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# THE BITCH

*Jackie Collins*

Dear Reader,

I do hope you enjoy this latest version of a book I wrote as an original paperback (which later became a movie) quite a few years ago. I started to read it through one day recently, and I thought about all the little changes I would like to make if I were to rewrite it today.

So for the first time ever, I've done a complete revision, cover to cover. The characters and plot are the same, but with a few new twists for today's generation. "The Bitch" has always been a fun read, and now it's even better! And I have to say that I still love these characters.

Welcome to "The Bitch" – the new 2012 revised version!

Happy reading,

Jackie

## Reviews for *The Bitch*

‘A generation of women have learnt more about how to handle their men from Jackie’s books than from any kind of manual... She seems to know every Hollywood player and just where to find their dirty laundry basket.

She is a consummate observer. An outsider with an insider’s knowledge. That’s her signature trick. She is, at once, both intimate and detached... Jackie is very much her own person: a total one-off

*Daily Mail*

‘Fizzling, sizzling and raunchy from cover to cover’

*Daily Express*

‘Miss Collins knows how to entertain - and that is a very precious commodity’

*The Times*

‘Jackie Collins has a very sharp eye for character and situation’

*Guardian*

# CHAPTER 1

Nico Constantine rose from the blackjack table, smiled all round, threw the pretty croupier a large tip, and pocketed twelve gold five-hundred-dollar chips. A nice six thousand dollars. Not bad for a fast half hour's work. Not good for someone who was already down two hundred thousand.

Nico surveyed the crowded Las Vegas casino. His intense dark eyes flicked back and forth amongst the assembled company. Little old ladies in floral dresses exhibited surprising strength as their skinny arms pulled firmly on the slot machines. Florid faced couples – weak with excitement and too much sun – picked up a fast eighty or ninety dollars at the roulette tables. Strolling hookers – blank eyes alert for the big spenders. The big spenders themselves, in polyester leisure suits, screeched away in middle-American accents at the crap tables.

Nico smiled. Las Vegas always amused him. The hustle and the bustle. The win and the lose. The total fantasy of it all.

Vegas was a carousel town set in the middle of arid desert. A blazing array of neon signs housing all the vices known to man. And a few unknown ones. In Vegas, if you could pay for it, you could get it. Just name it.

He lit a long narrow Havana cigar with a wafer-thin gold Dunhill lighter, smiled again and nodded at the people who went out of their way to catch his eye. A pit boss here, a cigarette girl there, a security guard on his rounds. Nico Constantine was a well-known man in Vegas. More importantly Nico Constantine was a gentleman – and how many of those were there left in the world?

He looked good. For forty-nine years of age he looked exceptionally good. A full head of black hair – curly, with slight traces of grey that only enhanced the jet. Dark eyes – unfairly surrounded with thick black lashes. A strong nose. Olive skin beautifully tanned. A wide-shouldered, thin-hipped body that would make many a younger man envious.

However, the most attractive thing about Nico was his style, his aura, his charisma.

Hand-finished, tailor-made three-piece suits in the very finest cloth. Silk shirts of exquisite quality. Italian-made shoes in glove-soft leather. Nothing but the best for Nico Constantine. It had been his motto since he was twenty years of age.

‘Can I get you a drink, Mr Constantine?’ A cocktail waitress was at his side, long legs in sexy cobweb stockings, a wide mouth smiling and full of Vegas promise.

He smiled back at her. Naturally he had wonderful teeth, and all his own, with just one vagabond gypsy cap. ‘Why not? I think vodka, on the rocks.’ His dark eyes flirted with her outrageously, and she loved every minute of it. Women always did. Women positively adored Nico Constantine and he, in his turn, was certainly not averse to them. From a cocktail waitress, to a princess, he treated them all the same. Flowers (always red roses); champagne (always Cristal); presents (small gold charms from Tiffany in New York, or, if they lasted more than a few weeks, little diamond trinkets from Cartier).

The cocktail waitress went off to get his drink.

Nico consulted his Patek Phillippe digital gold watch. It was eight o’clock. The evening was ahead of him. He would sip his drink, watch the action, then he would step once more into the fray, and fate would decide his future.

Nico Constantine was born in a poor suburb of Athens. He was the first brother to three sisters, and his childhood had been that of a small boy caught up in a sea of femininity. His sisters fussed, bullied and smothered him. His mother spoiled him and various female relatives kissed, cuddled and catered to him at all times.

His father was away a lot, being a crewman on one of the fabulous Onassis yachts, so Nico became the little man of the family. He was a beautiful baby, a cute little toddler, a devastating young boy and by the time he left school at fourteen, every female in the vicinity loved him madly.

His three sisters, not to forget his mother, guarded him ferociously. To them he was a prince.

When his father decided to take him away on a trip as a cabin boy, the entire family rebelled. No way was Nico to be allowed out of their sight. Absolutely no way. His poor father argued, but to no

avail, and Nico was given a job in a nearby fishing port on the small dock not a hundred yards from where one of his sisters worked scraping fish. She watched him like a hawk. If he so much as talked to a member of the female sex she would appear, bossy and predatory.

The Constantine family went out of their way to keep young Nico as innocent and untouched as possible. They worked on it as a team.

Nico meanwhile was growing up. His body was developing, his balls were dropping, his penis was growing, and most of the time he felt as horny as hell. Well who wouldn't, living in close proximity to four women? His sexual senses were assailed on every level. Naked breasts. Body hair. Tempting female smells. Underclothes hanging up to dry every way he turned.

By the time he was sixteen he was desperate. To jerk off was his only relief, but even that had to be planned like a military operation. Female eyes watched him constantly.

He realized he must run away, although it was a difficult decision to make, leaving behind all that love and adoration. It had to be done though. He was being smothered. It was the only answer, the only way he could become a real man.

He left on a Sunday night in December, arriving in the city of Athens two days later, cold, tired, hungry, certain he had made a wrong move, and already anxious that his family would come chasing after him. He had no idea what to do, how to get a job, or even what kind of job to look for. He wandered around the city, freezing in his thin cotton trousers and shirt, with only an oilskin to keep out the biting ice and sleet.

Finally he took shelter in the entrance of a tall apartment building, and stayed there until a chauffeured car pulled up, and two women in furs got out, chattering and laughing together.

Instinct told him to attract their attention. He coughed loudly, caught the eye of one of the women, smiled appealingly and winked, projecting unthreatening vulnerability.

'Yes?' the woman asked. 'Do you want my autograph?'

He was always quick, and without hesitation said, 'I have travelled three days to get your autograph.'

He had no idea who she was, only that she was mysteriously beautiful, with soft pale curls, a slender figure beneath the open fur, and a sympathetic smile.

She walked over to him and he inhaled sweet perfume. It reminded him of the womanly smells of home.

'You look exhausted,' she said. Her voice was magical, vibrant and comforting.

Nico didn't answer. He just looked at her with his dark eyes until she took him by the arm and said, 'Come, you shall have a hot drink and some warm clothes.'

Her name was Lise Maria Andrott. She was a very famous opera singer, thirty-three years old, divorced, extremely rich, and the most wonderful person Nico had ever met.

Within days they were lovers. The seventeen-year-old boy, and the thirty-three-year-old woman. She taught him to love her exactly as she had always wanted. And he was a willing learner. Listening, practising, achieving.

'God, Nico!' she would exclaim in the throes of ecstasy. 'You are the cleverest lover I have ever had.' And of course, after her expert tuition – he was.

Her friends were scandalized, and warnings abounded. 'He's hardly more than a child.' 'There'll be an outcry!' 'Your public will never stand for it!'

Lise Maria smiled in the face of their objections. 'He makes me happy,' she explained. 'This boy is the best thing that ever happened to me.'

Nico wrote a short formal note to his family. He was fine. He had a job. He would write again soon. He enclosed some of Lise Maria's money. She had insisted; and every month she made sure he did the same again. She understood how painful losing Nico must have been to them. He was truly a wonderful boy.

On Nico's twentieth birthday they were married. A ceremony Lise Maria tried to keep private, but every photographer in Greece turned up, and the small ceremony became a mad circus. The result was that Nico's family finally found out where their precious boy was, and they rushed to Athens, and added to the scandal Lise Maria had tried so calmly to ignore.

There was nothing they could do, it was too late. Besides which, Nico and Lise Maria seemed so unbelievably happy together.

For nineteen years they remained locked in a state of bliss, their age difference seeming to bother neither of them. Only the world press made much of it.

Nico grew from a gauche young male, into a sophisticated man of the world. He developed a taste for the very best in everything, and Lise Maria was well able to afford the millionaire lifestyle they adopted together. He never bothered to work, Lise Maria didn't want him to. He travelled everywhere with her, and taught himself fluent English, French, German and Italian.

He dabbled on the world stock market, and occasionally did well.

He learned to snow ski, water ski, drive a racing car, ride horses, play polo.

He became an expert at bridge, backgammon and poker.

He acquired an excellent knowledge of wine and cuisine.

He was a faithful and ever expanding lover to his beautiful, famous wife. He treated her like a queen right up until the day she died of cancer aged fifty-five.

Then he was lost. Set adrift in a world he did not wish to live in without his beloved Lise Maria.

He was thirty-nine years old and alone for the first time in his life. He had everything, for Lise Maria had bequeathed him her fortune. But as far as he was concerned, he had nothing. He could no longer stand to be at their Athens penthouse, their island retreat, their smart Paris house.

He sold everything. The four cars. The fabulous jewellery. The homes.

He said goodbye to his family, now ensconced in a house in the centre of Athens, and he set off for America – the one place Lise Maria had never been accepted as the superstar she was all over Europe.

America. A place to forget about his past. Onto new beginnings.

'Here's your vodka, Mr Constantine,' the cocktail waitress said, meeting his eyes with a bold glance, then reluctantly retreating at a signal from a surly pit boss.

Las Vegas. A truly unique place. Twenty-four-hour nonstop gambling. Lavish hotels and entertainment. Beautiful showgirls. Blazing sunshine.

Nico remembered with a smile his first sight of the place. Driving from Los Angeles in the dead of night, and after hours of blackness suddenly hitting this neon-lit fantasy in the middle of nowhere. It was a memory that would always linger.

Was it only ten years ago? It seemed like forever . . .

Nico had arrived in Los Angeles in the summer with twenty-five pieces of impeccable Gucci luggage. He had rented a white Mercedes, taken up residence in a bungalow attached to the famed Beverly Hills Hotel, and sat back to see if he liked it.

He liked it. Who wouldn't in his position?

He was rich, handsome, available.

He was jumped on within two minutes of settling himself in a private cabana beside the pool.

The jumpee was Dorothy Dainty, a sometime starlet with a mass of red hair, thirty-eight-inch silicone tits, and an unfortunate habit of talking out of the corner of her mouth like a refugee from a gangster movie. 'You a producer?' she asked conspiratorially.

Nico looked her over, treated her with respect, and allowed her to show him the town.

To her annoyance he didn't try to fuck her. Dorothy Dainty was amazed. Everyone tried to fuck her. Everyone succeeded. What was with this strange foreign guy?

She took him to all the best places. One visit and Nico and the maître d' were the best of friends. After two weeks he didn't need Dorothy. He sent her a gold charm inscribed with a few kind words, a dozen red roses, and he never called her again.

'The guy has to be gay!' Dorothy told all her friends. 'Has to be!'

The thought of a man who didn't actually want to fuck her threw her into a decline for weeks. It took her a while to recover.

Nico had no intention of screwing the Dorothy Dainty's of this world. His wife had been dead three months, and he certainly felt the physical need of a woman, but nothing would make him lower his standards. He'd had the best, and while he accepted the fact that he would never find another Lise Maria, he was certainly looking for something better than Dorothy Dainty.

He decided young girls would be best for him. Fresh-faced beauties with no track record.

He had never been to bed with a woman other than his wife. During the next ten years he made up for lost time and made love to one hundred and twenty fresh-faced beauties. They lasted on an average four weeks each, and not one of them ever regretted having been made love to by Nico Constantine. He was an ace lover. The very best.

He bought himself a mansion in the Hollywood hills, and settled down to having a good time.

The bachelors of the Beverly Hills community flocked around to be his friend. He had everything they all wanted. Class. Style. Panache. The money wasn't so impressive, they all had money, but he had that indefinable quality – a charm that was inborn.

For ten idyllic years Nico lived the good life. He played tennis, swam, worked the stock market, gambled with his friends, invested in the occasional deal, made love to beautiful girls, sunbathed, saunaed, went to the best parties, movies and restaurants.

It was a grave shock to him when his money finally ran out.

Nico Constantine broke. Ridiculous. But true. His late wife's lawyers in Athens had been warning him for two years that the estate was running dry. They had wanted him to invest, diversify his capital. Nico had taken no notice, until eventually he'd spent everything there was. The thought of having no money appalled him. He decided something must be done immediately. He was a brilliant gambler, always had been, and the lure of Las Vegas was so very close.

He thought about his situation carefully. How much money did he need to maintain his present lifestyle? He supported his entire family in Athens, but apart from them there was only himself to think about. If he sold his mansion, and rented instead, he would have a substantial lump sum of money and cut his weekly expenditure immediately. It seemed like a sensible idea. He could take the money from the sale of his house, and in Vegas – with his luck and skill – he would double it – treble it – certainly build it into a substantial stake that he could invest and then live off the income.

Nico had been in Las Vegas exactly twenty-three hours. Already he was down one-hundred-and-ninety-four thousand dollars.



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