

Great Bones

By
Lynn Ames

GREAT BONES

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CREDITS

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Dedication

To my amazing little sister of choice, Ann McMan, who always keeps me on my toes and pushes me to be the very best I can be. This one's for you.

Laughter truly is the best medicine. I love you, Thumper.

In memory of my Grandma Goldie. I can see your twinkling, mischievous blue eyes sparkling as you read over my shoulder. I hope you recognize your spirit in Goldie's adventures, lovingly imagined in these pages. This so would've been you. I love you so much, Grandma. All these years and I still miss you every day.

Acknowledgments

Great Bones has been a long time in the making. Twenty months, to be exact.

It all began on a warm summer day, with a challenge from my dear friend, Ann McMan.

“Get outside your comfort zone,” she said. “Write a romantic comedy,” she said. “You’ll be great at it.”

I thought perhaps she’d gone daft from creating one-too-many perfect book covers, but she persisted and insisted that I should do this thing. We workshopped ideas, potential plots, and characters. From that discussion was born the great bones for *Great Bones*. Thank you, Thumper, for the shove in the back and for the fabulous and fabulously fun cover.

Great Bones is my thirteenth book. I work hard at my craft. With each endeavor, I strive to be a better writer than I’ve ever been before. No one has taught me more about craft than my long-time editor, Linda Lorenzo, who retired just before I finished writing this book. Linda was not just my editor, but a gifted teacher. Linda? Your lessons continue to resonate, helping me to be the best I can be. You have my eternal gratitude for all your hard work. Enjoy your well-earned retirement.

The relationship between an author and editor is paramount. A good book, in the hands of a skilled editor, becomes a great book. A great book becomes even better. My gratitude to editor-extraordinaire, Elizabeth Sims, for stepping into the breach and helping me make *Great Bones* the very best work I’ve ever done.

My thanks to my team of “first readers” for offering invaluable feedback during the writing process, and to my e-book/website guru, Toni Whitaker, for helping me to make my books available in multiple formats and through multiple avenues, for all of you to enjoy.

Finally, to my extraordinary wife, Cheryl Pletcher, whose love and support carried me through this project—darling, you teach me every day the true meaning of unconditional love. Thank you for laughing with me and loving me. You make all things possible.

*Source for statistics on greeting cards: www.greetingcard.org.

CHAPTER ONE

Rachel Wallach stared at the painting on the wall behind the soft brown leather chair where her therapist sat. It was an abstract, and she found herself wondering if the picture and the placement were intentional. Perhaps the idea was to keep the patient off balance.

“You’re staring at the painting again, Rachel.”

“I am?”

“You know you are.”

“Did you put it there to psych out your patients? You know, to make them wonder...”

“Wonder what?”

“Wonder what they’re supposed to see in the image. You know, like in bad movies where the shrink draws conclusions about serial killers based on what they see in an ink blot.”

“What do you see in the painting, Rachel?” The therapist’s tone was warm and mellifluous, and the skin around her eyes crinkled as she smiled.

“Now you’re just playing with me.” Rachel picked at a cuticle. She was fond of Malinda. Like Rachel, she was in her mid-thirties, a professional woman, a straight shooter, and, most importantly, she was patient with Rachel’s foibles.

“Yep, I am. So, let’s pick up where we last left off. As I recall, I asked you a question: What do you see when you look in the mirror? You said you wanted time to contemplate your answer, and that you’d get back to me at our next session.”

Rachel sighed and fished in her pocket. She pulled out a crumpled, folded sheet of lined paper and smoothed it on her khaki-clad knee. She cleared her throat and kept her eyes down.

“How I see myself,” she read. “Lank brunette hair, an annoying widow’s peak, a square jaw, too-high cheekbones, plain brown eyes, a-once-fit-body-now-gone-too-soft...” She chanced a glance at the therapist, then averted her eyes again. “Do I have to go on?”

“No. I get the idea.”

“Why was I taking inventory?”

“Because what you see is not what the world sees.” The therapist said gently.

Rachel shifted uncomfortably in the buttery leather chair as a silence lingered.

“What if you took the same attributes and described them like this instead?” Malinda finally asked. “Lush, thick brown hair, a distinctive widow’s peak, long seen as a sign of beauty, a strong jaw, well-defined cheekbones, intelligent brown eyes, a lithe, capable, curvaceous body...”

“You’d be describing some fantasy woman, not me,” Rachel mumbled.

“Says you. Let me ask you another question. Why do you think you described only physical attributes?”

“You asked me what I saw when I looked in a mir—” Rachel wagged a finger. “That was tricky.”

“No. That was purposeful. What about the big-hearted woman who read a story about a shortage of blankets and pillows at the local homeless shelter, bought twenty of each online, and had them delivered anonymously the next day?”

“What does that have to do with anything?” Rachel asked.

“Why do you suppose you didn’t see that woman in the mirror? That was you, wasn’t it?”

“Yes.” Rachel pulled at a loose thread on her sleeve. “But those aren’t tangible attributes.”

“Does that make them any less real?”

“I don’t see those in the mirror.”

“Maybe you should look a little more closely.”

“No, thanks.”

Malinda sat forward, hands clasped, elbows resting on her knees. “This is going to seem like a non sequitur, but I assure you it’s not. Rachel, you and I have known each other a long time. I remember when you made the decision to go freelance and work from home. Do you remember that?”

“Of course I do. It was a great career move. Working for myself, creating romantic greeting card sentiments for multiple companies, gave me more flexibility and freedom.”

“It gave you an out—a way to isolate yourself further—to disappear into your own little world. And that’s just what you’ve done.”

“I…” Rachel began, then closed her mouth.

“You what?”

Rachel shrugged. “I’m successful at what I do.”

“Yes, you certainly are. But you spend far too much time alone. You need to get back out into the world. You need to integrate the person who writes such beautiful, heartfelt sentiments and gives away anonymous gifts to strangers with the Rachel Wallach who lives in the real world.”

Rachel frowned. What was her ex’s parting shot? *You’re brilliant, but you don’t know how to tie your own shoelace. Get your head out of the clouds and get a clue. You’re socially inept, devoid of common sense, and terminally awkward. You don’t know how to function on a practical level, and you have no idea how to interact with people.*

“When’s the last time you went on a date?”

“A date?” Rachel’s eyes opened wide with fear.

“Yes. You know, when you meet someone you’re attracted to, or might be attracted to—”

“I know what a date is.” Rachel tried to quell the panic bubbling up inside. She was no good at dating. Everything her ex had said about her was true.

“Should I repeat the question?” the therapist asked.

“No.”

“Rachel,” Malinda said softly, “there’s no shame or crime in being shy, introverted, and sensitive. You’re bright and caring, compassionate and kind. You just need to find the right match for you. You can do this. Let go of your anxiety. Remember to take deep breaths in and let them out slowly.”

Rachel rolled her eyes.

“I can’t help you if you won’t help yourself.” Malinda sat back. “Time’s up. Do you still have the affirmations I gave you?”

“Yes.”

“Good. Keep repeating them. Before the next time I see you, I want you to do two other things for me.”

Oh, boy.

“First, I want you to get out of the house and do something ordinary. Go to the store and interact with a stranger. It will do you good. Second, I want you to go on at least one date.”

“I... It’s going to be a busy time. I’ve got three sentiments due next week.”

“Come on, Rachel. Surely you can find the time to do something fun. Pick an activity you like to do and ask someone to do it with you.”

“Like what?”

“What brings you joy? What brought you joy as a child?”

Rachel pursed her lips. “I loved to ride my bike. I could ride forever.”

“Good! Invite someone who likes to bike ride to go for a ride with you. It’s not that hard. You might like it.” Malinda stood. “I’ll see you in a couple of weeks.”



“Be cool. Don’t blow it. Blend in.” Rachel leaned back and twisted to the side to get a better view of the elderly woman in the housecoat perusing the “Romantic Sentiments” spinner. She recognized that skulking around in the greeting card section of the East Greenbush, New York Target store wasn’t exactly what the therapist meant by interaction, but...

She wrapped her fingers around the nearby plastic-and-metal end cap to better balance herself, and gasped as she felt the flimsy metal support break free.

“Oh, my God!” She fell as if in slow motion, the grimy tile rising to meet her left shoulder, elbow, and hip. The metal support strip clattered to the ground next to her, echoing loudly in her ear, only making things worse.

“Dear? Are you all right?” The elderly woman rushed to Rachel’s side and stood over her, giving Rachel an up-close-and-personal view of her Tweety Bird slippers with duct tape holding the soles together.

“I’m fine.” Rachel scrambled to her feet, her face flushed and hot. She brushed herself off and straightened her blouse, trying to recapture some semblance of dignity. She shoved at the metal support piece with her shoe, trying to hide it under the shelving.

The woman clucked her tongue at the broken rack. “These things are so poorly constructed nowadays.”

Rachel met the woman’s gaze for the first time. Her eyes were an arresting shade of blue, crystal clear, and kind—so very kind. She reminded Rachel of her Grandma Goldie. Belatedly, she noticed the card the woman was clutching. Her heart thumped happily.

“That’s one of my favorites.”

“I’m sorry. What?”

Rachel pointed to the card, closed her eyes, and recited the verse from heart, shouting to be heard over the tin tones of the dronelike voice on the public-address system announcing a sale on tampons in aisle fourteen.

“When I awake to see your eyes gazing at me, and your smile welcoming me to the day, the years melt away and we are young again. *I am young again, and more in love with you than ever. Thank you for being my one and only.*”

When Rachel finished, she opened her eyes.

The woman sniffled, removed a Kleenex from her left sleeve, and noisily blew her nose.

Rachel’s heart sank. “I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to upset you.”

“It’s not your fault, dear. That was a beautiful sentiment. It’s just...” Tears spilled over and the woman used the tissue to stanch the flow. “My Herbert died a few months ago. He loved to surprise me with romantic greeting cards. I miss him so.” She moved closer to Rachel and whispered conspiratorially, “Sometimes I come here just to imagine which card he would’ve bought me next.” She paused. “He definitely would’ve gone for this one.”

Rachel swallowed around the lump in her throat.

“Say... How did you know what was in the card?”

Rachel, having barely recovered from the first round of embarrassment, blushed once again to the roots of her hair. What should she say? *Because I wrote it?* She’d never been caught before. There was no precedent for this emergency.

Suddenly, loud music burst forth from Rachel's back pocket.

The elderly woman jumped back and put a hand to her heart. "Goodness, is that the theme from that awful shark movie? What was it? 'Teeth'?"

"'Jaws,'" Rachel supplied.

"That film gave me nightmares for a year."

"Me too." *Which is kind of the point*, Rachel thought. "I'm sorry, I have to take this. If I don't, she'll just keep calling back."

"Don't worry, dear. Nice to meet you."

"Nice to meet you too." Rachel smiled at the woman.

"Who are you talking to?" The voice on the other end of the phone demanded.

"Hello, Mother."

"Is that another new girlfriend? What's this one's name?"

Rachel sighed. "No, Mother. That was just a nice little old lady I met in the store."

"Well, you shouldn't talk to strangers. It's not safe."

"Yes, Mother. Is there something you wanted?"

"I wanted to know if you're coming to Shabbat dinner?"

Rachel rolled her eyes. "I come every Friday, don't I?"

"Well, a mother likes to be sure, you know. I have to decide how much chicken to make and whether I need one challah or two."

Rachel switched hands and put the phone to her other ear as she picked up a tin of Altoids at the checkout counter, paid for them, exited the store, and stepped out into the bright August sunshine. She pocketed the mints, donned her shades, looked both ways, and crossed at the crosswalk. "Do what you've been doing every Friday for the past however many years."

"Did Mrs. Fischer get hold of you?"

Rachel used the key fob to unlock her car door. "For the last time, Mother, I have a job. A job I love. I don't need or want Mrs. Fischer's resume-building services." She slid into the driver's seat and gripped the steering wheel with her free hand, praying for patience.

"What you do *isn't* a real job. Sitting around, making up slogans for old men who can't figure out how to apologize to their wives."

Rachel silently counted to ten. “They’re not slogans, they’re sentiments. And demographic surveys and focus groups clearly show that women purchase a full eighty percent of all greeting cards. Seven out of ten card buyers say that buying greeting cards is vitally important to them. Annual retail sales for greeting cards run between seven and eight billion dollars.”

“Don’t be rude.”

“What you mean is, don’t confuse you with the facts.”

“If you’re going to insult me like this—”

“Mother, I’m not having this conversation with you. I can’t talk on the phone and drive. I’ll see you Friday. ’Bye.” Rachel leaned her head against the steering wheel...and jumped when the horn sounded. “Perfect.” She pulled out of the parking lot. Could this day get any worse?



Goldie Horowitz stuck her head out the door of her one-bedroom apartment in the staff-supervised section of the Shady Acres Assisted Living Community and looked in both directions. She checked her purse for her car keys. She knew it was a risk. She’d already violated the terms of her agreement and gotten caught once using the car. Getting caught a second time likely would get her tossed out on her ear.

She hated being cooped up. Heck, half the reason she’d suggested leaving her car in the parking lot for her granddaughter to use was so she could take it out for a spin when she got tired of the old folks. Nobody knew she kept a spare set of keys, and she intended to keep it that way. She checked the hallway one more time. The coast was clear.

If she hurried, she could catch the one o’clock showing of “Grandma,” starring Lily Tomlin, at the cheap theater. She liked Tomlin. She was especially fond of her character, Edith Ann, from the old TV show “Laugh-In.” As quickly as her feet would carry her, she hustled down the corridor.

“Mrs. Horowitz!”

Damn. Goldie pretended not to hear.

“Mrs. Horowitz!” The aide tapped Goldie on the shoulder from behind.

Goldie turned around and feigned surprise.

“Where are you going?” The aide yelled and gestured simultaneously. “Did you sign out? Is someone here to pick you up? You know your family took your car keys. You’re not allowed to drive anymore.”

Goldie blinked as if she was trying to make out what the young man was saying. “Hello, Evan. Beautiful day, isn’t it?”

“It is, Mrs. Horowitz. Were you going somewhere?” Evan pointed to Goldie’s purse.

“What? Oh, you like my purse? Why, thank you. You have excellent taste. My granddaughter bought it for me.” Goldie winked. “She stops by to see me every Friday. She’s a good girl.”

“She is, Mrs. Horowitz.”

“Now don’t go getting any ideas, young man.” Goldie playfully wagged her finger at Evan. “You’re not Rachel’s type, if you know what I mean.” She winked. She motioned him closer and stage-whispered, “She likes girls.”

Evan made a choking sound.

“You shouldn’t be so surprised. Even good-looking girls who wear lipstick like my Rachel can be lesbians, you know.”

“Of course.” Evan looked down at his watch. “Look at the time. I’ve got to go check on Mr. Bernstein and make sure he’s taken his pills.”

Goldie blinked as if she wasn’t sure what Evan said.

“You need to put in your hearing aids, Mrs. Horowitz,” he screamed.

“You have a nice day too, Evan.” Goldie lifted her hand in a half wave. When he turned the corner, she checked her own watch. If she hustled, she could still sneak out, make the movie, and be back before dinnertime.



Rachel swallowed the last bite of the Neapolitan ice cream bar she’d bought from the food concession and stared out the window of the southbound Amtrak train at the beauty of the Hudson River on a late summer’s day. She imagined she was on one of those cute little sailboats with the love of her life, cruising downriver. She could hear the robins singing in the trees on the shoreline.

“Keep dreaming, Wallach.” She cringed as she thought about last Saturday night’s disastrous date. Everything had been going so well... Right up until the moment when Rachel helpfully opened the car door at the same time Natalie bent over to retrieve the shiny quarter on the curb outside the restaurant. Three hours in the emergency room, one mild concussion, and a dozen stitches later, they parted ways without so much as a handshake.

Well, at least her therapist couldn’t say she wasn’t trying. And she’d gotten to dinner. That was a marginal improvement over the previous three dates, none of which had progressed beyond a cup of coffee.

Rachel sighed. She threw away the ice cream wrapper and stick, picked up her pen, and refocused on the yellow legal pad in front of her.

“When I look into your eyes, I see my past, my present, and my future. You make my world complete. Happy anniversary to the great love of my life.”

She cocked her head and considered what she’d written. It wasn’t horrible. But it didn’t exactly have great bones, either. That’s what her editor would say. Every greeting card sentiment needed to pop—beginning with the perfect foundation.

“It’s a start, anyway,” Rachel mumbled. She yawned and her eyelids drooped. If she closed her eyes now, she could get in a quick power nap before Penn Station. There, she would catch the shuttle to Grand Central Station and transfer to the commuter train to New Rochelle, where her Grandma Goldie would be waiting for her weekly visit. “I just need ten minutes...”

The conductor woke her as he passed by. “Penn Station! Last stop. Penn Station. Make sure to check around your seat for your belongings.”

Rachel stretched and wiped the back of her hand across her mouth. Apparently, she’d been catching flies again, her mouth no doubt agape as she drooled and quite possibly snored. “All traits certain to land you the woman of your dreams,” she mumbled to herself.

The train slowed and stopped. Rachel slipped the writing pad into her briefcase. Her fingers brushed against the carefully wrapped rectangular box inside. She hoped Grandma Goldie would love her new iPad. Rachel planned to teach her how to buy

movies and ebooks and how to video chat. She worried about her cherished grandmother. Surely the move to that sterile old-folks environment must be taking a toll on her.

In truth, these Friday treks south to her parents' house in Scarsdale to honor the Sabbath had nothing to do with being a dutiful daughter, and everything to do with having an opportunity to visit with her favorite grandmother along the way. Rachel checked her watch. If the shuttle to Grand Central showed up quickly enough, she could catch the 3:35 and have a little extra time with Goldie before dinner.



“Bubbeleh, you look so tired. Are you sure you’re getting enough sleep? Is that nasty editor of yours being too hard on you again? Do you want me to go over there and give her what-for and how-come?”

Goldie patted the bed and motioned for Rachel to sit next to her. Her favorite granddaughter looked gaunt, with dark circles under her eyes. Her shoulders were rounded as if in defeat. This wouldn’t do at all.

“I’m fine, Grandma.”

Goldie worked hard not to wince as Rachel shouted in her ear. It was her own fault, she knew. Whatever had possessed her to feign deafness and memory issues, she couldn’t imagine.

Ahh, who was she kidding? Of course she knew why. Anybody who spent more than five minutes with her overbearing, pain-in-the-tush daughter knew why. True, Goldie admitted to herself, she might have picked more convenient afflictions to warrant moving out of the in-law apartment behind her daughter and overmatched son-in-law’s house. But it was too late for that now and there was no use crying over spilled milk.

“Yeah, well, you don’t look so fine to me.” Goldie affectionately pinched Rachel’s cheek.

“I brought something for you.” Rachel fished in her briefcase and pulled out a purple polka-dotted package tied with a pretty pink bow.

“That’s nice, but you know I don’t need anything.”

“I know, but I wanted to get this for you.” Rachel presented her with the box.

Goldie set it aside. She didn’t like the idea of her granddaughter spending hard-earned money on trinkets for her. It should be the other way around—she should be buying for Rachel.

“Aren’t you even going to open it?”

“Later, darling. Right now it’s time for the show.”

“What show?”

“It’s supertime in this joint. You can keep me company before you have to deal with your mother. Let’s go make fun of the old folks.”

Goldie’s heart swelled with affection as Rachel stood and held her hands out for Goldie to take. She was so thoughtful, this girl—so unlike her mother. Where had she gone wrong with Deborah? “I didn’t. Morris spoiled her. That was the trouble. If only he’d listened to me...”

“What’s that, Grandma?”

“Hmm?” She hadn’t realized she’d spoken out loud.

“You were saying something.”

“Was I?” Goldie waved dismissively. “Never mind that. I’ll bet you five dollars that pork chops are on the menu tonight.” This was an ongoing joke between them.

Rachel squeezed Goldie’s hand. “Why, Grandma. I’m shocked. Shocked, I tell you. A respectable, kosher facility like this serving pork on the Sabbath? I’ll take that bet and double it.”

“Save your money so you can break me out of this joint and take me to the ocean on vacation.”

The dining room was bustling. Wheelchairs and walkers lined the walls, staff scurried back and forth carrying plates of food to the residents from the kitchen, and the loud buzz of conversation sounded like the hum of thousands of bees.

Goldie paused just inside the glass double doors. There wasn’t an empty table in sight.

“Gold-e-lah. Could it be? Is that you?”

Goldie squinted at the matronly woman waddling toward them with a walker, one arm waving and the walker weaving unsteadily. No, it couldn’t be. “Ida? Ida Pinsky?”

“Yep. Believe it or not, I’m still alive and kicking. God willing, I’ll be here a while longer.”

“How did you end up here?”

“Meh. You know how it is, Gold-e-lah. One day you’re useful and trundling along, the next you’re yesterday’s news and life has passed you by. But, I don’t complain. After all, I’m still here and I’ve got all my marbles.”

“Thank God,” Goldie said.

“Who’s this beautiful young woman?” Ida nodded in Rachel’s direction.

“This?” Goldie beamed at Rachel. “This is—”

“Oy! Look at the time!” Ida pointed to the oversized clock on the dining hall wall. “I’m going to be late for water aerobics!” She patted Goldie on the arm. “Good to see you, darling. We’ll catch up soon.”

Before Goldie could answer, Ida was out the door.



“Hurry up! It’s almost sundown. You know we have to get the Shabbat candles lit before sunset. Where have you been?”

Rachel prayed for patience. “I got here as soon as I could, Mother. It’s nice to see you too.” She gave her mother the obligatory peck on the cheek.

“Squirt.” Rachel’s older brother, Paul, punched her lightly in the arm. “I see you dressed for the occasion.” He tugged on the sleeves of his custom-made dress shirt, the diamonds in his cufflinks winking in the light from the setting sun streaming in through the open blinds.

Rachel caught herself as she self-consciously glanced down at her khakis and Eddie Bauer non-wrinkle button-front shirt. “Paul.” She crossed her arms.

“Hello, Rachel.” Her sister-in-law, Tiffany, gave her an air kiss.

Rachel’s eyes watered. Her nose twitched. *Here it comes.* She closed her eyes. *Don’t do it. Hold it. Don’t do it...* Ahhh... Ahhh... Ahhh chooooo! That darned cloying perfume got her every time.

Rachel refocused on her sister-in-law. Was it possible that Tiffany had had even more Botox? Pretty soon her lips were going to precede her through the door.

“Hi, honey.” Rachel’s father gave her a warm hug.

“Hi, Daddy.”

“Rach.” Rachel’s sister nodded coolly in her direction.

Rachel lifted her chin in return greeting. As usual, Erin looked flawless—self-assured and in control. And why wouldn’t she be? Rachel felt the familiar blanket of insecurity creep over her.

Erin was everything she was not—confident, accomplished, beautiful—the most sought-after eligible doctor in the tri-state area. She had more suitors than the government had lawsuits against it, and she presided over a thriving plastic surgery practice that boasted a coterie of A-list actors and actresses.

I am successful. I am accomplished. I am enough. Rachel silently repeated the mantra Malinda insisted she carry on a piece of paper in her wallet, even though she had long ago memorized the phrases.

“Let’s go, everybody. It’s almost sundown.” Deborah Wallach scurried around the kitchen, her apron stretched tightly over her belly. Her practical low heels clicked with purpose on the worn hardwood floor. “Here, take these.” She shoved two white tapers at Rachel along with a book of matches from the Chinese restaurant down the block.

Rachel carried the candles into the dining room and placed them on the sideboard. She turned just as her mother thrust the pewter tray with the challah bread at her. Dutifully, Rachel reached into the top drawer of the sideboard and withdrew a white linen napkin. She used it to cover the loaf of bread and set the tray in the middle of dining room table.

Paul was busy pouring the wine into fine crystal goblets. As usual, Tiffany pretended to find something fascinating to look at on the wall.

“God forbid you should ruin your manicure doing manual labor like preparing the Sabbath table,” Rachel grumbled under her breath. She blew a puff of air up in an effort to move an errant strand of hair out of her eyes. As usual, she was in dire need of a haircut.

“Places everyone!” Rachel’s mother bellowed. “Richard!”

“I’m right here, dear. No need to shout.” He winked at Rachel behind his wife’s back.

The family gathered in a semicircle behind Deborah as she fumbled with the matchbook.

Rachel rolled her eyes. "Mother, you know it's not against the law to use a lighter, or at least a box of wooden matches, right?"

Her mother shot her a withering glare. "Our foremothers didn't use lighters or wooden matches," she snapped.

"They didn't use paper matches, either," Rachel said behind her hand.

After wasting three matches, Deborah finally was able to get one to flare. She lit the pair of tapers, set the spent match in a small silver dish, extended her hands over the candles, drew them toward her three times in a circular motion, then covered her eyes.

In her most dramatic voice, she intoned the blessing of the candles:

"Baruch a-ta A-do-nay Elo-hei-nu me-lech ha-o-lam a-sheer ki-di-sha-nu bi-mitz-vo-tav vi-tzi-va-noo li-had-leek ner shel Sha-bat. Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the light of the Holy Shabbat."

"Good Shabbes everyone," Deborah said.

They seated themselves, Richard at one end, Deborah at the other, Paul and Tiffany on one side of the oblong table, Erin and Rachel on the other. Richard blessed the wine, Paul blessed the challah and sliced it, and Deborah commanded, "Eat slowly, everyone. This meal took me all day to make."

Over the clattering of the dishes, Deborah smiled at Paul and patted him affectionately on the hand. "So, what's this talk I hear about the stock market taking a nose dive? Do your father and I need to worry?"

"Absolutely not. I closed three multimillion-dollar trades in an hour today. The market's rock solid."

"Paul bought me a new necklace to celebrate. See?" Tiffany leaned forward so that the sapphire-and-diamond pendant swung freely from the delicate gold chain.

"It's beautiful," Deborah said. "See, Richard? Our son knows how to reward a woman properly."

"Mm-hmm."

"And you, Erin darling? Treat anyone exciting this week?"

“Mother, you know I can’t divulge who my patients are.”

“I know that. But you could at least give us a hint. It wouldn’t kill you to throw us a bone.”

Erin expertly dissected the chicken leg and thigh on her plate. “Okay. And this is all I’m going to say: His butt has launched a thousand female fantasies.”

“Oh.” Deborah put her fork down and rested her chin on her palm. “If I guess it, will you confirm?”

“Mother...”

“Well, you can’t just leave it at that.”

“I can and I did. Change the topic.”

“What about you, Rach?” Paul asked. “Saving the world one saccharine sentiment at a time?”

Rachel’s nostrils flared. She pushed the pile of peas around her plate. “As it happens, I picked up a contract with a new boutique greeting card company that looks promising.”

When no one else said anything, Richard said, “Good for you, sweetheart. Pass the bread, please.”

Rachel sighed. *I am successful. I am accomplished. I am enough. I am successful. I am accomplished. I am enough.*

About the Author

Lynn Ames is the best-selling author of The Kate & Jay series, *One ~ Love*, *Heartsong*, *Eyes on the Stars*, The Mission: Classified series, *All That Lies Within*, *Bright Lights of Summer*, *Great Bones*, and one of five authors of the collection *Outsiders*. She also is the writer/director/producer of the history-making documentary, “Extra Innings: The Real Story Behind the Bright Lights of Summer.” This historically important documentary chronicles, for the first time ever in her own words, the real-life story of Hall-of-Famer Dot Wilkinson and the heyday of women’s softball.

Lynn’s fiction has garnered her a multitude of awards and honors, including five Goldie awards, the coveted Ann Bannon Popular Fiction Award (for *All That Lies Within*), and the Arizona Book Award for Best Gay/Lesbian book. Lynn is a two-time Lambda Literary Award (Lammy) Finalist and winner of a Rainbow Award for Lesbian Romance. *All That Lies Within* was additionally honored as one of the top ten lesbian books overall of 2013.

Ms. Ames is the founder of Phoenix Rising Press. She is also a former press secretary to the New York state senate minority leader and spokesperson for the nation’s third-largest prison system. For more than half a decade, she was an award-winning broadcast journalist. She has been editor of a critically acclaimed national magazine and a nationally recognized speaker and public relations professional with a particular expertise in image, crisis communications planning, and crisis management.

More about the author, including contact information, news about sequels and other original upcoming works, video clips, author interviews, book excerpts, and purchasing assistance can be found at www.lynnames.com. You can also email Lynn at lynnames@lynnames.com, friend Lynn on Facebook and follow her on Twitter and YouTube.

Other Books in Print by Lynn Ames

Stand-Alone Romances

Bright Lights of Summer

ISBN: 978-1-936429-10-3

It's March, 1941. Captain America appears in a comic book for the very first time. New York City receives 18.1 inches of snow, its 3rd largest snowfall in history. In Holland, the Nazi occupiers forbid Jews to own businesses. In Poland, Heinrich Himmler inspects Auschwitz. World War II is raging in Europe, but America has yet to enter the fray.

And in Phoenix, Arizona, a 16-year-old scrap of a girl named Theodora "Dizzy" Hosler, takes the field to try out for the World Champion P.B.S.W. Ramblers softball team.

Set against the backdrop of perhaps the most dramatic time in US history, comes the story of Diz and Frannie, two women fueled by an unquenchable passion for the game of softball and feelings for each other that go far beyond the bounds of friendship. Will their love for the game bring them closer together or tear them apart?

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.

Heart song

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.

Final Cut

ISBN: 978-1-936429-12-7

Nearly three decades ago, Katherine Kyle and Jamison Parker saved the life of the President of the United States, in the process exposing an exceedingly dangerous, powerful shadow organization. The entire episode came at great personal cost and forever changed the trajectory of the couple's lives.

Now at the peak of her career as one of the preeminent novelists of the day, Jay is finally ready to put the past to rest in a fictional treatment...until powerful government forces intervene.

Oscar-winning actress Dara Thomas and her new wife, screenwriter Rebecca Minton, may hold the key to disseminating the truth.

Two of the most visible, formidable power couples in the country stand against the might of a government hell-bent on keeping secrets.

From the hallowed halls of the White House to the glittering streets of Hollywood, this is one adventure for the books.

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...

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.

Specialty Books - Humor

Digging For Home, By Parker & Dixie Ames (discoverable under Lynn Ames because these canine kids are too young to cash a royalty check)

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.

All Lynn Ames books are available through www.lynnames.com, from your favorite local bookstore, or through other online venues.

You can purchase other Phoenix Rising Press books
online at www.lynnames.com or at your local bookstore.



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