

**Read an excerpt:**

**Chapter One:**

Elaine Conti awoke in her luxurious bed in her luxurious Beverly Hills mansion, pressed a button to open the electrically controlled drapes, and was confronted by the sight of a young man clad in a white T-shirt and dirty jeans pissing a perfect arc into her mosaic-tiled swimming pool.

She struggled to sit up, buzzing for Lina, her Mexican maid, and at the same time flinging on a marahou-trimmed silk robe and pressing her feet into dusty pink mules.

The young man completed his task, zipped up his jeans, and strolled casually out of view.

"Lina!" Elaine screamed. "Where *are* you?"

The maid appeared, inscrutable, calm, oblivious to her mistress's screams.

"There's an intruder out by the pool," Elaine snapped excitedly. "Get Miguel. Call the police. And make sure all the doors are locked."

Unperturbed, Lina began to collect the debris of clutter from Elaine's bedside table. Dirty Kleenex, a half-finished glass of wine, a rifled box of chocolates.

"Lina!" Elaine yelled.

"No get excited, senora," the maid said stoically. "No intruder. Just boy Miguel sent to do pool. Miguel sick. No come this week."

Elaine flushed angrily. "Why the hell didn't you tell me before?" She flung herself into her bathroom, slamming the door so hard that a framed print sprang off the wall and crashed to the floor, the glass shattering. Stupid maid. Dumb-ass woman. It was impossible to get good help anymore. They came. They went. They did not give a damn if you were raped and ravaged in your own home.

And this *would* have to happen while Ross was away on location. Miguel would *never* have dared to pretend to be sick if Ross was in town.

Elaine flung off her robe, slipped out of her nightgown, and stepped under the invigorating sharpness of an ice-cold shower. She gritted her teeth. Cold water was best for the skin, tightened everything up. And, God knew, even with the gym and the yoga and the modern-dance class it still all needed tightening.

Not that she was fat. No way. Not a surplus ounce of flesh on her entire body. Pretty good for thirty-nine years of age.

*When I was thirteen I was the fattest girl in school. Etta the Elephant they called me. And I deserved the nickname. Only how could a kid of thirteen know about nutrition and diet and exercise and all that stuff? How could a kid of thirteen help it when Grandma Steinberg stuffed her with cakes and latkes, lox and bagels, strudel and chicken dumplings?*

Elaine smiled grimly. Etta the Elephant, late of the Bronx, had shown them all. Etta the Elephant, former secretary in New York City, was now slim and svelte. She was called Elaine Conti, and lived in a six-bedroomed, seven-bathroomed, goddam Beverly Hills palace. On the flats, too. Not stuck up in the hills or all the way over in Brentwood. On the flats. Prime real estate.

Etta the Elephant no longer had a sharp nose, mousy hair, gapped teeth, wire-rimmed glasses, and flat tits.

Over the years she had changed. The nose was now retrouse, cute. A perfect Brooke Shields, in fact. The mousy hair was a rich brown, cut short and tipped with golden streaks. Her skin was alabaster white and smooth, thanks to regular facials. Her teeth were capped. White and even. A credit to *Charlie's Angels*. The unbecoming glasses had long been replaced with soft blue contact lenses, without them her eyes were slate-gray and she had to squint to read. Not that she did a lot of reading. Magazines, of course. *Vogue*, *People*, *Us*.

She skimmed the trades, *Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter*, concentrating on Army Archerd and Hank Grant. She devoured *Women's Wear Daily* and *Beverly Hills People*, but was not really into what she termed hard news. The day Ronald Reagan was elected President was the only day she gave a passing thought to politics. If Ronald Reagan could do it, how about Ross?

The tits, while nowhere near the Raquel Welch class, were a perfect 36B, thanks to the ministrations of her first husband, Dr. John Saltwood. They stuck defiantly forward; no pull of gravity would ever harm *them*. And if it did, well, back to good old Johnny. She had found him in New York, wasting himself doing plastic surgery for a city hospital. They met at a party and she recognized a plain lonely man not unlike herself. They married a month later, and she had her nose and tits fixed within the year. Then she talked him into going to Beverly Hills and setting up in private practice.

Three years later he was *the* tit man, and she had divorced him and become Mrs. Ross Conti. Funny how things worked out.

Ross Conti. Husband. Movie star. First-class shit.

And she should know. After all, they had been married ten long years and it hadn't all been easy and it wasn't getting any easier and she knew things about Ross Conti that would curl the toes of the little old ladies who still loved him because after all he was hitting fifty and his fans were not exactly teenagers and as each year crept by it was getting more and more difficult and, God knew, financially things were not as good as they had been and each film could be his last and . . .

"Senora." Lina hammered on the bathroom door. "The boy, he go now. He want pay."

Elaine stepped out of the shower. She was outraged. He wanted paying -- for what? Pissing in her pool?

She wrapped herself in a fluffy terry-cloth robe and opened the bathroom door. "Tell him," she said grandly, "to piss off. "

Lina stared blankly. "Twenny dollar, Meesus Conti. He do it again in three day."

Ross Conti swore silently to himself. Jesus H. Christ. What was happening to him? He couldn't remember his frigging lines. Eight takes and still he was screwing up.

"Just take it easy, Ross," said the director calmly, placing a condescending hand on his shoulder.

*Some frigging director. Twenty-three if he's a day. Hair hanging down his back like a witch at Halloween. Levi's so tight the outline of his schlong is like a frigging beacon.*

Ross shook the offending hand off. "I'm taking it easy. It's the crowd -- they keep distracting me.

"Sure," soothed Chip, signaling to the first assistant. "Calm them down for chrissakes, they're background -- not auditioning for *Chorus Line*."

The first assistant nodded, then made an announcement through his loudspeaker.

"Ready to go again?" asked Chip. Ross nodded, The director tunned to a suntanned blonde. "Again, Sharon. Sorry, babe."

Ross burned. *Sorry, babe. What the little prick really means is sorry, babe, but we gotta humor this old fart because he used to be the biggest thing in Hollywood.*

Sharon smiled. "Right on, Chip."

*Sure. Right on Chip. We'll humor the old schmuck. My mother used to love him. She saw all his movies. Creamed her panties every time.*

"Makeup," Ross demanded, then added, his voice heavy with sarcasm, "That's if nobody minds."

"Of course not. Anything you want."

*Yeah. Anything I want. Because this so-called hotshot needs Ross Conti in his film. Ross Conti means plenty at the box office. Who would line up to see Sharon Richman? Who has even heard of her except a couple million television freaks who tune in to see some schlock program about girl water-ski instructors? Glossy crap. Sharon Richman -- a hank of hair and a mouthful of teeth. I wouldn't even screw her if she crawled to my trailer on her hands and knees and begged for it. Well, maybe if she begged.*

The makeup girl attended to his needs. Now, *she* was all right. She *knew* who the star was on this picture. Busily she fussed around him, blotting out the shine of sweat around his nose with an outsize powder puff, touching up his eyebrows with a small comb.

He gave her a perfunctory pinch on the ass. She smiled appreciatively. *Come to my trailer later, baby, and I'll show you how to give a star head.*

"Right," said Chip the creep. "Are we ready, Ross?"

*We are ready, asshole.* He nodded.

"Okay. Let's go, then."

The scene began all right. It was a simple bit of business which involved Ross saying three lines to Sharon's six, then strolling nonchalantly out of shot. The trouble was Sharon. She stared blankly, making him blow his second line every time. *Bitch. She's doing it purposely. Trying to make me look bad.*

"Jesus H. Christ!" Chip finally exploded. "It's not the fucking soliloquy from *Hamlet*."

*Right. That's it. Talking to me like some nothing bit player.* Ross turned and stalked from the location without a backward glance.

Chip grimaced at Sharon. "That's what happens when you're dealing with no talent."

"My mommy used to love him," she simpered.

"Then your mommy is an even bigger moron than her daughter."

She giggled. Chip's insults did not bother her. In bed she had him under control, and that was where it *really* mattered.

Elaine Conti drove her pale-blue Mercedes slowly down La Cienega Boulevard. She drove slowly so as not to spoil her nails, which she had just had done at a sensational new nail clinic called the Nail Kiss of Life. Wonderful place, they had wrapped her broken thumbnail so well that even *she* couldn't tell. Elaine loved discovering new places; it gave her a tiny shot of power. She pushed in a Streisand tape and wondered, as she had wondered countless times before, why dear Barbra had never had her nose fixed. In a town so dedicated to the perfect face . . . and God knew she had the money. Still, it certainly had not harmed her career -- nor her love life, for that matter.

Elaine frowned and thought about her own love life. Ross hadn't ventured near her in months. Bastard. Just because *he* didn't feel in the mood.

Elaine had indulged in two affairs during the course of her marriage. Both of them unsatisfactory. She hated affairs, they were so time-consuming . The highs and the lows . The ups and the downs. Was it all worth it? She had decided no, but now she was beginning to wonder.

The last one had taken place over two years ago. She blushed when she thought about it. What absurd risks she had taken. And with a man who could do her absolutely no good at all except fix her teeth, and they were already perfect. Milton Langley, her dentist -- and probably everyone else's with money in Beverly Hills. How indiscreet of her to have picked him. But really he had picked her. He had sent his nurse scurrying off on an errand one day, climbed aboard the chair, and made fast and furious love to her. She remembered the day well, because he had climaxed all over her new Sonia Rykiel skirt.

Elaine giggled aloud at the thought, although she hadn't giggled at the time. Milton had poured mouthwash over the damaged garment, and, when his nurse returned, sent her over to Saks to purchase a replacement. After that they had met twice a week in some dreadful motel on Santa Monica for two hot months. One day Elaine had just decided not to go. End of *that* little episode.

The other one wasn't even worth thinking about. An actor on one of Ross's films. She had slept with him twice and regretted both times.

Whenever she mentioned their lack of a sex life to Ross he flew into a rage. "What the frig do you think I am? A machine? I'll get it up when I want to-not just because you've read some crap sex magazine that says you should have ten orgasms a day."

Ha! She was lucky if she got ten a year. If it hadn't been for her trusty vibrator she would have been climbing walls.

Maybe his erection would return if the movie he was doing turned out to be a hit.

Yes. That was what Ross needed -- a massive shot of success would be good for both of them. There was nothing like success for putting the hard-on back in a man's life.

Carefully she made a left on Melrose. Lunch at Ma Maison was a must on Fridays. Anybody who was anybody and in town invariably showed up. Elaine had a permanent booking.

Patrick Terrail, the owner of Ma Maison, greeted her at the entrance to the small outdoor restaurant. She accepted a kiss on each cheek and followed a waiter to her table, keeping an eagle eye out for anyone she should acknowledge.

Maralee Gray, one of her closest friends, was already waiting. She nursed a spritzer and a sour expression. At thirty-seven Maralee maintained more than a shadow of her past prettiness. In her time she had been voted the most popular girl in high school *and* Miss Hot Rod 1960. That was before she had met, married, and divorced Neil Gray, the film director. Her father, now retired, owned Sanderson Studios. Money had never been Maralee's problem. Only men.

"Darling. I'm not late, am I?" Elaine asked anxiously, brushing cheeks with her friend.

"Not at all. I think / was early." They exchanged you-look-wonderfuls, admired each other's outfit, and cast their eyes around the restaurant.

"And how's Ross making out on location?" Maralee asked, extracting a long black cigarillo from a wafer-thin gold case.

"You know Ross-he makes out wherever he is."

They both laughed. Ross's reputation as a cocksman was an old Hollywood joke.

"Actually he hates everything," she confided. "The script, the director, the crew, the food, the climate -- the whole bug-ridden setup, as he so charmingly puts it. But Maralee, believe me" -- she leaned confidentially toward her friend -- "he's going to be dynamite in this movie. The old Ross Conti-full-force."

"I can believe it;" Maralee murmured. "I've never counted him out, you know that."

Elaine nodded. Maralee was a true friend, and there weren't many of them around. In Hollywood you were only as hot as your last hit -- and it had been a long time between hits.

"I'm going to have my eyes done," Maralee announced dramatically. "I'm only telling you, and you mustn't mention it to a soul."

"As if I would!" Elaine replied, quite affronted. "Who's doing it?"

"The Palm Springs connection. I'll spend a couple of weeks there -- after all, I have the house. Then I'll come back and nobody will know the difference. They'll just think I was vacationing."

"Wonderful idea," Elaine said. Was Maralee stupid or what? Nobody took a vacation in Palm Springs, even if they did have a house there. They either weekended or retired. "When?" she asked, her eyes flicking restlessly round the restaurant.

"As soon as possible. Next week if he can fit me in."

They both stopped talking to observe the entrance of Sylvester Stallone. Elaine threw him a perfunctory wave, but he did not appear to notice her. "Probably needs glasses," she sniffed.

"I met him at a party only last week."

Maralee produced a small gold compact and inspected her face. "He won't last," she remarked dismissively, removing a smudge of lipstick from her teeth. "Let's face it, Clark Gable he's not."

"Oh yeah, that's it... don't stop... don't ever stop. Oh yeah, yeah . . . just keep on going, sweetheart, keep right on going."

Ross Conti listened to the words pouring from his mouth and wondered how many times he had uttered them before. Plenty. That was for sure.

On her knees, Stella, the makeup girl, worked diligently on his weak erection. She sucked him as if he were a water pump. Her technique could do with some improvement. But then, in his time, Ross had had some of the best little cocksuckers in the business. Starlets, whose very livelihood depended on doing a good job. Hookers, who specialized. Bored Beverly Hills housewives who had elevated cocksucking to an art.

He felt his erection begin to deflate, and he dug his fingers hard into the girl's scalp. She yelped with pain and stopped what she was doing.

He wasn't sorry. Quick as a flash he tucked himself out of sight and firmly zipped up. "That was great!"

She stared at him in amazement. "But you didn't come."

He could hardly lie. "Sometimes it's better this way," he mumbled mysteriously, reaching for a bottle of tequila on the side table in his hotel room.

"It is?" She continued to stare.

"Sure. Keeps all the juices inside. Keeps me buzzing. That's the way I like it when I'm working." If she believed that she'd believe anything.

"I think I know what you mean," she began enthusiastically. "Sort of like a boxer before a fight -- mustn't release that precious energy. You've got to make it work for you."

"Right! You got it!" He smiled, took a slug of tequila from the bottle, and wished she would go.

"Would you like me to... do anything?" she asked expectantly, hoping that he would want her to undress and stay.

"There's a million things I'd like you to do," he replied. "But the star has got to get some sleep. You understand, don't you?"

"Of course, Mr. Con -- Ross."

He hadn't said she could call him by his first name. Mr. Conti would do nicely. Women. Give them nine inches and they frigging moved in. "Goodnight, Sheila."

"It's Stella."

"Right."

She finally left, and he switched on the television in time for *The Tonight Show*. He knew that he should call Elaine in L.A., but he couldn't be bothered. She would be furious when she heard he had blown his lines and walked off the set. Elaine thought he was on the way out. She was always nagging him about keeping up with what the public wanted. He had done his last movie against her advice, and it bombed at the box office. God, that bad pissed him off. A fine love story with a veteran director and a New York stage actress as his leading lady. "Old-fashioned garbage," Elaine had announced baldly. "Sex, violence, and comedy, that's what sells tickets today. And you've got to get in on the act, Ross, before it's too late."

She was right, of course. He did have to get in on the act, because he was no longer Mr. Box Office, not even in the frigging top ten. He was on the slide, and in Hollywood they could smell it.

Johnny Carson was talking to Angie Dickinson. She was flirting, crossing long legs and looking seductive.

Abruptly Ross picked up the phone. "Get me the bell captain," he snapped.

Chip had come groveling to his trailer after his walkout. "Nothing we can't sort out, Ross. If you want to quit today, we can schedule to reshoot the scene first thing in the morning."

He had agreed. At least they knew they were dealing with a star now, and not some nothing has-been.

"Yes, Mr. Conti. This is the bell captain. How may I help you?"

Ross balanced the phone under his chin and reached for the tequila bottle. "Can you be discreet?"

"Of course, sir. It's my job."

"I want a broad."

"Certainly, Mr. Conti. Blonde? Brunette? Redhead?"

"Multicolored for all I care. Just make sure she's got big tits-and I *mean* big ones.

"Yes *sir!*"

"Oh, and you can charge her to my account. Mark it down as room service." Why should *he* pay? Let the film company pick up the tab. He replaced the receiver and walked to the mirror. Fifty. Soon he would be fifty. And it hurt. Badly.

Ross Conti *had* lived in Hollywood for thirty years. And for twenty five of those years he *had* been a star. Arriving in town in 1953, he was soon discovered hauling boxes in a food market on Sunset Boulevard by an aging agent's young wife. She was entranced by his blond good looks, and set about persuading her husband to handle him. In the meantime she was handling him herself -- twice a day -- and loving every minute.

Her husband discovered their affair on the day Universal decided to sign his young client. In a fit of fury the old agent negotiated the worst deal he possibly could, waited until it was signed, then dropped Ross, and badmouthed him as an untalented stud all over town.

Ross didn't care. He had grown up in the Bronx, spent three years kicking around New York grabbing bit parts here and there, and a Hollywood contract seemed just perfect to him, whatever the terms.

Women adored him. For two years he worked his way through the studio, eventually picking on the pretty mistress of a studio executive, who promptly saw to it that Ross's contract was dropped.

Two years, and all he had done was a few small parts in a series of beach-party movies. Then suddenly -- no contract, no prospects, no money.

One day, lounging around Schwab's drugstore on the Strip, he got talking to a girl named Sadie La Salle, a hardworking secretary with the most enormous knockers he had ever seen. She was not a pretty girl. Overweight, suspicions of a mustache, short of leg. But oh those magnificent tits! He surprised himself by asking her for a date. She accepted readily, and they went to the Aware Inn, ate health burgers, and talked about him. He loved every minute of it. How many girls were prepared to discuss him and only him for five solid hours?

Sadie was very smart, a quality Ross had not encountered in a woman before. She refused to go to bed with him on their first date, slapped his hands away when he went after the magic tits, gave him sound advice about his career, and on their second date cooked him the best meal he had ever had.

For six months they had a platonic relationship, seeing each other a couple of times a week, speaking on the phone daily. Ross loved talking to her; she had an answer for every problem. And oh boy, did he ever have problems! He told her about the girls he was screwing, the trouble he was having finding work. Going on interview after interview and getting nowhere was depressing, not to mention terrible for his ego. Sadie was a wonderful listener, plus she cooked him two great meals a week and did his washing.

One night he had a narrow escape while visiting a nubile girlfriend. Her out-of-town husband returned home sooner than expected, and Ross was forced to drop out her bedroom window desperately clutching his pants. He decided to pay Sadie an unexpected visit and tell her the story. sure she would love it.

When he arrived at her small apartment on Olive Drive he was shocked to discover her entertaining a man, the two of them sitting at her candlelit dining table finishing off a delicious-smelling pot roast. There was wine on the table, and fresh-cut flowers . Sadie was wearing a low-cut dress and seemed flustered to see him.

It had never occurred to him that she had boyfriends, and he was unreasonably pissed off.

"I want you to meet Bernard Leftcovitz," she said primly, eyeing his crumpled clothes and mussed hair with distaste.

He flung himself familiarly into a chair and threw a silent nod in Bernard Leftcovitz's direction. "Get me a drink, hon," he said to Sadie, reaching out to slap her on the ass. "Scotch, plenty of ice."

She glared, but did as he asked. Then he outsat Mr. Leftcovitz, who finally left an hour later.

"Thanks a lot!" she exploded, as soon as the door shut behind him .

Ross grinned. "Wassamatter?"

"You *know* what's the matter. Walking in here like you own the place, treating me like one of your . . . your . . . goddam . . . women!" She was spluttering with rage. "I hate you. I really hate you! You think you're such a big deal. Well, let me tell you --"

He grubbed her fast. Moved in for the kill -- for he knew that's what it would be -- a killer scene, all thighs and heat and those amazing mountainous breasts enveloping him.

She pushed him away. "Ross --" she began to object.

He wasn't about to listen to any reasons why they shouldn't. Sadie La Salle was going to be his and screw the Bernard Leftcovitzes of this world.

She was a virgin. Twenty-four years old. A resident of Hollywood and a virgin.



Ross could not believe it. He was delighted. Ten years of making out and she was his first.

The next day he packed up his things and moved in with her. He was two months overdue with his rent anyway, and money was becoming a big problem. Sadie loved having him in her life. She said goodbye to Bernie without a second thought and devoted all her time to Ross. "We have to find you an agent," she fretted, because she knew his failure to land a part in a movie was upsetting him more than he cared to admit. Unfortunately all the agents he visited seemed to have got the message -- Ross Conti equaled bad news.

One day she made a major decision. "I'll be your agent," she said quite seriously.

"You'll what?" he roared.

"I'll be your agent. It's a good idea. You'll see."

The next week she gave up her job, withdrew her savings, and soon found a tiny room in a run-down building on Hollywood Boulevard. She stuck a notice on the door -- Sadie La Salle, Agent to the Stars. Then she had a phone installed, and was in business.

Ross found the whole thing hysterically funny. What the hell did Sadie know about being an agent?

What she didn't know she soon found out. For six years she had worked as a secretary in a large lawfirm which specialized in show-business work. She had the legalities down pat, and the rest wasn't difficult. She had a product. Ross Conti. And when the women of America got a good look at him they were going to want to buy.

"I have a great idea," she told him one day, "and I don't want your opinion of it, because it'll work. I know it's going to work."

As it happened he loved her idea, although it was a little crazy, and very expensive. She borrowed the money she needed from her former boss, an uptight jerk named Jeremy Mead who Ross suspected wanted to ball her. Then she had Ross photographed by the Pacific Ocean wearing faded Levi's cutoffs and a smile. And she had the picture blown up and placed on as many billboards as she could afford all across America, with just the words: "WHO IS ROSS CONTI?"

It was magic time. Within weeks everyone was asking, "Who *is* Ross Conti?" Johnny Carson began making cracks on his show. Letters started to arrive by the sackload, addressed to Ross Conti, Hollywood (Sadie had prudently informed the post office where to forward them). Ross was stopped in the street, mobbed by adoring women, recognized wherever he went. The whole thing took off just as she had predicted it would.

At the peak of it all Sadie flew with her now famous client to New York, where he had been invited to do a guest appearance on *The Tonight Show*. They were both ecstatic. New York gave Ross the feel of what it would be like to be a star. Sadie was thrilled that it was she who had done it for him.

He was marvelous on the show-funny, sexy, and magnetically attractive. By the time they got back to Hollywood the offers were piling up. Sadie sifted through them and finally negotiated an ace three-picture deal for him with Paramount. He never looked back. Success as a movie star was instantaneous.

Six months later he dumped her, signed with a big agency, and married Wendy Warren, a rising young star with an impressive thirty-nine-inch bust. They lived together in much-photographed luxury on top of Mulholland Drive, five minutes from Marlon Brando's retreat. Their marriage lasted only two years and was childless. After that Ross became *the*

Hollywood bachelor. Wild stories, wild pranks, wild parties. Everyone was delighted when in 1964 he married again, this time a Swedish starlet of seventeen with, of course, wonderful breasts. The marriage was stormy and only lasted six months. She divorced him, claiming mental cruelty and half his money. Ross shrugged the whole thing off.

At that time his star was at its peak. Every movie he appeared in was a winner. Until 1969, when he made two disastrous films in a row.

A lot of people were not sorry to observe his fall from superstardom. Sadie La Salle, for one. After his defection from her loving care she had faded from sight for a while, but then she had resurfaced and slowly but surely built herself an empire.

Ross met Elaine when he went for a consultation with her husband. At thirty-nine he thought maybe he needed a little face work. He never got the surgery, but he did get Elaine. She moved in on him without hesitation, and she was exactly what he needed at that time in his life. He found her sympathetic, supportive, and an excellent listener. The tits were nothing to get excited about, but in bed she was accommodating and warm, and after the aggression of the usual Hollywood starlet he liked that. He decided marriage to Elaine was just what he needed. It did not take a lot of persuasion for her to divorce her husband. They married a week later in Mexico, and his career took a sharp upward swing. It stayed up for five years, then slowly, gradually, it began to slip. And so did their marriage.

Forty-nine. Heading full-speed toward fifty. And he didn't look a day over forty-two. The blond boyish good looks had aged nicely, although he could do without the graying hair that had to be carefully dyed, and the deep indentations under his piercing blue eyes.

Still, he was in terrific shape. The body was almost as good as new. He stared at his reflection, hardly hearing the discreet knock on the door.

"Yes?" he called out, when the knock was repeated.

"Room service," crooned a feminine voice.

Room service was twenty-two and stacked. Ross made a mental note to tip the bell captain royally.

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