

JACKIE COLLINS

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF DEADLY EMBRACE

*Hollywood
Wives
The New Generation*

JACKIE COLLINS

*Three Wives
The New Generation*



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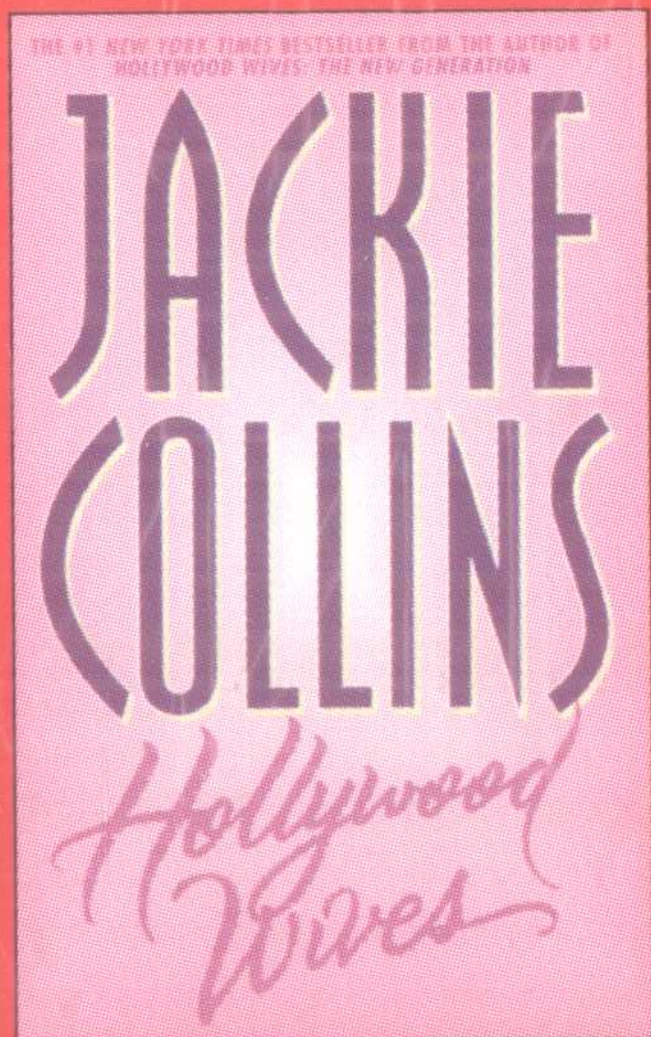
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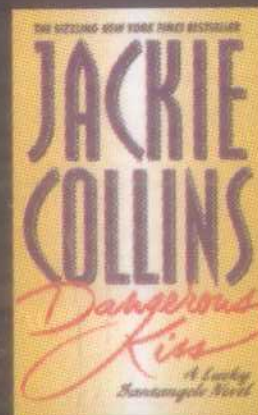
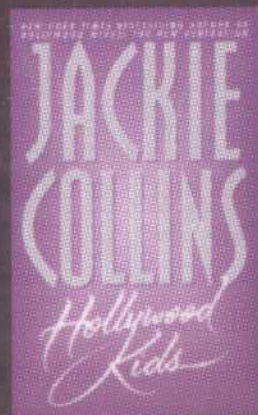
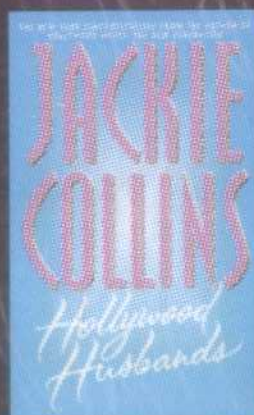
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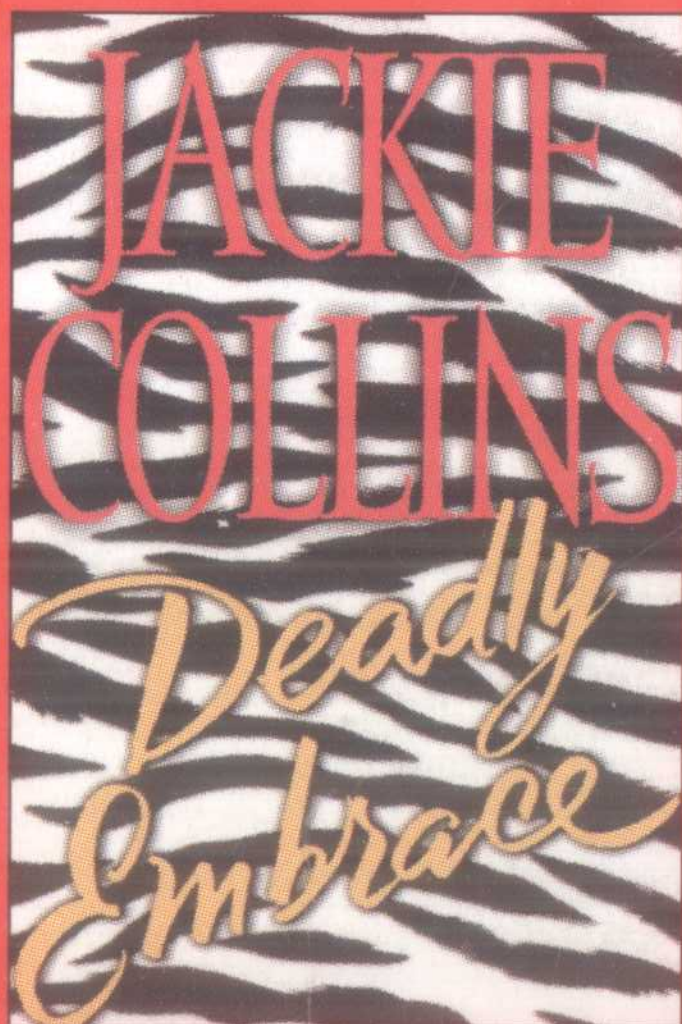
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JACKIE COLLINS

is the author of twenty-one *New York Times* bestselling novels. From *Hollywood Wives* to *Rock Star*, from *Lady Boss* to *Lethal Seduction*, Jackie Collins has chronicled the lives of the rich and famous with “devastating accuracy” (*Los Angeles Times*).

She lives in Beverly Hills.

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Always . . .

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Prologue

ERIC VERNON walked into Sam's Place, a seedy topless bar in the valley, and immediately fixed his gaze on Arliss Shepherd.

Arliss was not a pretty sight as he leaned against the bar, nursing a half-full bottle of beer. Long-faced with pale, pockmarked skin, and lank, shoulder-length yellow hair, he was skinny as a starving coyote and just as skittish. Nervous habits surrounded him—he chewed on his straggly hair, picked his teeth, rarely changed his underwear, and smelled of stale onions.

In spite of his shortcomings, Arliss was not lacking in friends—a group of similar misfits hung out at Sam's Place, with Arliss leading the pack. Sam, an obese man famous for only having one ball, ran his bar like a friendly club for losers. Regulars included Davey "the Animal," Little Joe, and Big Mark Johansson. They were a motley crew, drawing solace from each other's company and the fact that there was strength in numbers. Together they could kick ass. Alone they were useless, nothing more than a bunch of loud-mouthed fail-

ures. Which, as far as Eric Vernon was concerned, was a good thing, because men with no self-esteem were far easier to manipulate than men with balls. He'd discovered that in prison when he was doing time for manslaughter.

Manslaughter my ass, Eric thought as he approached Arliss at the bar. I hit the scumbag with a two-by-four until he dropped dead in front of me. And not a moment too soon.

Eric Vernon was a nondescript man of medium height and slight build, with bland features and sandy brown hair cut short. He had the kind of face that blended in—the kind of face that nobody ever remembered.

Except that skanky bitch remembered me all right, he thought sourly. Oh, yes, she remembered me so well that I served six miserable years in prison because of her.

The first thing he'd done when he'd gotten out of the joint was taken care of her. Smashed her pointy face until it was no more than pulp. Then he'd burned her house down.

The best revenge is deadly. Eric had learned that at an early age.

Immediately after dealing with the tattling bitch, he'd adopted a new identity and moved to California, eventually settling in L.A., where he'd gotten a job with a computer company—using a skill he'd mastered in jail.

All this had taken place two years earlier, and no one had ever questioned who he was or where he came from. Which is exactly the way he'd planned it.

A person does not sit in jail for six stinking years without making plans. And Eric had an agenda, an agenda he was getting ready to pursue.

Chapter **O**ne

YOU LOOK *FANTASTIC!*”

“You think?”

“I *know*.”

Lissa Roman narrowed her eyes as she studied her reflection in the large, lightbulb-surrounded makeup mirror. She saw perfection and so she should, considering she worked like a long-haul truck driver to look as good as she did. And it wasn't easy. It took real dedication and nonstop action. Yoga, Pilates, starvation, ice-cold showers, Brazilian waxing, hair coloring, jogging, swimming, weight training, fasting, aerobics, spinning—you name it, Lissa did it. Everything except plastic surgery. She was too scared of the knife. Too petrified that the surgeon would make her look like somebody else—take away her identity, her personality. She had seen it happen to numerous people in Hollywood—women *and* men. Besides, she was only forty—*younger* than Madonna and Sharon Stone, for God's sake. And anyway, she didn't need it.

"You're *sure* I look as good as it gets?" she questioned, forcing Fabio, her faithful makeup and hair artist, to repeat his compliments.

"Divine. Beautiful. The works," Fabio assured her, tossing back his luxuriant mane of expensive hair extensions.

And he meant every word of it, because although Lissa Roman was not a classic beauty, she had that indiscernible something that made her a superstar. It was a combination of blatant sex appeal, fiery energy, and a body to die for. Not to mention blazing blue eyes, high cheekbones, and full, pouty lips. Fabio *loved* basking in her aura.

"All thanks to you and your magic fingers," Lissa murmured, smoothing her shoulder-length platinum hair.

"That's what Teddy told me last night," Fabio said with a self-satisfied smirk.

"Lucky you," Lissa said, rising from the makeup chair.

"No," Fabio said, wagging a beringed finger at her. "Lucky *Teddy*."

"You have some ego!" Lissa teased, heading for the door.

"Almost as big as yours," Fabio retorted crisply, following her out to the studio, where the photographer from *Maxim* magazine waited.

Lissa and Fabio had worked together for eight years and enjoyed an excellent relationship. Fabio actually *liked* Lissa Roman. For someone of her stature, she was not an egocentric bitch. She was warm and friendly and quite funny at times. Of course, she had appalling taste in men—but in Hollywood there was hardly a vast pool of eligible men to choose from. And as far as Fabio was concerned, all the good ones were gay—thank God!

Her second husband, Antonio—the man who'd fathered her only child—sounded the best of all. Not that Fabio had ever met him, but he'd seen photos, and Antonio was a magnificent specimen—all dark, sexy eyes, impressive physique, and broodingly handsome features. Fabio often wondered why she'd let that one slip away.

"Antonio had a wandering cock," was Lissa's only explanation.

Fabio didn't get why straight people were so uptight about sex. After all, sometimes a wandering cock could be a good thing.



NICCI STONE gazed unblinkingly at her kickboxing instructor's crotch. It was quite a package, and so was he. His name was Bjorn, and he was tall and blond in the Nordic style, with subtle muscles and sinewy, bronzed thighs. He was over six feet tall, with large Chiclet teeth and a gleaming smile.

I bet he gives great tongue, Nicci thought with a secretive smile. *He's Scandinavian. Scandinavian men rock.*

Not that she'd had that many. Sven, the Swedish facialist. Marl, the Danish rock 'n' roller. And Lusti, the Norwegian personal trainer. Actually, that was a lot. Enough to make her realize that European men were far more inventive in bed than their American counterparts.

She wondered how Bjorn, with his quite commendable package, would stack up. Maybe she should give him a try . . .

Not a stern voice in the back of her head commanded. You are currently engaged, and there will be no more screwing around.

Damn! Who came up with *that* rule?

Mommy, of course. Lissa Roman—mega movie star, singer, and legendary sex symbol—currently on her fourth husband.

Yeah. That's right. Four.

Nicci hoped it was Lissa's lucky number. The next wedding was *hers*, and she did not take kindly to competition, even though she had lived with it forever.

Growing up with Lissa Roman as your mother was no day trip to Disneyland. Whenever possible, Nicci had kept the identity of her famous mom a deep, dark secret. Although keeping it to herself never lasted long, because somebody always managed to find out—blowing her chance of a normal (*What's that anyway?*) relationship.

Nicci was, at nineteen, a spirited kind of beauty. Instead of her mother's platinum-blond sexiness, Nicci had inherited exotic Gypsy looks from Antonio Miguel Stone, her Spanish father—Lissa's husband number two—a drop-dead handsome philanderer with no money to speak of and a somewhat shaky pedigree. His mother, Nicci's grandma, was supposedly a third cousin to the King of Spain—although they'd never been invited to tea.

Nicci knew the story. Lissa had fallen for Antonio when he'd arrived in Hollywood to liaise with a gorgeous redhead. Five days after their first meeting, the redhead was history, and Lissa and Antonio were on their way to Vegas in a chartered plane, where after two days of gambling and incredible sex, they'd gotten married.

Nine months after that, Nicci was born.

One passion-filled year later, Lissa caught Antonio cheating with her so-called best friend and promptly divorced him. Shortly after that he'd returned to Europe to continue his career as an ace playboy and sometime