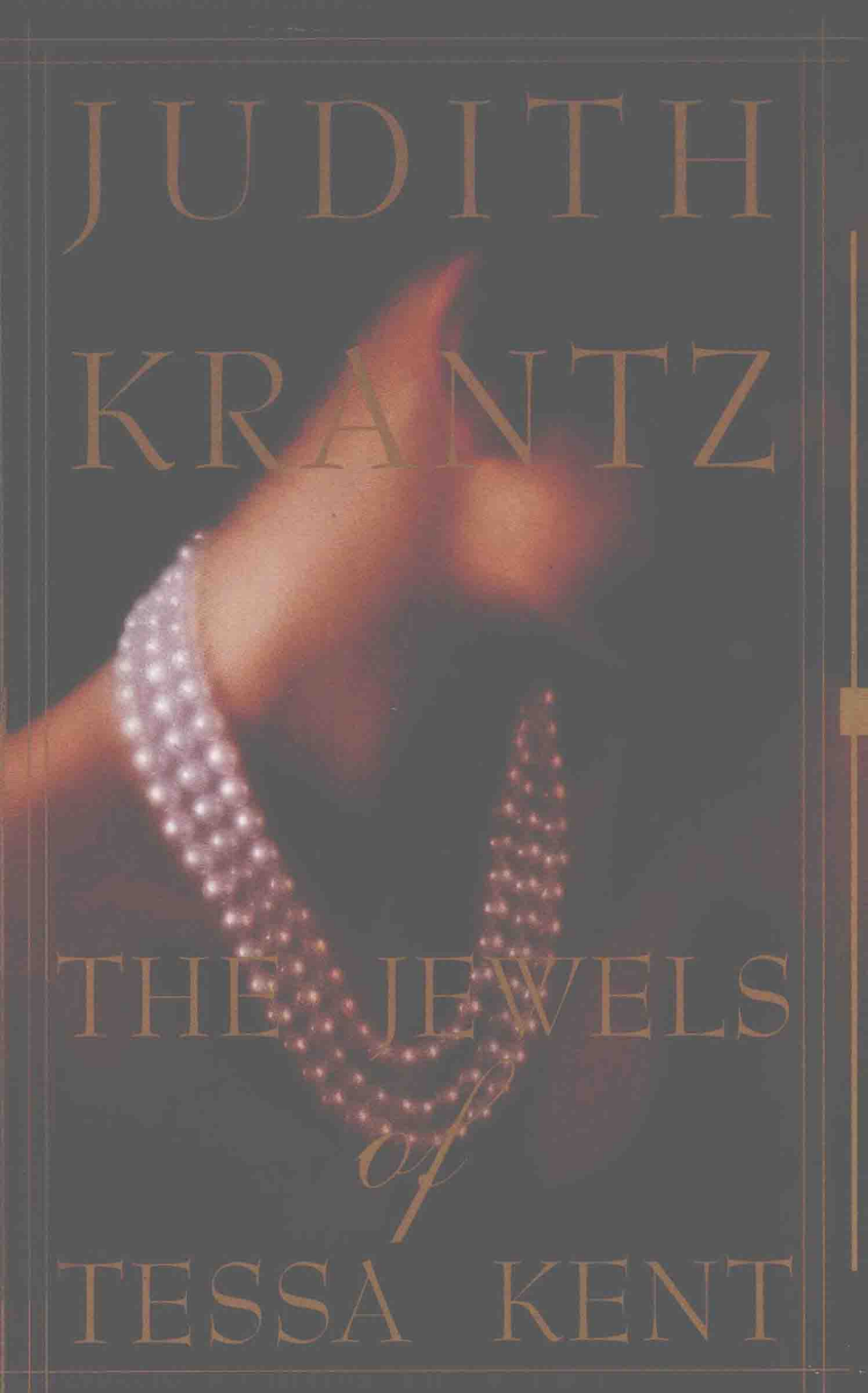


JUDITH
KRANTZ



THE JEWELS
of

TESSA KENT

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THE JEWELS
of
TESSA KENT

A Novel



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For Andrea Louise Van de Kamp, Chairman of Sotheby's
West Coast Operations, Senior Vice President of
Sotheby's, and Chairman and CEO of the
Music Center of Los Angeles County.

Even if Andrea hadn't suggested I write a novel based on
the auction business and given me an opportunity to do
my research at Sotheby's, I would have dedicated
this novel to her because she is the most vibrant, life-
enhancing and utterly solid friend one could have.
A multitude claim her and rejoice in her.

Great cities are defined by their great people,
and no one defines Los Angeles as well as Andrea.

Her vast and genuine enthusiasms,
her wonderfully inclusive laugh, her extraordinary
generosity and her immense charm are legend.
Only Andrea could work as effectively as she does
at her demanding jobs without ever losing her focus,
her sense of humor—or a battle.

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THE JEWELS OF TESSA KENT

Prologue



Quickly, Tessa Kent stepped out of the bank and crossed the strip of New York pavement. The door of her parked limo was held open by the driver. She slid inside, grateful that she'd left a coat on the seat when she'd entered the bank much earlier in the day. It had been a morning of indecisive weather, early fall weather, but now the afternoon sun had disappeared behind clouds that promised rain before nightfall on this mid-September day in 1993.

"Where to, Miss Kent?" Ralph, the driver, asked.

"Wait right here for a while, Ralph, there's something I want to see," she answered impulsively, surprising herself, and pulled the coat over her shoulders.

All through the endless afternoon at the bank, she'd kept going by promising herself that the instant she was able to leave, she'd return as quickly as possible to her apartment at the Carlyle, take a long, lavishly perfumed bath, put on her oldest, softest, most familiar peignoir, have a great fruitwood fire—the first of the year—lit in the generous fireplace of her bedroom, and stretch out on the pile of pillows flung down on the carpet. She intended to put the past three days firmly behind her, sipping a distinctly alcoholic drink and looking straight into the flames until she was so dazzled by them that her mind would unclench and a pleasant emptiness would take over.

Yet, as soon as she entered the limo, Tessa Kent abruptly understood that it was still too soon to escape into that peaceful moment. Something was missing, a sight that would put an absolute punctua-

tion to the process she had just completed, the witnessing of a three-day inventory of every last one of her jewels except the few she was wearing.

She needed to see her jewels actually leave the protection of the bank, Tessa realized. She needed to watch them being brought out onto the street and whisked away in three taxis and three ordinary cars by six couriers and a twelve-man armed security team that would carry tens of millions of dollars worth of jewels in the scruffy briefcases and sturdy shopping bags that had been selected to attract no attention.

If she didn't see that final scene of the drama, she'd still be able to imagine that her jewels slept in the darkness of their velvet cases, piled high in their vaults, ready for her to come and pick out those she would wear to an opening night at the theater or a black-tie party or dinner in a favorite restaurant. Something deep in Tessa's psyche demanded that she recognize, with her own eyes, the fact that her jewels no longer belonged to her, that now they were gone. Gone for good.

Since her marriage, eighteen years earlier, Tessa Kent, the most internationally adored of American movie stars, had never been seen in public unadorned by magnificent jewels. Even in a bikini she wore ropes of seashells inset with gems. Jewels, on Tessa Kent, were never out of place, no matter the year or the hour or the style of the moment. They had become part of her persona, in private as well as in public, a signature as utterly specific to her as the sound of her voice, the shape of her mouth, the color of her eyes.

Suddenly Tessa saw the first of the couriers, carrying three shopping bags, appear at the entrance to the bank. On either side of him, seemingly busy in conversation, were two of the armed guards, clad in banker's gray. One of the taxis that had been circling the block for hours pulled up beside Tessa's limo, paused briefly as the three men got in, and then continued up Madison Avenue.

She hadn't watched the process of transfer on any of the two previous days. She hadn't felt any need to view it until today, when the last box had been entered into the inventory and sealed. Now, as she watched more couriers and guards walk out of the busy bank and disappear into their carefully choreographed transportation, she felt such a complex mixture of feelings that she couldn't sort them out: loss, excitement, relief, anticipation, disbelief, and nostalgia, all jumbled together. Dominating every emotion was hope.

"You can take me back to the hotel, please, Ralph," Tessa told the driver as soon as she realized that all of the couriers had left the bank. Traffic was heavy and the limo had barely covered two blocks when a heavy rain began to fall.

"Oh, perfect!" Tessa exclaimed. "Stop wherever you can." As her driver knew, rain was her friend. With a big black umbrella skillfully deployed, she could roam the streets of New York without being recognized. This liberty was impossible in good weather; even wearing sunglasses and a scarf over her hair seemed, perversely, to attract the most attention of all from eager autograph seekers.

Today, after spending so many hours in an air-conditioned strong room, deep underground, Tessa yearned for a hard, private, cleansing walk more than for a bath or a drink.

Blessing the foul weather, she pulled a beret down until it reached her eyebrows, kicked off her shoes, and put on the boots that lay waiting in the back of the limo. She shrugged into the light raincoat, buttoned up the collar, and burrowed into it so that it hid her chin, and then picked up the umbrella that lay under her coat.

"Let me out at the corner, Ralph. I'll walk all the way back."

As soon as the limo came to a stop, Tessa hopped out, opened her umbrella, and strode rapidly across the street in the direction of Fifth Avenue. At any time of the year she loved walking up along Central Park, particularly now, as the lights of the city grew brighter against the darkening afternoon.

She found herself at Fifth Avenue and Forty-Seventh Street and she struck out uptown at a fast pace, breathing deeply and freely. It was wonderful to know that no one could possibly care about her in this humid confusion of burdened shoppers and people leaving their offices and seeking transportation home.

Enjoying herself in a way so frequently denied her, Tessa continued up Fifth Avenue past St. Patrick's Cathedral and was three good blocks beyond it when she abruptly stopped, and changed direction. At the age of thirty-eight, she hadn't been inside a church in years. She didn't want to calculate how many it had been, but today...something about today...drew her back to the great bulk of the cathedral, drew her up the steps to the doors of the cathedral, drew her inside. She closed her umbrella. Old habit took over as she dipped her fingertips in the font of holy water, crossed herself, and genuflected before slipping into one of the pews at the back.

She would just sit here for a few seconds and then flee, back out to the delicious freedom of the busy, dripping streets, Tessa thought. Sit and bask in the vast singing hum of busy silence that had a color and a texture and a scent uniquely its own, so that if she had been set down here blindfolded she would have known instantly where she was.

Without willing it, Tessa found herself on her knees, her head bent. She was praying, she who no longer believed in prayer, praying as ardently as when she'd been a girl, but praying without words, praying purely for the sake of prayer.

The hope she had felt earlier in the afternoon returned, stronger than ever, illuminating her heart. She was safe here, Tessa thought dreamily, and the tears she had held back for many, many days splashed comfortingly down the backs of her hands.



Agnes Patricia Riley Horvath, whose daughter, Teresa, would become Tessa Kent, lay in bed at three in the morning. She had been awakened, as usual, by obsessive, angry thoughts about her husband, Sandor, and the way in which he dominated the upbringing of their only child, who now, in August 1967, had reached the age of twelve.

Her parents had opposed her marriage to Sandor Horvath in 1954 and they had been right, Agnes told herself. She was humiliated to the marrow of her bones as she relived her folly, lying next to Sandor in those private hours during which she was unable to keep her mind under control.

If it weren't for Sandor's stern prohibitions, Agnes reflected furiously, Teresa would be well launched on her career, a career about which there wasn't the smallest question—a destiny Agnes knew to be as fixed as the rotation of the earth.

Her daughter had been born a star—yes, a star!—by virtue of her extraordinary beauty and the unmistakable dramatic talent she'd exhibited even as a small child. That wasn't a mere mother's pride talking, that was the opinion of everyone who'd ever seen her, Agnes told herself, trembling with frustration. Teresa should be making movies, or at the very least commercials—there was no limit to her future. But no, her husband, unable to move away from his rigid, old-fashioned, European ideas of what was correct and proper for a young girl, had steadily refused to let her take the girl to New York,

where she could meet the influential people who would recognize how exceptional her daughter was.

Night after night, Agnes Horvath asked herself what had possessed her, when she was a mere eighteen and far too stupid to make choices, to insist on marrying a man who was essentially foreign to the tight-knit, devout, Irish Catholic world in which she had her enviable place as the youngest of the five sparkling, black-haired, blue-eyed Riley daughters. Why had she set her heart on a refugee from Communist Hungary, a music professor of thirty-five?

Each time Agnes asked herself this question, she couldn't stop herself from treating it as if it were a newly discovered problem that might contain some newly meaningful answer. She'd recapitulate the past as seriously as if she might still uncover some forgotten fact that would suddenly change the present.

Sandor had been an amazingly handsome man, a charming and romantic stranger, who had swept the provincial fool she had been off her feet and out of what small, unsophisticated wits she had possessed. The distinguished man who spoke English with more elegance and precision than any American boy had been irresistible to her barely formed mind and impressionable heart. Savagely Agnes reminded herself that she'd also been suffering from a bad case of seeing *Gone with the Wind* too many times. Then, and still today, at forty-eight, Sandor strongly resembled Leslie Howard, but she'd been too immature to realize how quickly his fine-boned, intellectual, sensitive beauty would become infuriating when she weighed them against the rules and regulations he imposed on her.

Now she was thirty-one, her marriage was thirteen years old, and Agnes Horvath had known for at least half of it that she'd made the biggest mistake a deeply religious Catholic woman could make. No matter how great her rage against her husband, there could be no thought of divorce. But even if the mere idea of divorce had not been a sin, what training did she have to make a living for herself and Teresa if they were to find themselves on their own? Agnes Riley had been brought up to be a protected wife and a devoted mother, nothing more, and certainly nothing less, like every other woman of her generation.

Sandor earned a good salary as the head of the music department at an exclusive girls' school in Stamford, Connecticut, not far from their home on the modest edge of the rich community of

Greenwich, where they lived in order to be near their daughter's school. Teresa was a day student at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, an aristocratic institution which they were both intent on her attending.

In all fairness, Agnes reminded herself, turning over in bed, she had to admit that Sandor worked hard to make his way in his new country. Her sisters had married local boys in nearby Bridgeport, where she'd grown up, mates whose status never came close to that of a professor. Some of these good Irish-American boys made considerably more money than Sandor in their blue-collar jobs, but the whole family respected her elegant, learned husband.

Each of Agnes's sisters had produced a sprawling brood of kids, ordinary, unremarkable, almost indistinguishable kids. When she took Teresa to their frequent family gatherings there was no doubt about whose child, among the dozens of cousins, was the center of attention. Teresa's singularity was a subject of family pride rather than any sniping or competition. From the time she was a tiny baby she had so fine and rare a quality that a party would have been incomplete without Teresa to marvel at. Her own sisters, Agnes knew, were in awe of the child she'd brought into their limited world. Her cousins vied for her attention, the older ones whisking her away so they could play with her as if she were some very precious kind of doll.

Teresa was the only one of the cousins who didn't attend a local parochial school. At the Convent, one of the many Sacred Heart schools in the world, she was a "Day Hop," not a boarding student. Many daughters of millionaires were her classmates, a distinction that only added to Teresa's exalted position in the Riley family.

"Your family will ruin her utterly with all that attention," Sandor had grumbled angrily after the last Riley get-together. "Teresa's becoming spoiled. She used to be such a satisfactory child, docile and obedient, but lately, I warn you, Agnes, I sense that there's something going on inside her that I worry about...some sort of rebellion under the surface, something I can't put my finger on. And I most definitely don't approve of that 'best friend' of hers, that Mimi Peterson. She's not a child I want Teresa associating with, she's not even a Catholic, heaven knows what ideas she's putting—"

"You're imagining things," Agnes had snapped. "Every little girl has a best friend, and the Petersons are lovely, suitable people. They may be Protestants but they have the good sense to realize that the

quality of education at Sacred Heart is better than that at an ordinary school. And they truly appreciate Teresa, which is more than her own father seems to do."

"How can you say something so unfair?" he demanded, stung. "I love her too much for my own good, but, Agnes, the world's a difficult place and Teresa's not a princess, whatever you may think. She doesn't need any more fuss made about her than she already gets from you. The way you dote on her is shameless...it comes close to the sin of pride, if you ask me."

"Sandor!"

"Pride, Agnes, is too high an opinion of oneself."

"Do you imagine I don't know that?" she asked, outraged. She loathed his tone when he started to talk church doctrine, as sanctimonious, stuffy and hair splitting as if he'd lived hundreds of years ago.

"Too high an opinion of one's offspring, can, like pride, lead to the sin of presumption."

"When I need a priest's interpretation of sin, Sandor, I know where to go for it. How dare you preach to me?"

"Agnes, but you realize that in less than a year Teresa will be a teenager? I've seen your sisters go through enough trouble with their own teenaged children, why should we be different? If only..."

"If only we'd had more children? Don't you dare, Sandor! I wanted them as much as you did. Are you saying it was my fault that I had those miscarriages...?"

"Agnes, you can't possibly be starting this nonsense again, please, I beg you. I was going to say that if only it were ten years ago life would be simpler, if only there were *standards*...if only people stayed the same! In my country teenagers behaved like the school children they are. Please stop talking about fault. The Blessed Virgin didn't mean it to be, and we must accept that."

But he did blame her, Agnes Horvath brooded angrily, he blamed her in his heart of hearts, but never as much as she blamed herself, no matter how ridiculous and futile and morally wrong she knew it was to use the word "blame" about a situation that was in the hands of God alone.

But at least she had Teresa, and wasn't one Teresa worth a houseful of ordinary children?

She wished her parents wouldn't fight about her, Teresa thought in misery as she tried to go to sleep. She couldn't hear them from her room, but she knew from their expressions while they'd listened to her say her bedtime prayers that another of their quarrels was hatching.

Long ago she'd stopped listening outside their door; their basic differences never changed, and yet nothing she did seemed to make it better for either of them. *For years she'd tried so hard to please.* There were her mother, her father, the nuns who taught her catechism class on Saturday, the priests who listened to her confession each Thursday, her teachers, the many Madams of the Sacred Heart, even every last one of her relatives. For a long time she had believed she could change her mother's disappointment, make her father less severe. But nothing worked. Her mother was utterly concentrated on her; her father was suspicious and disapproving, he corrected her pronunciation, refused to let her use slang. Other kids said she sounded "stuck up."

If her parents knew everything there was to know about her! They'd die if they knew, *die*, Teresa told herself, caught up in a combination of defiance, shame, guilt, and—worst of all—the dreadful fear that she had lived with for the past year, ever since she'd realized that she wasn't going to get anywhere by pleasing.

It was their own fault! As Mimi said, the atmosphere around Teresa's house was enough to make a cat fart. To Teresa her home life was maddeningly irritable, so tense that it made her want to scream and break every dish in the house and rip up her frilly bedspread and take a sharp kitchen knife to the pile of pretty pillows on her bed so all the feathers would fly out and cover the floor with a mess that couldn't be cleaned up.

There was never a time in which she could take a deep breath, feel a sense of contentment, and, most important of all, *feel safe*. Oh how she yearned for a safe day, a safe hour, even a safe minute, in which all pressure would dissipate and be replaced by easy, loving, unqualified approval.

Just yesterday she'd caught a glimpse of her mother sitting in a back row of the darkened school auditorium, while the rehearsals for the school play went on, sitting so far scrunched down that nobody but she would have noticed her.

"Mother," she exclaimed furiously, as soon as she got home from her last class, "you know you promised me never to do that again!"

"Teresa, Mother O'Toole said it was all right with her so long as I stayed out of sight. No one saw me, absolutely no one," Agnes defended herself vigorously.

"Except me. How do you expect me to concentrate when I know you're there, watching my every move? *You've been doing that all my life!* Ever since the first part I had in a kindergarten pageant. I hate it! It makes everything so much more difficult. I've explained that to you again and again, but you won't leave me alone!"

"I see nothing to apologize for," Agnes responded coolly. "It's excellent training for you to have to ignore me. When you start acting for a living, you'll be the center of everyone's attention, not just mine. No one acts without an audience, and at least, in my case, you know I'm biased in your direction."

Helplessly Teresa had watched her mother head toward the kitchen, with the self-righteous conviction of someone who hasn't the slightest doubt that she always acts in your own best interests.

If it weren't for Mimi she didn't know what she'd do, Teresa thought. She didn't know how she'd manage to keep on pretending to be the good little girl her father expected her to be as well as enduring the burden of being her mother's "pride and joy."

But at least she could escape the atmosphere of her home, when she went over to Mimi's to do their homework together—to Mimi's big, luxurious house that impressed her mother although she'd never admit it. She and Mimi, another only child, were sworn blood sisters, and Mrs. Peterson, lively, easygoing, and expensively dressed with blond streaks in her hair, was too busy playing bridge or golf every afternoon to give a thought about what the two little convent girls were up to.

"Teresa, sweetie, you're a good influence on Mimi," she'd say if she came in before Teresa had left for home. "She never got her homework done before you started studying together."

But Mrs. Peterson had no idea how easy the homework was when Teresa and Mimi put their heads together and attacked it. Both bright, they could polish it all off in an hour with a system of tutoring each other that divided the work in half.

And then, homework done, at least twice a week they'd "engage in an adult experience," as Mimi called it. The Petersons' bar was crammed with bottles of everything any liquor store could supply.

Teresa and Mimi, sharing Mimi's bathroom glass, would pour