

## ***Two Wars and a Wedding* by Lauren Willig**

Lauren Willig is a prolific author of historical fiction, with over 20 published books including *Band of Sisters*, *The Lost Summer of Newport*, and *All the Ways We Say Goodbye*.

The story of Betsy Hayes is based off of the real lives of two different women that Willig drafts into one story, covering the years of September, 1896 through September, 1898. Betsy is a graduate of Smith College, and decides to travel to Athens, Greece. As an archaeologist Betsy Hayes wants to be included in ancient excavations in Greece, but the field has little space for women in 1890s. When conflict breaks out between Greece and Turkey and soon turns into war, a local recruitment drive pushes for nurses to be trained and ready. Betsy decides to join. After failing an admission exam, she pushes forward on her own and finds herself quickly overwhelmed by horrific conditions of war and sparse medical care.

While in Greece Betsy allows herself to be drawn into a relationship with Charles Baron de Robecourt. Even knowing a relationship with the married baron will only produce heartache, Betsy finds the Baron accepting of her archeologist passions, while perhaps not as excited about her desire to serve as a nurse. Ava, Betsy's close friend from Smith College, is also not excited about Betsy's decision to join the medical team. The decision divides the two. Betsy continues to write to her friend, defending her decision. Letters from Betsy continue to fill in some of the details of her experience, and her plea to Ava to reconcile their friendship.

In June 1898, the Spanish- American War is beginning. When Betsy hears from Ava the message is that Ava is heading to Cuba as part of a medical team headed by Clara Barton. Betsy is determined to stop her, or at least to be there with Ava as she knows the horror that lies ahead. By the time Betsy arrives in Cuba will she be too late? Will she be able to handle the reminders of what she has just escaped?