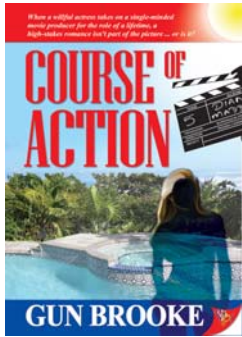


Book Review: July 2005

by Arlene Germain (reviewer at [MBR](#))



Course of Action

Gun Brooke

ISBN: 1-933110-22-8

Trade paper, 320 pp, \$15.95

June, 2005

Lesbian Romance

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

www.boldstrokesbooks.com

Midwest Book Review

278 Orchard Drive
Oregon, WI 53575-1129
Phone: 1-608-835-7937
E-mail: mwbookrev@aol.com

James A. Cox
Editor-in-Chief

Take one desperately determined middle-aged diva from Tinseltown and add one mysterious, megabucks publisher and philanthropist from Miami. Stir in personality clashes, ethical conflicts, and a slowly simmering discovery of desire and romantic awakening. What results is Gun Brooke's refreshing novel, *Course of Action*. Carolyn Black wants the role of a lifetime, transforming the popular lesbian criminal investigator Diana Maddox from the pages of the popular novel series to the big screen. Annelie Peterson owns the film rights and wants to interview and audition several actresses for the role. However, at the same time, Annelie possesses a secret or two when it comes to Carolyn Black, secrets better left undisclosed for the moment. These two likable career women have indeed found a worthy and challenging adversary in each other. Carolyn and Annelie are vibrant and charismatic women, but they are far from the carefully crafted public persona each willingly reveals to the world. Corporate machinations, Hollywood hype, family crises, and intriguing secondary characters all intersect to create varied conflicts, some of which appear to have no easy resolutions. Yet, beneath all the clever maneuverings and seemingly shady shenanigans, a relationship is being forged, but whether or not it is genuine, Carolyn and Annelie must discover for themselves.

Brooke has created an appealing set of circumstances. Finding the right actress to play the role of Diana Maddox so as not to disappoint the many fans of the fictional detective is the main premise of the book. The disparate characters each have a stake in seeing this project come to fruition. It is the discord that arises from this quest that provides the reader with a fast-paced reading experience. The plot flows naturally and uncluttered from one scene to the next. The various sub-plots are written in a contained yet expansive manner. The author has an easy comfortable writing style, and chapters are often marked by several scene breaks within the chapter. This device succeeds in rapidly driving the plotline; the reader's interest is piqued with every new scene.

A well-written novel has a strong and memorable opening, and *Course of Action* delivers. "That role is mine! I am Diana Maddox" (page 11)! With the exclamation of those eight simple words, the reader meets the whirlwind, Carolyn Black. Part of the pleasure in this book is determining if she indeed is the larger-than-life diva she purports to be. From the very outset the reader wonders if the reticent Annelie is also what she seems to be. Therein lays the basic contention for the reader to resolve along with these two women. The foreshadowing presented here is fairly elementary, but at the same time, it is intriguing for the reader to see if her expectations occur.

The setting created by Brooke is a glimpse into that fantasy world of celebrity and high rollers, escapist to be sure, but witnessing the relationship develop between Carolyn and Annelie is well worth the trip. As the reader progresses, the trappings become secondary to the characters' desire to reach goals both professional and personal.

Some may find the title a bit misleading, although there is a reference to it, "I guess we'll have to agree on a course of action before...." (p. 291). However, it certainly doesn't detract from the overall effect. This reader would have preferred a few loose ends be more tightly wrapped up, but, then again, that is the usual basis for a sequel, and Brooke has created a workable segue should she decide to continue. *Course of Action* is a commendable effort in the romance genre. The novel is populated with a host of captivating and amiable characters. The glimpses into the lifestyles of the rich and beautiful people are rather like guilty pleasures. The overall result makes for a most satisfying and entertaining reading experience.

Reprinted with permission.



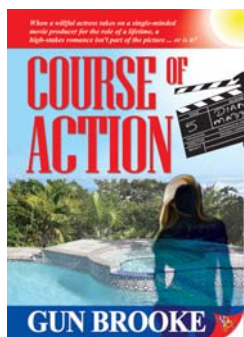
Order from these Distributors:

CDS.....800 343-4499 Baker & Taylor.....800 775-1100
Ingram.....800 937-8000 Bookazine....800 548-3855

Direct from BellaDistribution
800 533-1973

Book Review: September 2005

by Kathi Isserman (reviewer at [IGW](#))



Course of Action

Gun Brooke

ISBN: 1-933110-22-8

Trade paper, 320 pp, \$15.95

June, 2005

Lesbian Romance

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

www.boldstrokesbooks.com

Independent Gay Writer

Ronald L. Donaghue

Editor-in-Chief

Gun Brooke's international debut of the romance *Course of Action* is a winner. I could not put this book down once I began reading the first page. It is tension-filled and fast paced with easy to follow dialog. It is a wonderful romance from a first time published author.

Annelie Peterson owns Key Line Publishing and decides to produce a trio of movies of the best selling Diana Maddox books. The character of Diana Maddox is a lesbian criminal investigator. Diva actress Carolyn Black is the very popular voice in the audio version, but she is not the front runner for the starring role. At forty-five, the marketing experts want a more bankable younger star. So the Diva pursues this role and Annelie as well, with dogged determination. She even states to her agent that she will do just about anything to secure this role. In the course of this pursuit Carolyn, who is straight, becomes attracted to Annelie. But is it all for show just to land this prime role or is it for real?

Brooke develops her characters through great dialogue that is to the point and flows smoothly which makes for fast reading. She doesn't get bogged down in details that do not advance the plot. The author creates tension not only with words, but with descriptions of subtle inadvertent touching and physical closeness. Brooke illustrates the struggle and complexities of not only a gay-straight relationship, but one that crosses professional boundaries as well. Both Annelie and Carolyn begin to go down one path only to find as they get to know one another, the path changes. Annelie and Carolyn have to make personal and professional choices, and the author demonstrates that the choices each makes may not be what are best for their budding relationship. As the story progresses, Carolyn's single-mindedness to get the role of a lifetime and Annelie's stubborn refusal to give her the part because it may jeopardize her company, slowly melts away as the characters are fleshed out even more. Brooke's words capture the intensity of their growing relationship. Her prose throughout the book is breathtaking and heart-stopping. The following quotes illustrate this.

"She lifted from the box a white gold bracelet, a simple chain with three charms attached to it—a heart, a cross, and an anchor..." (pg 186)

"The sound of Carolyn's throaty voice was reassuring. It wrapped around Annelie's heart like armor, and for a moment, she instinctively knew as long as Carolyn was there to love her, nothing could really pierce it." (pg 209)

Where have you been hiding, Gun Brooke? I, for one, would like to see more romances from this author.

Reprinted with permission.



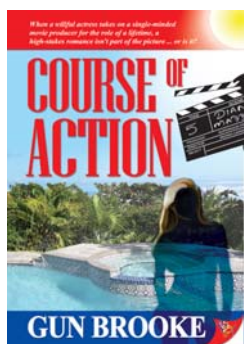
Order from these Distributors:

CDS.....800 343-4499 Baker & Taylor.....800 775-1100
Ingram.....800 937-8000 Bookazine....800 548-3855

Direct from BellaDistribution
800 533-1973

Book Review: September 2005

by Patricia Pair (reviewer at Family & Friends Magazine)



Course of Action

Gun Brooke

ISBN: 1-933110-22-8

Trade paper, 320 pp, \$15.95

June, 2005

Lesbian Fiction/Romance

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

www.boldstrokesbooks.com

Family & Friends
Magazine

Email: familymag@aol.com

Patricia Pair
Editor-in-Chief
& Publisher

When we first picked up this book we glanced at the author's profile and upon finding that Gun Brooke lives in Sweden wondered how on earth she could write a believable story centered around something as American as Hollywood. But, she did it, and did it big.

Published by bold Strokes Books, *Course of Action's* 310 pages takes the reader into the depths of a high-stakes romance between two women, Carolyn Black and Annelie Peterson, who should have had everything, but were lacking the only thing with meaning, love. Carolyn is an actress driven by her ambition and Annelie is a wealthy publisher. How far will Carolyn go to get the part of a lifetime? As you read to find out, you'll also discover you can't put this book down.

Brooke's ability to weave a story through her characters has us anxiously waiting for her next effort, *Supreme Constellations: The Protector of the Realm*, due out in December 2005.

Reprinted with permission.



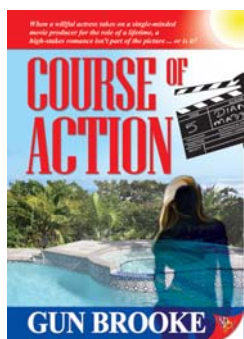
Order from these Distributors:

CDS.....800 343-4499 Baker & Taylor.....800 775-1100
Ingram.....800 937-8000 Bookazine....800 548-3855

Direct from BellaDistribution
800 533-1973

Book Review: March 2006

by Cheri Rosenberg (reviewer at [JAW](#) and [MBR](#) and [L-Word Literature](#))



Course of Action

Gun Brooke

ISBN: 1-933110-22-8

Trade paper, 320 pp, \$15.95

June, 2005

Lesbian Romance

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

www.boldstrokesbooks.com

Just About Write

Web site:

www.justaboutwrite.com

Nann Dunne
Editor-in-Chief
& Publisher

Award winning, talented, but over thirty, Carolyn Black will go to any lengths to land the role of a lifetime: portraying Diana Maddox, a lesbian criminal investigator. One woman, Annelie Peterson, appears to be keeping her from getting the part she feels is rightfully hers. Peterson, the owner of Key Line Publishing, is also the producer of the Maddox movie, *Dying for Fame*.

When sparks fly, Annelie can't help but wonder how far Carolyn is willing to go to get the part. Annelie values honesty, integrity, and loyalty, and her feelings for Carolyn are clouded by rumors that Carolyn is a ruthless, calculating opportunist. And straight. Annelie, while out to her friends, is cautious, and doesn't make a habit of falling for straight women.

Gun Brooke's debut novel, *Course of Action*, brings this unlikely pair together in a somewhat unusual setting, thought to be all glamour and glitz, where ambition and greed reign.

Brooke gets to the core of her characters' emotions and vulnerabilities and points out their strengths and weaknesses in very human terms. Carolyn, the Diva, is a far cry from Carolyn, the woman. A consummate actress, Carolyn is adept at concealing her true feelings as she retreats behind her persona at a moment's notice. The commitment that drives her ambition leads the reader to perceive her tough exterior as impenetrable, and it's hard to imagine her letting intimacy in. At the same time, the reader longs for her to take the risk. Living vicariously through Carolyn is easy; her elation is apparent when she impresses her audience, and the reader can't help but feel the excitement right along with her.

Annelie is equally tough on the outside and a softie on the inside. Despite intense desire, Annelie wants to run and hide from Carolyn. With both women, especially Annelie, trying hard to protect their hearts, the development of any relationship seems out of the question. Wondering how events will affect them, and whether their love will be strong enough to overcome their differences, keeps the reader engrossed.

Gun Brooke's debut novel has met the standards that define a good romance with flying colors. Brooke is proficient at tapping into every nuance and emotion, making it easy for the reader to be enamored with the characters while getting wrapped up in the action. With romance, hot sex, characters you care about, and important areas still to be explored, *Course of Action* demands a sequel. Don't miss what I hope will be the first of many Carolyn Black and Annelie Peterson stories.

Course of Action is a finalist for the Golden Crown Literary Society 2006 Goldie Awards for Debut Author. In addition, Brooke's second book, *Protector of the Realm*, is a finalist in the Sci-fi/Fantasy/Speculative/Horror category. This new author has a bright future ahead of her.

Reprinted with permission.



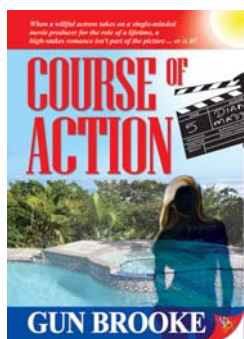
Order from these Distributors:

CDS.....800 343-4499 Baker & Taylor.....800 775-1100
Ingram.....800 937-8000 Bookazine....800 548-3855

Direct from BellaDistribution
800 533-1973

Book Review: June 2006

by Anna Furtado (reviewer at [JAW](#))



Course of Action

Gun Brooke

ISBN: 1-933110-22-8

Trade paper, 320 pp, \$15.95

June, 2005

Lesbian Romance

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

www.boldstrokesbooks.com

Just About Write

Web site:

www.justaboutwrite.com

Nann Dunne
Editor-in-Chief
& Publisher

Gun Brooke's *Course of Action* is not exactly the tale this reviewer expected from the title, but it is a story of deep caring and a wonderful romance.

Carolyn Black wants to be Diana Maddox, a lesbian character in a novel, whose portrayal in audio books has won the heterosexual Carolyn national acclaim and a huge following. Annelie Peterson, philanthropist, publisher, producer, lawyer and lottery winner is about to turn the first Diana Maddox novel into a movie and Carolyn wants the part.

At first, Carolyn and Annelie are at loggerheads about who should star in the role. Annelie, seeming to cave in under pressure from marketing people who think a young, lightweight actress should play the 40-something, poised lesbian main character, spurs Carolyn to extraordinary measures to prove that she is perfect for the role.

Carolyn has always had a reputation for going after what she wants, but she harbors secrets and insecurities that she never allows the public to see. Sometimes she even denies them herself, driving herself to ill-health and collapse. Annelie is an equally determined woman, who harbors her own hidden past and has a passion for her charities, as well as for the books she publishes, and now, the first movie she will produce. Yet no matter how much the women engage in a battle of wits, they find that they cannot resist attraction to one another.

Finally surrendering to their feelings, they still have to battle demons and external difficulties, like the precarious situation that Carolyn's sister is in and the appearance of Annelie's estranged and long-absent father.

Course of Action by Gun Brooke was a 2005 Lammy Debut Fiction Finalist and a 2006 GCLS "Goldie" Debut Author Finalist. These nominations point to an author whose tales are well worth adding to any lesbian reader's bookshelf.

-Anna Furtado, author of *The Heart's Desire*

Reprinted with permission.



Order from these Distributors:

CDS.....800 343-4499 Baker & Taylor.....800 775-1100
Ingram.....800 937-8000 Bookazine....800 548-3855

Direct from BellaDistribution
800 533-1973