A blush crept up the side of the interviewer’s neck and she removed her hand from Diz’s arm. She fumbled in the bag at her feet, pulled out a tape recorder, and set it on the table. Eventually, when the red faded to pink, she lifted her head to meet Diz’s amused gaze. “Is it okay if I record this?”

“Of course, dear.” Diz smiled kindly. “I’m sorry if I frazzled you.”

“No. No, not at all.” The interviewer busied herself with the controls on the recorder. “Testing. Testing, one, two. This is Julie Newsome. Today is Monday, February 17, 2014, and this is session number one with Theodora ‘Dizzy’ Hosler.”

“My. That all sounds so formal.” Diz winked.

“I assure you, that’s by far the most ‘official’ part of our program.” Julie returned the wink and held the recorder to her ear to block out the ambient noise as she played back the test to ensure that the recorder was working properly. Apparently satisfied, she replaced the recorder on the table and set it to record. Then she flipped through the pages of a dog-eared notebook. Every page was filled with scrawled handwriting. She tapped her finger on a date outlined in red and surrounded with a black rectangle. “How about if we start at the beginning with a question that’s been nagging at me?”

“Sounds like a good place to begin.”

“I know Dot Wilkinson was a big influence on your career. My notes say you’ve known each other for seventy-six years.”

Diz nodded, then bent toward the microphone. When she spoke, her voice was several decibels louder than it had been before. “I met Dottie in 1938, although I was aware of her before that. Everyone knew who Dottie Wilkinson was. She was the best catcher in the game.” Diz sat back.

“I could be wrong, but it was 1941 when you joined the Ramblers, correct?”

“That’s right.”

Julie’s brow furrowed. “But you met Dot three years earlier.”

“I did.”

“So...”

“Ah.” Diz raised an eyebrow. “It’s a math problem. You don’t see how it adds up.”

“Well, yeah.” Julie pulled an iPad from her bag. As she did so, she said, “By the way, you can just sit back. The microphone will pick up your voice. There’s no need to make yourself uncomfortable by hunching over the tape recorder. I’m only using that as a backup in case I miss anything while I’m taking notes. I just want you to relax, and we’ll have an easy conversation. Okay?”

“Works for me.” Diz’s fingers trembled as she grasped her mug. She used her other hand for support and lifted the cup to her lips, blowing once more to cool the coffee before taking a sip. “Now, where were we?”

“You were about to solve a math problem for me.”

“Ah, yes. Indeed.” Diz slurped another mouthful of coffee. “My older sister, Elsie, and I played ball in the field near our house every morning before school. In 1938, Elsie tried out for the Ramblers and made it. That’s when I met Dot. After school, I would run as fast as I could to the field to watch the girls practice. I went to every home game with our folks. I just wanted to be around softball.”

Julie nodded as she tapped on the keypad.

“Then, right before we left for the national championships in Chicago, we got the news that the team was going to New York City to play in Madison Square Garden. I begged my mother to let me go along.”

“Wait!” Julie held up a hand. “The Ramblers played in Madison Square Garden? In 1938?”

“Yes. It was the largest crowd ever to watch an indoor softball game.” Diz sighed and put down the cup. “I remember that trip like it was yesterday.”



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Chicago, 1938

“Please, Mother. Please let me go with Elsie. It’s New York City! I might never get to see it if I don’t go now.” Diz pressed her hands together in front of her face in a prayerful pose. “You said yourself that she needs a chaperone.”

“Don’t be so dramatic, young lady. You may think you’re all grown up, but let’s not forget that you’re thirteen years old. You’ve already missed the first week of school by coming here to Chicago for the national championships. You’d be missing another entire week if we let you go on to New York.”

Diz opened her mouth to respond, but her mother shushed her. Diz frowned. Desperate times called for desperate measures. She bit her lip. If she said it and it didn’t come true, she’d be in big trouble. *In for a penny, in for a pound.*

“Mr. Hoffman said I could help with the equipment if you give me permission to go. I’d be working, Mother. It would be good experience for me. You’re the one always wanting me to be more responsible. Please?” She drew out the word and gave what she hoped was her most angelic expression.

“He did, did he?”

“Yeah.” Diz’s voice squeaked a little, and she hoped that her mother hadn’t heard it. It was a white lie, really. Diz *was* planning to ask the coach if she could carry the bats and balls for the team.

She tried not to squirm under her mother’s piercing stare.

“That’s ‘yes,’ young lady. Proper grammar counts.”

“Yes, Mother.”

In the ensuing silence, Diz calculated how fast she could run over to the field where the championship game was being played. Although the Ramblers already had been eliminated, she knew that Mr. Hoffman was in the stands, watching the game. If she could just get to him in time, she could talk him into taking her along, and then what she’d told her mother would be the truth.

“You know I’ll be checking with Mr. Hoffman myself?”

“I know, Mother.”

“And if you’re not telling the truth...”

“I’m telling the truth.” Diz crossed her fingers behind her back.

“We’ll see about that,” her mother muttered.

“Can I go watch some of the game?”

“If you promise to go right over to the field and come right back here as soon as the game ends.”

“I promise,” Diz said. She dashed out of the motel room, opening the door just wide enough to clear the threshold. Her feet barely touched the ground as her legs ate up the distance to the field.

“Mr. Hoffman. Mr. Hoffman.” Diz bent over and put her hands on her knees, trying to catch her breath.

“Slow down, Theodora.”

Diz winced at the use of her given name. “Can...can I ask you something?”

“Sit down.” The coach patted the seat next to him. “And slow down.”

Diz took a deep breath. On the field, Alameda was at bat. “My mother says that I can come with you to New York, if it’s okay with you.” Diz stared at the tops of her sneakers. When she didn’t hear anything, she dared a peek at Mr. Hoffman’s face. He was scrutinizing her. She tried her best not to look as desperate as she felt.

“Are you telling the truth, young lady?”

“Why wouldn’t I be telling the truth?” Diz swallowed hard.

“An excellent question.”

The coach continued to stare at her, and Diz’s shoulders slumped. If he said no...

“What would you do on the trip, exactly?”

Diz straightened up again. “Anything. I’d do anything.” Her slim body vibrated in the seat. “I could carry the equipment for you. I’d iron the uniforms. I could keep score. I could—”

“Stop.” Mr. Hoffman put his hand on Diz’s arm. “Stop.”

“But—”

He patted her arm. “I’ll talk to your mother about it. If...”

Diz jumped up and stopped just short of throwing her arms around the coach. “Thank you! Thank you. You won’t be sorry.”

“Wait a minute,” Mr. Hoffman said. “Let me finish.” He put a little pressure on her arm, signaling her to sit back down.

For the first time, Diz looked around and realized that she was blocking the view of the game for the people behind her. “Sorry,” she said, and slumped back into the seat.

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“I’ll talk to your mother. If, and that’s a big if, she says it’s okay, then you can come along and carry the equipment.”

“Thank you! Thank you! I promise I’ll do a great job.”

“You know the equipment is pretty heavy, don’t you?”

Diz flexed a bicep. “I’m stronger than I look.” Why did everyone think she was a weakling? It was true that she was several inches shorter than Elsie, but she was still growing, wasn’t she?

“I’m sure you are.” He turned his attention back to the game. “I’ll talk to your mother after the game and then we’ll see about New York.”

“Yes, sir.” Diz heaved a big sigh of relief. She had told her mother the truth, after all.



### **New York City, 1938**

Diz rolled over and put the pillow over her head. The sun was streaming in through the hotel-room window and the rollaway bed on which she was lying was lumpy. She rubbed the sore spot on her side where a protruding spring had left a bruise.

“Hey, sleepyhead.”

Diz swatted at the annoying fly...

“Theodora Hosler, if you do not get your lazy bottom out of that bed right this second...”

Diz’s eyes popped open as she registered Elsie’s presence and the hand that was shaking her shoulder. She bolted straight up. “Am I late?”

“You will be if you don’t get up right now. Go brush your teeth and get yourself clean. We have a big day today.”

“Oh, gosh, yes.” Diz swung her legs around and stuffed her feet into the slippers she’d left next to the bed. She grabbed a towel, a comb, and her toiletry bag and hustled down the hall to the bathroom. Today was going to be the best day ever, starting with a trip to Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia’s office and then a tour of the grounds for the upcoming World’s Fair.





Diz let the buzz of conversation wash over her. The girls were oohing and aahing over the buildings on the grounds of the World's Fair, but Diz was busy replaying the game the Ramblers won the night before over the New York Roverettes. She'd never seen anything like it. More than 12,500 fans. She overheard someone say it was the largest crowd ever to see an indoor softball game. It sure had looked and sounded like it. The cheers had reverberated off the terrazzo floor and echoed in her ears when the Rambler players stripped off their cowgirl outfits after warm-ups to reveal their regular short-short satin uniforms underneath.

"Oh, my goodness!" Diz winced as Elsie squeezed her arm too hard. "Look at that! Have you ever seen anything like it?" Elsie pointed at a spherical object juxtaposed against a gargantuan pointy structure. The entire thing was surrounded with scaffolding.

The perky guide smiled indulgently at Elsie. "That," she said, "is the Trylon and Perisphere. It will house Democracy, a utopian city of the future. It's going to be the lynchpin of the Fair."

"I'll bet."

"Who's ready for lunch?" Mr. Hoffman asked.

As if on cue, Diz's stomach growled. "Me," she said and patted her stomach for good measure.

"Good, because we've got something really special planned."

The "something special" was a real-life giant of the sporting world—Heavyweight Champion of the World Jack Dempsey. His restaurant was directly across the street from Madison Square Garden.

Diz bit into her burger and moaned with pleasure. It was rare and juicy, just the way she liked it.

"Hiya, pal. Whaddaya think? Pretty good, huh?"

The burger slipped out of Diz's suddenly boneless fingers as she looked up into the rugged face of Jack Dempsey himself.

"It's..." Diz finished chewing the bite she had in her mouth and tried to find her voice. "It's really good, Mr. Dempsey."

"Call me Jack." He clapped Diz on the back. "I'm glad you like it." He held out a glossy, eight-by-ten inch, black-and-white photograph. His eyes twinkled as he gazed down at her. "This is for you."

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"It is?" Diz looked at the photograph. It was Dempsey, throwing the punch that won him the title from the reigning champ, Jess Willard, on July 4, 1919. Her eyes widened.

"Yep, it is." Dempsey whipped out a pen. "What's your name?"

"Theo— Um, Dizzy, sir."

Dempsey threw back his head and laughed. "Dizzy, huh?"

Diz squirmed in her seat as heads turned in their direction from nearby tables.

"Why do they call you Dizzy? Do you have trouble standing up?"

Diz's face grew hot and her ears reddened. "No, sir," Diz mumbled. "It's on account of Dizzy Dean is my favorite baseball player."

"He is, is he?"

"Yes, sir."

Dempsey tilted his head, sizing her up. "Are you a pitcher?"

"No, sir. I'm an outfielder."

The boxer crossed his arms in front of him as he continued to size her up. "Are you even old enough to play?"

Diz felt, rather than saw, the eyes of several of the nearby Ramblers watching the interchange. She straightened up in her seat and lifted her chin. "I'm not playing with these girls yet, sir. But I will be soon."

Elsie, who was sitting next to her sister, guffawed, and Diz glared at her.

"Yes, she will be, Mr. Dempsey."

Diz turned her head just in time to see Dot Wilkinson's wink. Her heart thumped hard in her chest as gratitude flooded through her.

"And you are?" Dempsey asked.

"That's Dot Wilkinson. She's the best catcher in the game. Nobody messes with Dot," Diz gushed.

"Is that so?" Dempsey asked. "She must be pretty tough."

"She is," Diz agreed.

"So, Dizzy-who-is-soon-to-be-a-player, do you want me to autograph this picture for you?"

"You bet, Mr.—er, Jack."

Dempsey signed the photo with a flourish. "To Dizzy, Keep punching. Jack Dempsey."

"Thank you, Jack."

"Now, how about a picture with me?"

"For real?" Diz jumped up out of her seat.

"Absolutely." Dempsey motioned to a photographer who was standing by. The boxer put his arm around Diz and the flashbulb went off, temporarily blinding her.

As they left the restaurant a short time later, Diz hustled to catch up to Dot. "Hi."

"Hi, yourself."

"I just wanted to say thank you for sticking up for me in there with Mr. Dempsey and not letting me look like some loser little kid."

Dot reached over and patted Diz on the back. "You're welcome. Besides, what I said was the truth. I've seen you throw the ball. You've got a good arm. Keep practicing and learn how to hit that drop ball, and I'm sure we'll find a place for you in the lineup."

"You really think so?"

"Yep. I really do."

For the rest of the day, all Diz could think about was the conversation with Dot. Even when they met the famed Radio City Rockettes and took pictures with them on the roof of Radio City Music Hall, Diz's imagination was busy conjuring visions of her hitting homeruns off the drop ball and rounding the bases to the cheers of the crowd.

The next night, when the Ramblers wrapped up the two-game set by beating the Roverettes again, this time in a raucous, 2-0, 18-inning affair, Diz paid even closer attention than normal to everything Dot Wilkinson did.

When Dot got the game-winning RBI on a walk in the top of the 18<sup>th</sup> inning, Diz cheered louder than anyone else in the record-breaking crowd of 13,500. She stood at the end of the line of Ramblers waiting to congratulate Dot after the game.

"That was terrific, Dot. Did you see the way the crowd reacted to you? I swear, half of them wanted to kill you and half of them wanted to hug you."

"I didn't notice."

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Undeterred by Dot's lack of enthusiasm, Diz prattled on. "What a neat trip this has been, huh?" She skipped alongside as Dot strode purposefully toward the Ramblers' cars. They were parked outside waiting for the team to make the long drive home to Phoenix. "Jack Dempsey, the World's Fairgrounds, the Rockettes, the Pittsburgh Pirates-Giants game. This has been so much fun."

Dot stopped short and rounded on Diz, her blue eyes piercing and serious. "If you want to make this team and be a Rambler, you need to remember something, kid."

Diz instinctively backed up a step. She hadn't been overstating Dot's ability to intimidate. "O-okay."

"The game is the only thing that matters. All of this fancy stuff is fine, but when it comes right down to it, softball is the only thing I care about. That's true for every player on this team, including your sister. So, if you want to be one of us, the game better be your number one priority. If it isn't, you can forget playing and go find something else to do with your time."

Diz simply nodded. *Softball first, last, and always. Got it.*



### Phoenix, 2014

"That sounds pretty harsh," Julie said, as Diz pushed aside her now-empty coffee cup.

Diz waved a hand dismissively. "Not at all. It was the single most important thing Dottie ever said to me. I still thank her for it whenever I see her. Those were words to live by, you see." Diz's hand fluttered to her throat. "I'm sorry, dear. I'm not used to talking so much." She cleared her throat.

"After New York, I wanted to make the team even more than before. It became sort of an obsession with me. I began to practice harder. I learned to hit a drop ball." She shook her head. "I hated that damned drop ball. But I'd be dipped if I was going to let it keep me from making the team."

Diz coughed again, and Julie handed her a glass of water. She checked her watch as Diz sipped.

“It’s no wonder your voice is worn out. We’ve been talking for two hours.”

“Oh dear. We have?”

“We have. I shouldn’t have kept you so long.” Julie frowned, flipped closed the cover of the iPad, and shut off the tape recorder.

“Don’t worry about it. I’m not as fragile as I look.”

Julie chuckled. “Diz, there are many things I might say about you, but that you were fragile? That’s not anywhere on the list.”

“Good.” Diz sat back and took her measure of the woman across the table. “I like you. I like you a lot. You’re a good person, and that goes a long way with me. Especially when you’re a real fan of the game.”

“I’m glad. And again, I want you to know how much it means to me that you’re willing to talk to me.”

“It’s my pleasure. Like I said, I don’t often get to talk about the old days.” Diz cocked her head to the side. “Remind me how you know Dot?”

“She knew my mother.”

“Was your mother a player?”

Julie nodded. “When my mother died a few months ago, I was going through her things and I found a picture of her in a softball uniform. Apparently, she played for the Queens. In the picture, she was sliding into home and Dot was applying the tag.”

“No kidding!” Diz exclaimed.

“No kidding.”

“Well, I’ll be darned.”

“The handwriting on the back of the photo indicated that the play occurred during the 1940 regional softball championships. I was stunned. Although my mother was the one who taught me how to play, she never, ever mentioned that she played at such a high level.”

“I wonder why she didn’t tell you?” Diz asked.

“Me too. Why would she hide that part of her life from me? I felt cheated, somehow, that there was this whole side of my mom that I knew nothing about. So I decided to get to the bottom of it. I tried to find anyone left who played for that Queens team in 1940, but they’re all gone.”

“Mm. Like I said earlier, there aren’t many of us ball players left from that time,” Diz said.

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“I know, and because of that, I thought I might never figure it out. Then I looked at the picture again and decided to see if I could find the other woman in the photo.”

“Dot,” Diz said.

“Right. So I looked Dot up and showed her the picture. She remembered playing against my mother, but she didn’t know anything about her, really.”

“I’m sorry she couldn’t help you.” Diz patted Julie’s hand.

“Thank you. That’s so sweet.” Julie smiled. “Anyway, as Dot and I started talking in general about what it was like to play back then, I got completely caught up in that world. The stories were fascinating.”

“It was a different time, that’s for sure.”

“It wasn’t just different. You gals were amazing!”

“It goes back to what Dot said to me all those years ago. The game was everything. That kind of commitment and passion doesn’t seem to exist in today’s players.”

“I think you’re right. So I really wanted to explore that and write about it. But I also began to wonder about something else.” Julie wiped the condensation off her glass and took a sip of water as if gathering herself.

“What’s that?” Diz asked. “And why, all of a sudden, do you seem uncomfortable?”

“Well, it’s just…” Julie bit her lip. Instead of looking at Diz, she stared at the table. “This is a little bit awkward and I’m not sure what you’ll think about it.”

“Try me. Whatever it is, I’m sure it’s nothing I haven’t heard before.”

“It’s softball. And where there’s softball, at least nowadays, there are lesbians.” Julie met Diz’s eyes. “I couldn’t believe that there wouldn’t have been any players back then that were gay. So I started researching.”

“I’m sure you didn’t find any mentions of that in old newspaper articles or write-ups.” Diz’s eyes twinkled.

“No, I sure didn’t. But I did find a couple of interesting present-day items that told me I was on the right track.”

“Such as?”

“Obituaries,” Julie said. She reached into her bag, grabbed a folder, and pulled out a photocopied newspaper clipping. “First, I

found an obit for Ricki Caito. That one listed Dot as her longtime companion.” Julie slid the document across the table for Diz to see.

“You’re a smart girl, I’ll give you that.”

“Thanks.” Julie took the document back. She fingered a second piece of paper, started to take it out of the folder, hesitated, shoved it back inside, and returned the folder to the bag.

When she glanced back up from what she was doing, Diz was watching her knowingly.

“What is it you want from me?”

“While I started out just wanting to know about my mother and her time playing softball, I can see now that there’s a more interesting story that needs to be told, one that’s so obviously different than the perception created by the movie. That’s why Dot pointed me in your direction.”

“I see. So, have I been wasting your time for the past two hours, not giving you what you need?”

“Are you kidding me?” Julie gently squeezed Diz’s hand. “You gave me exactly what I was looking for. That was an incredible memory.”

“But what you really want to talk about is what it was like to be gay back then. You want to talk about me and Frannie.”

Julie leaned forward, obviously warming to the subject. “I want to hear about all of it—the game, the times, being gay back then, your relationship. I’m guessing all of those things are intertwined for you. Are they?”

“They are.”

“Are you going to be okay talking about it with me?” Julie asked.

“I guess that depends on what kinds of questions you have.”

“I don’t want to ask you anything you don’t want to answer.”

Diz pursed her lips in thought. “Well, Hell’s bells. I’m eighty-nine years old. What do I care what people think anymore? Truthfully, it will be a relief to talk about it.”

Julie sat back, pulled out her iPhone and opened the calendar app. “So, can we talk again soon?”

“Sure.”

“Next week?”

## **Bright Lights of Summer**

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“You bet.” Diz peeked at Julie’s notepad. “What’s the next question on your list? I might need to prepare.” Diz winked.

“As if.” Julie scanned the page. “I want to talk about how you got your start playing for the Ramblers.”

“That’s easy.”

“And, if you’re comfortable about it, I want to talk about how you met Frannie.”

Diz’s hand hesitated as she reached for the water glass. “Oh. Going to get right to it, are we?”

“Is that okay? I really think that it’s an integral part of the story.”

Diz’s eyes misted over and Julie put a hand over hers. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have—”

“No, no. It’s fine. Really.” Diz smiled kindly. “But if we’re going to talk about that, I think we’ll need to take a field trip.” Her eyes met and held Julie’s gaze. “Are you up for that?”



## About the Author

An award-winning former broadcast journalist, former press secretary to the New York state senate minority leader, former public information officer for the nation's third largest prison system, and former editor of a national art magazine, Lynn Ames is a nationally recognized speaker and CEO of a public relations firm with a particular expertise in image, crisis communications planning, and crisis management.

Ms. Ames's other works include *The Price of Fame* (Book One in the Kate & Jay series), *The Cost of Commitment* (Book Two in the Kate & Jay series), *The Value of Valor* (winner of the 2007 Arizona Book Award and Book Three in the Kate & Jay series), *One ~ Love* (formerly published as *The Flip Side of Desire*), *Heartsong*, *Eyes on the Stars* (winner of a 2011 Golden Crown Literary award), *Beyond Instinct* (winner of a 2012 Golden Crown Literary Award and Book One in the Mission: Classified series), *Above Reproach*, Book Two in the Mission: Classified series, *All That Lies Within* (Lammy Award finalist and winner of the 2014 Ann Bannon Popular Choice Award), and *Outsiders* (winner of a 2010 Golden Crown Literary award).

More about the author, including contact information, news about sequels and other original upcoming works, pictures of locations mentioned in this novel, links to resources related to issues raised in this book, author interviews, and purchasing assistance can be found at [www.lynnames.com](http://www.lynnames.com). You can also friend Lynn on Facebook and follow her on Twitter.

## **Other Books in Print by Lynn Ames**

### **The Mission: Classified Series**

#### ***Beyond Instinct – Book One in the Mission: Classified Series***

ISBN: 978-1-936429-02-8

Vaughn Elliott is a member of the State Department's Diplomatic Security Force. Someone high up in the United States government has pulled rank, hand-selecting her to oversee security for a visit by congressional VIPs to the West African nation of Mali. The question is, who picked her for the job and why?

Sage McNally, a career diplomat, is the political officer at the US Embassy in Mali. As control officer for the congressional visit, she is tasked to brief Vaughn regarding the political climate in the region.

The two women are instantly attracted to each other and share a wild night of passion. The next morning, Sage disappears while running, leaving behind signs of a scuffle. Why was Sage taken and by whom? Where is she being held?

Vaughn's attempts to get answers are thwarted at every turn. Even Sage does not know why she's been targeted.

Independently, Sage and Vaughn struggle to make sense of the seemingly senseless. By the time each of them figures it out, it could be too late for Sage.

As the clock ticks inexorably toward the congressional visit, the stakes get even higher, and Vaughn is faced with unspeakable choices. Her decisions will make the difference between life and death. Will she choose duty or her own code of honor?

*Above Reproach – Book Two in the Mission: Classified Series*

ISBN: 978-1-936429-04-2

Sedona Ramos is a dedicated public servant. Fluent in three languages, with looks that allow her to pass for Hispanic, Native American, or Middle Eastern, she is a valuable asset to the super-secret National Security Agency. When she accidentally stumbles upon a mysterious series of satellite images revealing activity at a shuttered nuclear facility in war-torn Iraq, somebody wants her dead.

With danger lurking at every turn and not knowing who among her colleagues might be involved, Sedona risks her life to get the information to the one person she can trust—the president.

The implications of Sedona's discovery are clear and quite possibly catastrophic. Potential suspects include foreign terrorists, high-ranking Cabinet members, and assorted others. Whomever the president picks for this mission must be above reproach.

Vaughn Elliott is enjoying her self-imposed isolation on a remote island, content to live in quiet anonymity. But when old friend Katherine Kyle brings an urgent SOS from the president of the United States, duty trumps comfort.

Time is of the essence. Vaughn, Sedona, and a hand-picked team of ex-operatives and specialists must figure out what's really going on outside Baghdad, stop it, and unmask the forces behind the plot. If they fail at any point along the way, it could mean the loss of millions of lives.

Will Vaughn and company unravel the mysteries in time? The trail of clues stretches from the Middle East to Washington. The list of people who want to kill them is long. And the stakes have never been higher...

## **Stand-Alone Romances**

### ***All That Lies Within***

ISBN: 978-1-936429-06-6

How far would you go to hide who you really are inside? And what do you do when you find the one person from whom hiding your true self isn't an option?

Glamorous movie star Dara Thomas has it all—an Oscar nomination, dozens of magazine covers proclaiming her the sexiest woman alive, and people of both sexes clamoring for her attention. She also has a carefully guarded secret life. As Constance Darrow, Dara writes Pulitzer Prize-winning fiction, an outlet that allows her to be so much more than just a pretty face.

Rebecca Minton is a professor of American Literature in love with the work of the mysterious, reclusive author Constance Darrow, with whom she strikes up a correspondence. A chance phrase in a letter leads her to a startling conclusion about the author.

What happens next will change the course of both of their lives forever.

### ***Eyes on the Stars***

ISBN: 978-1-936429-00-4

Jessie Keaton and Claudia Sherwood were as different as night and day. But when their nation needed experienced female pilots, their reactions were identical: heed the call. In early 1943, the two women joined the Women Airforce Service Pilots—WASP—and reported to Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas, where they promptly fell head-over-heels in love.

The life of a WASP was often perilous by definition. Being two women in love added another layer of complication entirely, leading to ostracism and worse. Like many others, Jessie and Claudia hid their relationship, going on dates with men to avert suspicion. The ruse worked well until one seemingly innocent afternoon ruined everything.

Two lives tragically altered. Two hearts ripped apart. And a second chance more than fifty years in the making.

From the airfields of World War II, to the East Room of the Obama White House, follow the lives of two extraordinary women whose love transcends time and place.

### ***Heartsong***

ISBN: 978-0-9840521-3-4

After three years spent mourning the death of her partner in a tragic climbing accident, Danica Warren has re-emerged in the public eye. With a best-selling memoir, a blockbuster movie about her heroic efforts to save three other climbers, and a successful career on the motivational speaking circuit, Danica has convinced herself that her life can be full without love.

When Chase Crosley walks into Danica's field of vision everything changes. Danica is suddenly faced with questions she's never pondered.

Is there really one love that transcends all concepts of space and time? One great love that joins two hearts so that they beat as one? One moment of recognition when twin flames join and burn together?

Will Danica and Chase be able to overcome the barriers standing between them and find forever? And can that love be sustained, even in the face of cruel circumstances and fate?

### ***One ~ Love, (formerly The Flip Side of Desire)***

ISBN: 978-0-9840521-2-7

Trystan Lightfoot allowed herself to love once in her life; the experience broke her heart and strengthened her resolve never to fall in love again. At forty, however, she still longs for the comfort of a woman's arms. She finds temporary solace in meaningless, albeit adventuresome encounters, burying her pain and her emotions deep inside where no one can reach. No one, that is, until she meets C.J. Winslow.

C.J. Winslow is the model-pretty-but-aging professional tennis star the Women's Tennis Federation is counting on to dispel the image that all great female tennis players are lesbians. And her lesbianism isn't the only secret she's hiding. A traumatic event from her childhood is taking its toll both on and off the court.

Together Trystan and C.J. must find a way beyond their pasts to discover lasting love.

## **The Kate and Jay Series**

### ***The Price of Fame***

ISBN: 978-0-9840521-4-1

When local television news anchor Katherine Kyle is thrust into the national spotlight, it sets in motion a chain of events that will change her life forever. Jamison “Jay” Parker is an intensely career-driven Time magazine reporter. The first time she saw Kate, she fell in love. The last time she saw her, Kate was rescuing her. That was five years ago, and she never expected to see her again. Then circumstances and an assignment bring them back together.

Kate and Jay’s lives intertwine, leading them on a journey to love and happiness, until fate and fame threaten to tear them apart. What is the price of fame? For Kate, the cost just might be everything. For Jay, it could be the other half of her soul.

### ***The Cost of Commitment***

ISBN: 978-0-9840521-5-8

Kate and Jay want nothing more than to focus on their love. But as Kate settles into a new profession, she and Jay are caught in the middle of a deadly scheme and find themselves pawns in a larger game in which the stakes are nothing less than control of the country.

In her novel of corruption, greed, romance, and danger, Lynn Ames takes us on an unforgettable journey of harrowing conspiracy—and establishes herself as a mistress of suspense.

The Cost of Commitment—it could be everything...

### ***The Value of Valor***

ISBN: 978-0-9840521-6-5

Katherine Kyle is the press secretary to the president of the United States. Her lover, Jamison Parker, is a respected writer for Time magazine. Separated by unthinkable tragedy, the two must struggle to survive against impossible odds...

A powerful, shadowy organization wants to advance its own global agenda. To succeed, the president must be eliminated. Only one person knows the truth and can put a stop to the scheme.

It will take every ounce of courage and strength Kate possesses to stay alive long enough to expose the plot. Meanwhile, Jay must cheat death and race across continents to be by her lover's side...

This hair-raising thriller will grip you from the start and won't let you go until the ride is over.

The Value of Valor—it's priceless.

## **Anthology Collections**

### ***Outsiders***

ISBN: 978-0-979-92545-0

What happens when you take five beloved, powerhouse authors, each with a unique voice and style, give them one word to work with, and put them between the sheets together, no holds barred?

Magic!!

Brisk Press presents Lynn Ames, Georgia Beers, JD Glass, Susan X. Meagher and Susan Smith, all together under the same cover with the aim to satisfy your every literary taste. This incredible combination offers something for everyone—a smorgasbord of fiction unlike anything you'll find anywhere else.

A Native American raised on the Reservation ventures outside the comfort and familiarity of her own world to help a lost soul embrace the gifts that set her apart. \* A reluctantly wealthy woman uses all of her resources anonymously to help those who cannot help themselves. \* Three individuals, three aspects of the self, combine to create balance and harmony at last for a popular trio of characters. \* Two nomadic women from very different walks of life discover common ground—and a lot more—during a blackout in New York City. \* A traditional, old school butch must confront her community and her own belief system when she falls for a much younger transman.

Five authors—five novellas. Outsiders—one remarkable book.

All Lynn Ames books are available through [www.lynnames.com](http://www.lynnames.com), from your favorite local bookstore, or through other online venues.

## **Books By Parker & Dixie Ames (Listed under Lynn Ames)**

### ***Digging for Home***

ISBN: 978-1-936429-08-0

We've all done it—sat there and wondered what our canine companions were thinking while staring at the television with us during a ball game. Ponder no more! Irrepressible golden retrievers Parker and Dixie Ames have made it their mission to take you inside the dugout for a dog's-eye view of the innings and outings of the great game of softball. Assisted by their Siberian husky pal Lucy McMan-West, an obliging cast of canine cohorts, a chicken, a turtle, and a llama named LaRue, the dynamic duo reminds us that softball is not about winning or losing—it's about finding the shortest route to the concession stand.

Filled with quirky explanations and colorful photo illustrations, *Digging for Home* is a tasty ballpark treat that's packed with heart, hilarity, and plenty of doggone good fun.



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