

## Love Burns Bright: A Lifetime of Lesbian Romance

### Radclyffe

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*These stories of passion tell of couples who are a bit older and established in their relationships.*

*Love Burns Bright* brings together erotic stories of lovers who have managed to keep the sexual pulse in their long-term lesbian relationships. Part erotica, part love story, the nineteen stories range in age, ethnicity, and style, but return to the oft-challenged notion that sexual thrall can live well into the latter years of a relationship.

Editor Radclyffe is the author of more than forty books, the editor of numerous anthologies, and an eight-time finalist and three-time winner of the Lambda Literary Awards. Her pseudonym gives historical boost to her project—the original Radclyffe Hall fought obscenity laws in the United States to bring her lesbian classic, *The Well of Loneliness*, into print. It is particularly poignant, then, to see this anthology in print some eighty-six years later, attesting to the strength of lesbian love.

The book opens with “Forever Yours, Eileen,” a nearly sixty year friendship-cum-love-affair finally realized after two marriages, one for each woman. This sets the tone for the book, that love can endure and grow richer in spite of distance and difficulty. Rebekah Weatherspoon writes:

*I grab her and kiss her again. It's a final kiss. At least it is for a time. I know this is not our fairy tale ending, that we won't get to experience that life, but I kiss her so she knows without a doubt how I feel. When I'm hundreds of miles away it's her I'll be thinking about. I kiss her again so I can remember how kissing is supposed to feel in your toes, in your gut.*

In “My Sweetest Noelle,” a woman plans an extravagant Christmas engagement only to be foiled when her partner opts to return home to her parents. In “Cooling Down, Heating Up,” a couple heads to an air-conditioned hotel to beat the heat of summer and re-ignite their libidos. “Sepia Showers” brings together not only a couple, but a mother and daughter who suddenly better understand each other as a result of who they love. From an artist’s studio to a diner to a doctor’s office, these women find their passion in places as varied as the women themselves.

Most stories contain some passionate sexual interplay not appropriate for younger audiences. They may be very appropriate for couples looking to enliven their sexual lives with stories of couples who are more like them, perhaps a bit older and more established in their relationships. This should not indicate that these stories are not titillating, which is certainly a large part of the book.

The writing in the stories is proficient, with the focus falling on content generally rather than style. From first dates, to the opportunistic interludes, to the bawdy celebration of anniversary, these stories celebrate love, both emotional and physical, in long-term relationships.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (April 2, 2014)

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