



HOLLYWOOD HUSBANDS

By Jackie Collins

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Brings together in one volume two of Jackie Collins best-known novels. In "Hollywood Husbands", Solomon, Jack, Mannon and Wes seem to have everything Tinsel Town can offer. "Rock Star" charts the rise to fame of three of the biggest recording artists in the world.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

As in *Hollywood Wives*, Collins (Lucky colorfully depicts the brash hedonists of Tinseltown, most of whom are motivated by avarice, lust and conceit. The central trio in this lengthy saga consists of movie star Mannon Cable, studio executive Howard Soloman and TV talk-show host Jack Python. Although Mannon has married compliant young Melanie-Shanna, he vows to win back his ex-wife, Whitney. Cocaine addict Howard pursues Whitney though he is wed to a gossipy society gadabout. Jack courts an illustrious actress, but he becomes infatuated with Jade Johnson, a willowy, self-possessed model. Jack's sister, imperious soap-opera star Silver Anderson, doesn't know that her lover is desperately trying to extricate himself from a potentially lethal business deal. While these escapades unfold, we must guess which female was a sexually abused arsonist in the 1970s. Collins's devotees will probably relish the snappy dialogue, whirlwind pacing, irreverent humor and opulent locales that are her trademarks. Others will find, however, that this book's clichéd characters and repetitive plot soon grow tiresome. Major ad/promo; paperback rights to Pocket Books; author tour.

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About the Author

There have been many imitators, but only Jackie Collins can tell you what really goes on in the fastest lane of all. From Beverly Hills bedrooms to a raunchy prowling along the streets of Hollywood; from glittering rock parties and concerts to stretch limos and the mansions of the power brokers—Jackie Collins chronicles the real truth from the inside looking out.

Jackie Collins has been called a “raunchy moralist” by the late director Louis Malle and “Hollywood’s own Marcel Proust” by *Vanity Fair* magazine. With over 400 million copies of her books sold in more than forty countries, and with some twenty-seven *New York Times* bestsellers to her credit, Jackie Collins is one of the world’s top-selling novelists. She is known for giving her readers an unrivalled insider’s knowledge of Hollywood and the glamorous lives and loves of the rich, famous, and infamous! “I write about real people in disguise,” she says. “If anything, my characters are toned down—the truth is much more bizarre.”

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Chapter One:

Jack Python walked through the lobby of the Beverly Hills Hotel with every eye upon him. He had money, charisma, a certain kind of power, razor-sharp wit, and fame. It all showed.

He was six feet tall with virile good looks. Thick black hair worn just a tad too long, penetrating green eyes, a two-day stubble on a deep suntan, and a hard body. He was thirty-nine years old and he had the world by the balls.

Jack Python was one of the most famous talk show hosts in America.

"Hello, Jack," cooed a voluptuous woman sprayed into a tennis minidress.

He smiled his killer smile -- he had great teeth. Looked her over

appreciatively, knowing eyes sweeping every curve. Standard greeting, "How's it going?"

She would have been happy to tell him, but he didn't break stride, just kept walking toward the Polo Lounge.

Several more people greeted him along the way. Two tourists paused to stare, and a very thin girl in a red tank top waved. Jack did not stop until he reached his destination. Table number one, a cozy leather booth directly facing the entrance of the Polo lounge.

A man was already seated there -- a man with a slightly manic look, clad in white sweats, black Porsche shades, and a Dodgers baseball cap. Jack slid in beside him. "Hiya, Howard," he said.

"Hiya, Jack," Howard Soloman replied with a wink. There was something about the perpetual motion of his features that gave him a crazed look. He was always mugging, crossing his eyes, sucking in his cheeks. In repose he was quite nice looking -- the face of a Jewish doctor who had strayed into the wrong business. However, his constant mugging gave the impression he didn't want anyone to find out. "What was the action last night?" he asked, restlessly rimming the top of his glass with a nervous index finger.

"You've been to one screening at the Goosebergers' house, you've been to 'em all," Jack replied easily.

"Good movie?"

"Lousy movie."

"I coulda told you that," Howard said smugly.

"Why didn't you, then?"

Howard took a gulp of hot coffee. "Adventure is finding out for yourself."

Jack laughed. "According to you no movie is any good unless it comes from your studio."

Howard licked his lips and rolled his eyes. "You'd better believe it."

"So invite me to one of your screenings."

"I always invite you," Howard replied indignantly. "Is it *my* fault you never show? Poppy's insulted."

"That's because Clarissa has very particular taste," Jack explained patiently. "Unless it's a film she's been offered and turned down, or unless she's actually *in* it, she has no desire to see it."

"Actresses!" Howard spat.

"Tell me about 'em," agreed Jack, ordering Perrier and two eggs over easy.

Saturday morning breakfast at the Polo lounge had once been a ritual for Jack and Howard and Mannon Cable, the movie star, who had yet to appear. Now they were all too busy, and it was a rare occasion when they were able to sit down to breakfast together.

Howard headed Orpheus Studios, a recent appointment and one he relished. Heading a studio had always been his big ambition, and now he was there, king of the whole fucking heap -- while it lasted. For Howard, like everyone else in Hollywood, realized that being a studio head was an extremely precarious occupation, and the position of great and mighty power could be snatched away at any given moment by faceless corporate executives who ran the film industry like a bank. Being a studio head was the treacherous no-man's-land between high-powered agent and independent producer. The saving speech of every deposed studio head was: "I need more creativity. My talent is stifled here. Too much to do and too little time. We're parting amicably. I'm going into indie prod." In the industry, indie prod (independent production, to the uninitiated) equals out on your ass. Canned. Can't cut it. Tough shit. Don't call us we'll call you. And so... most indie prods faded into oblivion after one failed movie.

Howard Solomon knew this only too well, and it scared him. He had struggled too long and too hard to allow it to happen to him. The one consolation he could think of was at least when you failed in Hollywood you failed up. Out at one studio -- in at another. The old pals act reigned supreme. Also, he was lucky. Zachery K. Klinger, the multipowerful magnate, owned Orpheus. And Zachary personally had hired him.

Tapping the tabletop with bitten-to-the-quick nails, he said, "Since Clarissa wasn't in the goddamn movie, I guess it was one she vetoed. Right?"

"Her decision made her very happy last night," Jack replied gravely.

"*Terms of Endearment* it wasn't." He extracted a pair of heavy horn-rim glasses from his top pocket and put them on. He didn't need them to see, but as far as he was concerned they took the curse off his good looks. So did the two-day growth of stubble he carefully cultivated.

Jack did not realize the glasses and the incipient beard made him all the more attractive to women. Ah... women... the story of his life. Who would have thought in seventh grade that shy and studious Jack Python would have developed into one of the great lovers of the century? He couldn't help the effect he had on women. One penetrating glance and they were his. No rock star had a better track record.

Not that Jack went out chasing. It had never been necessary. From the onset of puberty and his first conquest at fifteen, women had fallen across his path

with monotonous regularity. Most of his life he had indulged shamelessly. One, two, three a week. Who counted? A brief marriage at twenty-five barely stopped him in his tracks. Only luck and a certain sixth sense had prevented him from catching various sexual diseases. Of course now, in the eighties, it was only prudent to be more careful. Plus he felt a more serious image was in order, and for a year he had been desperately trying to live down his loverboy reputation. Hence his relationship with Clarissa Browning. Clarissa was a serious actress with a capital S. She had won an Oscar and been nominated twice. No bimchette movie star she.

"I'd like to get Clarissa to do a film for Orpheus," Howard said, chewing on a roll.

"Have you anything in mind?"

"Whatever she wants. She's the star." Reaching for the butter, he added, "Why don't you tell her to call me direct. if I operate through her schmuck agent, nothing'll get done." He nodded, pleased with his own idea. "Clarissa can whisper in my ear what she wants to do, and then I'll do the dance of a thousand agents."

"Why don't *you* phone *her*?" Jack suggested.

Howard hadn't thought of anything as simple as that "Would she mind?"

"I don't think for her. Give it a shot."

"That's not a bad idea...." His attention wandered. "Christ!" he exclaimed "Will ya *Look* at that ass!"

Jack cast an appraising glance at a very impressive rear end clad in tight white pants exiting the Polo Lounge. Recognizing the sway, he smiled to himself -- Chica Hernandez -- Queen of the Mexican soaps. He would know that sway anywhere, although he didn't let on to Howard. Kiss and tell had never been his style. Let the tabloids guess their smutty little hearts out. Jack never boasted about his many conquests, even though it drove Howard and the other guys crazy. They wanted names and details, and all they got was a smile and a discreet silence.

Since his year-long affair with Clarissa there wasn't much to tell. A couple of production assistants, an enthusiastic bit-part actress, a Eurasian model. All one-night stands. As far as he was concerned he had been scrupulously faithful. Well, with a woman like Clarissa Browning in your life, you couldn't be too careful. Their romance was headlines; he had to watch his every move.

Jack Python was smart, charming, a concerned citizen interested in maybe pursuing a political career one day. (Hey -- remember Reagan?) And although he understood women very well -- or thought he did -- he still believed (subliminally, of course) in the old double standard. It was okay for him to indulge in the

occasional indiscretion; after all, a quick lay meant nothing to a man. But God forbid Clarissa ever did it.

Not that she would. Jack knew for sure.

"Faster!" gasped Clarissa Browning fervently. "Come *on!* Faster!"

The young actor on top of her obliged. Although in shock, he was managing to perform nevertheless. Well, he was twenty-three years old, and at twenty-three a hard-on is only a hand-shake away.

Clarissa Browning had done more than shake his hand. Shortly after their first meeting on the set of the film they were appearing in together, she had requested his presence in her dressing room. He went willingly. Clarissa was a star, and this was only his second movie.

She offered him a glass of white wine and a pep talk about his role. Even though it was only ten o'clock in the morning he accepted both gratefully. Then, in clipped tones, pushing strands of brown hair away from her delicate but interesting features, she said, "You do know that on film reality is the core of everything."

He nodded respectfully.

"You play my lover," she said. Clarissa was twenty-nine years old, with a long face, limpid eyes, a nose just saved from being too long, and a thin line of a mouth. In life she received no awards for beauty. However, she had proved more than once that her ordinary looks created incandescent magic in front of a camera.

"I'm looking forward to it," the young actor said enthusiastically.

"So am I," she replied evenly. "Realize, though, that anticipation is not enough. When we interact on screen it has to be real. We have to generate *excitement* and *passion* and longing. She paused. He coughed. "So," she continued matter-of-factly. "I believe in working our roles through *before* we get in front of the camera. That way we are never caught with our pants down -- metaphorically speaking, of course."

He tried for a laugh and wondered why he was beginning to perspire.

"Let's make love and get it out of the way," she said, her intense brown eyes challenging his.

Who was he to argue? He forgot about his California blond perfect girlfriend with thirty-six-inch boobs and the longest legs in town.

Clarissa reached over, unzipped his levi's, and they went to work. Even though he was shell-shocked to be sticking it to Clarissa Browning. *The Clarissa*

Browning. Who would believe it?

When they were finished she said briskly, "Now we'll both be able to concentrate and make an excellent film. Just know your lines backwards. Listen to our admirable director, and *become* the character you're playing. *Live* the role. I'll see you on the set."

Just like that, he was dismissed.

As the young actor left her dressing room, Clarissa reached for a thermos of vegetable juice and poured herself a small glass of the nourishing liquid. She sipped it thoughtfully. Interaction with her fellow actors, that's what real theater was all about. Making love to the young man had put him at ease, given him the confidence he would need for the difficult role. He would no longer be in awe of her -- Clarissa Browning, Oscar-winning actress. He would see her as a passionate woman, flesh and blood, and react accordingly. This was crucial, although some people would think she was mad if she confided that she always made love to her on-screen lovers.

She sipped her juice reflectively. It worked. And she had an Oscar to prove it.

Jack Python would throw a fit if he ever found out. Macho chauvinist. All-made stud. Did he honestly believe she didn't know about his little dalliances?

She laughed quietly to herself. Jack Python -- the man with the wandering...

Ah, well... as long as it didn't wander too far. Right now it suited her to have Jack as her permanent lover. Who knew what the future held?

"I got a friggin' heart palpitation yesterday," Howard Soloman announced with a grim expression.

"What?" Jack wasn't quite sure he'd heard correctly.

"My friggin' heart," Howard continued in outraged tones, "started bouncin' around like a Ping-Pong ball."

Jack had long ago decided Howard was a hypochondriac and changed the subject. "Where's Mannon?" he asked. "Is he coming?"

"Mannon would come every day of his life if he could," Howard said slyly.

"We all know that," Jack agreed.

Mannon Cable -- movie star, director, producer, hot property (in Hollywood when you're hot you're hot -- when you're not you may as well be dead) made his entrance. Like Jack before him, he caused every pair of eyes to swivel to get a better look. In fact, Mannon actually stopped conversation. He was handsome. If

you threw Clint Eastwood, Burt Reynolds, and Paul Newman into a blender, you would come up with Mannon Cable. His eyes were cobalt blue. His skin sun-kissed to a sexy leather brown. His hair a dark dirty blond. His body powerful. Six feet four inches. "Every inch a winner," he would mock when he made frequent guest appearances on the Carson show.

He was forty-two years old. Fit. Fast. And right up there box-office-wise with Stallone and Eastwood. Mannon Cable was hitting a peak.

"Hey -- I'm one hungry sonofabitch," he said, sliding into the booth. He grinned. He had the *I am a big movie star* grin down pat. He also had a great set of caps (lost the shine on his originals when he labored as a stuntman for a couple of years), which enabled him to grin from here to eternity without any trouble at all. "What are y'all eating?"

"Eggs," replied Jack, stating the obvious.

"Looks like a couple of fried-egg tits to me." Mannon laughed.

"Everything looks like tits to you," Jack replied. "You should see a shrink, you've got big problems."

Mannon roared. "The only big problem *I've* got is my dick. *You* should have such problems." He signaled the waiter and proceeded to order an enormous breakfast.

Jack stared at Mannon and Howard. Sometimes he wondered why the three of them remained friends. They were all so different now. And yet, whenever he got to thinking about it, he knew why. The truth was they were brothers under the skin, sharing their pasts. They had made it to the top together, and nobody could split them up -- although many a wife and girlfriend had tried.

Howard had gone through three wives, and was currently on his fourth, the curvaceous Poppy. He had children everywhere. Mannon was still carrying a torch for his first wife, Whitney, and the new one, Melanie-Shanna, had not yet killed the flame. Jack had Clarissa, although deep down he knew she wasn't the right woman for him -- a knowledge he refused to admit.

"I've got a great idea," Mannon said suddenly. "Why don't we fly down to Vegas next month? Just the three of us. We never get to see each other anymore. We could play the tables, raise hell, cause some trouble, just like old tunes. Whaddya say?"

"Without the wives?" Howard asked hopefully.

"You bet your *cojones* without the wives," Mannon said quickly.

"We'll drop 'em off at Neiman's -- they'll never even notice we're gone."

Mugging excitedly, Howard said, "I like the idea," forgetting that Poppy would singe his balls if he tried to go away without her. This one was a clinger, as opposed to the three before her who were strictly takers.

"How about it, Jack?" Mannon looked at his friend expectantly.

Jack had promised Clarissa a week in New York. Long walks through the Village. Off-Broadway theater. Never-ending dinners with her strange, broke friends. Guess who would pick up the check.

He hated walking, only liked movies, and her so-called friends were a pain in the ass.

"Yes," he said. "Set it up. Work permitting, you can definitely include me in."

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