

## Book Review: February 2006

by Patricia Pair (reviewer at Family & Friends)

### Justice & Honor Series

Radclyffe

Trade paper, Lesbian Romance

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

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I recently got the chance to do what most readers don't have the opportunity to do, that is I had the pleasure of reading two lesbian fiction series from beginning to end without having to wait for the next book to be released.

The two series to which I refer are the Justice and Honor series, both by acclaimed lesbian author Radclyffe. Each of the series contains five books, at least to date. They are listed in order on either side of this page from top to bottom, although *A Matter of Trust* isn't exactly the first book in the Justice series, but rather a prequel to the remaining four books. Although unavailable for purchase for a time, Bold Strokes Books, of which Radclyffe serves as president and publisher, has just released this month the second edition of *A Matter of Trust*. Unfortunately, it had not arrived by presstime so I was unable to read it for myself.

#### The Justice Series

At first it was a bit difficult to get into *Shield of Justice*, although I'm not entirely sure why, perhaps a bit too much exposition, but then again, I was meeting the cast of characters for the first time.

The series revolves around a number of main characters, although central to the story are special crimes unit investigator Detective Sergeant Rebecca Frye and psychiatrist Dr. Catherine Rawlings. These two become reluctant allies, then lovers, as both seek to uncover a murderer; the man responsible for a series of sexual assaults, and ultimately the persons behind a national Internet child pornography ring; the latter with the help of a specially-created, multilevel task force headed up by the Department of Justice's Avery Clark.

The remaining characters, who are introduced at varying intervals within the series of books, include computer super sleuth J.T. Sloan and her partner, Jason McBride; business executive Michael Lassiter; gentle practitioner of eastern medicine Sarah Martin; Philadelphia police officers Detective William Watts, Captain John Henry, and rookie Dellon Mitchell; prostitute Sandy Sullivan; surgeon Dr. Ali Torveau, and the crime scene investigation unit's head, Dee Flanagan, and senior technician, Maggie Collins.

To say there's a lot going on there is a gross understatement. But, to her credit, Radclyffe not only manages to do a great balancing act with her characters and how they relate to one another, she uses her well-honed craft to weave a story so realistic and complex that it can't help but reel the reader deeper and deeper into the pages.

I think one of the most surprising elements of the Justice series is the inclusion of the art of drag, and not just drag queens, but drag kings, too. You won't be able to put any one of these books down.

#### The Honor Series

Although a bit more simplistic in the number of major characters involved, the Honor series doesn't disappoint as Radclyffe again wields her extraordinary craft into a story both emotionally mesmerizing and ripped from the headlines.

As Radclyffe herself likes to say, she tends to begin a story with the question of "What if...?" and that's apparently just how the first book in this series, *Above All, Honor*, came about. What if a secret service agent were to fall in love with their charge? The answer to that question lies in the pages of the Honor series as Secret Service Agent Cameron Roberts is saddled with the responsibility of heading up the team in charge of protecting the first, and only, daughter of the United States, Blair Powell.

Cameron and Blair are complimenting opposites. Cam is as duty-bound and reserved as Blair is reckless and free, and both have a stubborn streak as wide as the Grand Canyon. In fact, more than once I found myself actually shouting at both of them as they allow their pride and pig-headedness to cloud their judgement and get in the way of what each of them wants more than anything, each other.

Their developing on-again, off-again love affair is set against the real-life backdrop of some of this decade's most riveting moments, among them the threat of national security and terrorism, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," as well as the attacks of 9/11. It's a testament to any writer who can create a character so real that the reader finds themselves falling in love with said character, but I won't tell you if it's Cam or Blair I fell for, and hard..

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