



DANIELLE  
STEEL

Upside Down

*A Novel*

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# Chapter 1

The line of limousines snaked down the driveway of the Beverly Hilton hotel at a snail's pace to drop off stars and starlets, producers, directors, ingénues, the famous and the infamous and the unknowns and wannabes, desperate to be seen at one of Hollywood's most glittering annual events, the Golden Globe Awards. The greatly respected award was second only to the Academy Awards. At sixty-two, Ardith Law, one of Hollywood's biggest stars for the past forty years, had won three Golden Globes so far. And she had two of the Academy's coveted Oscars to her credit as well. This was an evening she never missed, as much to pay her respects to her fellow actors as to be seen herself. It was one of those things one had to do. It was expected, and you had to keep your face out there if you wanted to continue to get work, and your face had to look damn good or you'd better not show up!

Ardith was known for the variety and depth of the roles she accepted, and the quality of the movies she starred in. Occasionally, she took a small, unusual part if it intrigued her, which happened from time to time, but as a rule, she only took major starring roles. She was an extraordinary actress with a huge talent and a well-deserved reputation. She was picky about the parts she took. She wanted to be in movies with depth and merit, which weren't always easy to find after a certain age. She looked exceptionally good at sixty-two, was still beautiful, and unlike nearly every actress in Hollywood, she had had no "work" done. She preferred to keep her own natural face and left it to the makeup artists on set to correct

whatever needed attention. And she was never afraid to take an important part if it aged her beyond her actual years.

Ardith wanted roles with substance that stretched her to the limits of her abilities. She turned down most of the easy parts. Although for the past two years, there had been no offers. No one dared to cast her in minor roles, and producers knew that her agent, Joe Ricci, would turn them down before the offers even got to her. But once she turned sixty, there had been no appropriate parts for her. She read scripts constantly, looking for the right roles, but hadn't seen any she wanted to play. Her high standards and perfectionism on set had won her the reputation of being difficult or a diva, which wasn't entirely true. She was an extremely dedicated actress and demanded a lot of herself and everyone she worked with. So now and then, when others fell short, forty years of the best parts available and producers who would do almost anything to keep her happy had led to rare but memorable outbursts that supported the notion that she was a diva. She was above all a consummate professional, and a star to her very core. It wasn't about ego, but more about wanting to be the absolute best she could be in every role, at all times. She hated working with lazy actors, and she hated stupidity and phonies. She was true to herself and her high standards in every way. She was an honest woman, and a great actress more than a diva, no matter what people said who didn't really know her. Her career was vital to her sense of well-being and purpose. She had missed working for the past two years but preferred it to accepting roles in second-rate movies. She was waiting for the right film to come along, and she knew that eventually it would. In the meantime, she read every book and script she could lay her hands on.

Her personal life had always taken a back seat to her career, and it still did. She had one daughter from an eight-year marriage that began in her twenties. She had been married to one of Hollywood's biggest producers, John Walker. They had been a powerful pair and had made several movies together, which had been legendary box office successes and enhanced both their careers. It had been a tumultuous but creative match, which also produced their only daughter, Morgan, who was now thirty-eight years old and a plastic surgeon in New York.

Morgan had avoided the Hollywood scene all her life, and chose medicine as an exciting, satisfying alternative. It suited her. She was a partner in a successful practice of plastic surgeons, with two senior partners who had worked together for years. One was close to retirement, the other was in full swing, and Morgan was the only woman they had ever invited to join the partnership. One of the senior partners also taught at Columbia medical school. They set the bar high.

Ardith wished now that she had spent more time with Morgan when she was younger, but her own career had been white-hot then, and she was too often away on location and away from Morgan, and didn't deny it. Ardith had missed all the important moments and landmarks in Morgan's life, the school plays, her first prom, her first heartbreak, many birthdays, and there was no way to catch up. She felt guilty about it now but there was no way to make up for it, or relive the past. Once Morgan was an adult, the two women were very different. Morgan respected her mother's career but had never enjoyed it, and the differences in their personalities and respective careers were hard to bridge now. They spoke often, out of duty and respect, but agreed on very little. Morgan had few memories of her father, who had died when she was seven. There had been scandal around her father's death, which had troubled her for years.

John Walker had died in a tragic helicopter accident, which was even more traumatic for Ardith because he was killed with the young woman he was rumored to be having an affair with at the time, a budding actress who was appearing in one of his movies and whose career he was shepherding. She was twenty-two, and Ardith was thirty-one then. The letters she found after John's death with his protégée confirmed her fears and suspicions about their involvement. Ardith had never forgiven him for it. The press had turned his death into a lurid event. Morgan knew the story once she was older, and had harbored illusions about him anyway. His films remained as tributes to him, but his reputation as a womanizer lasted after his death. Ardith knew it wasn't his first affair by any means and had said as much to Morgan. He could never resist the actresses in his films. Ardith had never married again and had no regrets that she hadn't. It was an experience she never wanted to repeat, as she had no desire to be married to another cheater and she didn't want more children. Morgan was enough

to deal with on her own, and their relationship had never been easy, and less and less so when Morgan grew up. She'd been rebellious in her teens, and angry about the parents she didn't have. Ardith readily admitted that although she loved her daughter, motherhood wasn't her strong suit. Morgan agreed. Ardith hadn't been prepared for how much she needed to give a child, especially after her father died. They occasionally had a good time together, but they didn't see each other often anymore. Ardith had the time to give her now, but Morgan didn't have the interest or the time. She was busy with her career as a physician in New York, and her mother was proud of her, but Ardith still had her own life as a star in L.A. Morgan was single at thirty-eight and said she didn't have time for a husband and children, or even dating. Her work and her patients were her priorities. In some ways she was like her mother—her career came first. And the tables had turned. Ardith hadn't made enough time for her when she was a child, and now Morgan made no effort for her. It was a cycle they couldn't seem to break, and Ardith had accepted the fact that it was too late and they would never be close. They existed on the periphery of each other's lives. And living on opposite coasts, they saw too little of each other to heal the damage of the past. They had the occasional nice dinner together, and then Morgan flew back to New York, and they didn't see each other for months.

For the past twelve years, Ardith had found comfortable companionship with William West, who was almost as big a star as she was. He had been a readily identifiable hero over a fifty-year career, even longer than Ardith's. He had never won an Oscar, and hadn't taken the challenging roles she had, but audiences loved him. He took parts that endeared him to his fans. Since he wasn't as demanding about the parts he played, he worked more often than Ardith, and still did one or two pictures a year. He was leaving in two days for England on location, playing a worthwhile role, although he was no longer the romantic lead. At seventy-eight, he was healthy and energetic and wanted to continue working, even in slightly less important parts. He had no desire to retire.

Ardith always said that the sixteen-year age difference between them didn't bother her. When they'd gotten together, she was fifty and he was sixty-six, still a handsome man, and a star. They had their careers in



common, and he was kind, attentive, and good company. He had slowed down a little in the past few years, but other than the handful of pills and vitamins she handed him every day to keep him healthy, he was in surprisingly good condition for his age. No one knew what would come later, but for now he was doing fine and still working. He hadn't been as wise with money as she was. He had never commanded the salaries she did and was grateful to be living in her home in Bel Air for the past ten years. He contributed a small amount to expenses, but Ardith didn't expect anything from him. He had been married and divorced twice, to actresses both times, had only stayed married briefly, and had no children, which kept things simple. He had always been friendly to Morgan, but she was already doing her residency at Columbia by the time he and Ardith got together, so Morgan's relationship with him was cordial but superficial. She had no complaints against him, he was friendly and polite and good to her mother, and he had appeared much too late to be a father figure to her. She said she had no need for one, and she found him somewhat narcissistic, like most actors, more concerned with his own looks, projects, and problems than anyone else's. Ardith was used to it and didn't mind, and they were each the longest relationship either of them had ever had. After twelve years, they had become a legendary Hollywood couple, and were always seen together. It wasn't a great love affair and never had been, but it was companionship for both of them. They had each other and weren't alone or lonely.

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When the car finally stopped in front of the Hilton, Ardith stepped out of the car, in a long sleek black satin gown, which molded her impeccably maintained figure. She had a white fox wrap on her shoulders, was wearing a diamond necklace and earrings she had borrowed from Van Cleef & Arpels, and her blond hair was combed in a smooth, elegant bun. She looked dazzling, and the press went wild when they saw her, flashing her picture, shouting her name, waving to catch her attention as Bill West stepped out behind her in an impeccable tuxedo. She smiled and waved like royalty at the mass of photographers and the fans hovering near them at the edge of the crowd, and she and Bill glided smoothly inside to make

their way down the red carpet before the dinner and award ceremony began. Once Ardith and Bill were in a room or a crowd, all eyes were on them. Most people assumed that they were married by now, but they weren't, and she still had no desire to be. She said there was no reason for it, although Bill reminded her from time to time that he would prefer it, but he was of a previous generation. And she always pointed out that at this point marriage wouldn't change anything. They had lived together for ten out of twelve years, and there was no additional benefit to marriage, except emotional reassurance she didn't need. Ardith was a strong, self-sufficient woman and preferred her life that way.

Bill had beaten prostate cancer five years before, which had left him healthy and cancer-free but unable to perform sexually, which she accepted. She was young to give up sex, but it was a sacrifice she made for him. The relationship they had suited her, and him as well. She couldn't imagine meeting someone else now and having to adjust to a new man. She had had enough men in her life and was satisfied to have Bill West be the last one. They were both Hollywood icons and thought to be the perfect couple. In some ways, being with a man his age aged her, and in others it made her feel young. They seemed right together in everyone's eyes, including their own. He was the perfect supporting actor to her, the star.

They spent half an hour going down the red carpet, then made their way to their table, where they would have dinner and watch the awards. The Golden Globes were important and often predicted how the Oscars would go two months later. Ardith and Bill were seated at a table of comparable major stars, and the TV cameras sought them out constantly. They would be under close scrutiny all night, and Bill had already told Ardith he wanted to go home right after the awards and skip the after-parties. He still had a lot to do before he left for England two days later, and he didn't want to stay out late, although she would have enjoyed it. She didn't want to go to the parties without him, so she planned to leave with him.

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Ardith and Bill both accurately predicted who would win that night, and approved of the foreign press's choices, and after making their way back

through the photographers, they escaped without attending any of the parties and were back at Ardith's house in Bel Air before midnight. Ardith had already packed most of what Bill would need in England, but he kept adding to it, afraid she had forgotten something. She was going to pack his various medications in his briefcase, with notes about what to take when. He fell asleep with his arm around her that night, with Oscar, Ardith's tiny white toy poodle, on the bed next to her. She took him everywhere, which Bill had objected to at first, but he finally got used to him. Ardith claimed the dog was her soulmate, and his constant presence was nonnegotiable.

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Ardith was an early riser and was already at the breakfast table the next day when Bill appeared in a navy cashmere dressing gown with navy satin lapels. She looked up and smiled when she saw him. She read the *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal* every day. She had an insatiable hunger for knowing about the world around her, more so than Bill, who read *Variety* for news of the film industry, which was all that really interested him. He said that he left Ardith in charge of world news, and was sure she'd let him know if the stock market crashed or a war broke out, and she promised she would.

"Did you sleep well?" she asked him, as she did every morning, with a tender look.

"I did." He smiled at her. "I hate to leave you for two months," he said wistfully, as she poured him a cup of coffee. But he had no desire to retire either. He enjoyed his work and loved going on location. It made him feel busy and alive, and important. "I had an email from the producer this morning. Your assistant starts tomorrow, when I leave." As part of his contract, and to induce him to go on location for two months, the producers would provide an assistant to help Ardith with all the small tasks Bill did for her. He worried about her being alone for so long with no one to help her and felt mildly guilty leaving. He was still a bankable name and to keep him happy, the producers agreed to provide Ardith the assistant, she had guessed probably a young actress they knew well who wasn't currently working and needed the money. And she was grateful for whatever help an assistant would give her. She was expecting a female

assistant. She had a housekeeper who came daily during the week, and left dinner for them if they weren't going out. Ardith often drove herself around town, but used drivers too. She drove Bill when he had appointments, or he took an Uber. She thought an assistant might be superfluous, but Bill wanted her to accept it. It was free and an add-on to his contract, which his agent had negotiated. It was a perk for her to share, so she agreed somewhat hesitantly. Since it wasn't Ardith's contract, they didn't offer her the opportunity to interview whoever they hired. She was mildly worried that an unknown assistant might be more of an annoyance than a help, but she could always fire her if she didn't like her, and it made Bill feel as though he had done something special for her, so she hadn't argued about it.

"Did they tell you anything about her?" Ardith asked, as she poured skim milk into a bowl of cereal for him. She watched his diet more carefully than he did. He would have preferred bacon and fried eggs, which she didn't allow him. There was a responsibility that went with being with a man his age. She was as much a nurse as a girlfriend.

"No, they didn't," he said about the assistant. "I'm sure she'll be very nice. You can send Oscar to the groomer with her," he said, a task which he personally didn't like. Oscar had never been overly fond of Bill. Oscar knew who his friends were. Bill wasn't a "dog person" and Oscar knew it.

"I don't mind taking him," Ardith said breezily.

"What are you hearing from Morgan these days?" he asked her. He was impressed by Morgan's medical career. Even though they weren't close, Ardith frequently asked her for medical advice, which Morgan was loath to give her. Ardith checked on all of Bill's medications with her daughter, to be sure there weren't dangerous side effects the doctors hadn't informed him of.

"Nothing much. All Morgan does is work," she answered his question.

"No man in her life?" He was sorry she hadn't met someone by now, at thirty-eight. He thought she should make some effort in that direction, as she wasn't getting any younger if she wanted a husband and a child. Bill had old-school views on every subject, particularly women and relationships.

“She says she doesn’t have time,” Ardith said. She had stopped reminding her daughter of it herself. It was up to Morgan if she wanted marriage and kids. It didn’t look like it so far, and she loved her work. Morgan had never been very interested in marriage. “She’s thinking about going to Vietnam this fall, to work on a special project, pro bono, helping kids with burns. It sounds awful, but noble.”

“She’s a good girl,” Bill said admiringly, and left the table a short time later to finish packing. Ardith drove him all over town to do last-minute errands, and they were both exhausted that night when they went to bed. He had to leave the house at six A.M., as the producers were having him picked up for a nine A.M. flight to London. He was getting VIP treatment all the way, due to his age and status.

The alarm went off at five, and he was ready to leave when the car arrived. He looked lovingly at Ardith as they stood in the doorway, she in her nightgown, and Bill elegantly dressed for the trip.

He looked every inch a movie star, in a dark gray suit, blue shirt, and navy tie, with a well-cut navy overcoat, and a hat that made him look very dashing. He was excited to be going to work on a film for two months, and to have a good role, but he was sorry to leave her. She had promised to visit him in three weeks, and she was looking forward to some time alone while he was gone. She was planning to spend a night in New York on the way, to visit Morgan if her daughter had time. The plan wasn’t definite yet. Morgan didn’t make plans far in advance and said she was swamped at work.

“Try to behave while you’re gone,” Ardith teased Bill. “Don’t fall in love with the star.”

“You too,” he said, and kissed her. He had more to worry about than she did, but they were faithful to each other. She stood waving from the doorway as the car pulled away, and she envied him for a minute. She would have liked to be leaving to work on a film on location, and hoped she would be one of these days, for the right movie. It made Bill feel useful and engaged to be working. He had three suitcases for his elegant suits, and a fourth one just for shoes. He had friends in London he planned to see when they had breaks, and he wouldn’t be on set every day. The role wasn’t too physically demanding, unlike the projects Ardith usually signed

on for, which required months of preparation. His career had never been as demanding as hers. He was the only actor she'd ever been involved with who wasn't jealous of her and didn't punish her for her success, which was one of the reasons their relationship worked so well. He had never been resentful of her fame. Bill was easygoing, comfortable with who he was, satisfied with the degree of success he'd achieved, and didn't want more than that. Unlike Ardith, who had always pushed herself hard, physically and mentally, with the roles she took, always wanting to achieve more. It was why she had won two Oscars and he hadn't, and he didn't mind that either. At seventy-eight, he was just happy to still be in the game and to have work at all. He had never been as ambitious or driven as she was. They were a good fit that way.

She went back to bed, thinking about him after he left, happy for him that he would be working. It was an impressive cast, which would be fun, and a famous director whom Bill had worked with before.

She fell asleep, woke up two hours later, showered, and put on a green face mask she didn't like applying when Bill was at home. It made her look like the witch in *The Wizard of Oz*. Then she sat down to breakfast with the papers she read every day. She was halfway through the *Los Angeles Times* when there was the sound of an explosion outside, or some kind of major disturbance. She looked up in surprise, peeked through the blinds of the kitchen window, and saw an enormous motorcycle head straight for the house and spin around with a spray of gravel. The biker riding it looked like Darth Vader or a Hell's Angel, in a helmet with a black shield that concealed his face, a black motorcycle jacket, torn jeans, and biker boots, and he sat staring at the house for a minute, looking as though he was going to kill someone if he got inside. Benicia, the housekeeper, came running up to Ardith, looking terrified.

"He looks like a Hell's Angel, should I call the police?" she whispered, while Ardith tried to evaluate the situation and just how dangerous the biker was. He looked like a rough customer. Oscar was barking frantically from the noise the biker had already made with the Harley.

"Where are the panic buttons?" Ardith asked, whispering too. He looked menacing as he slowly got off the enormous motorcycle. You heard

about guys like him, who broke into homes or held people at gunpoint while they robbed them in broad daylight.

Benicia took a panic button out of a drawer and handed it to Ardith, as she continued to watch him, wondering if he was armed or going to break a window to enter the house. It had never happened before. She didn't like guns and didn't keep one in the house, although Bill thought she should, for an event such as this. Burglars and criminals in the Los Angeles area were known to be pretty bold. Ardith was holding the panic button in her hand, about to press it, while watching what the fearsome-looking biker was going to do. He took the helmet off, and she saw that he was unshaven, with a face covered in beard stubble, and had longish hair that looked as though it hadn't seen a comb in months. He had a powerful build, and she had visions of him tying them up while he robbed the house. He didn't look like a drug addict, more like a thug. He was in good shape, with broad shoulders. He walked away from the kitchen windows, strode up the front steps, and rang the doorbell, which wasn't what she expected at all. Or maybe robbers were just that brazen now, they rang the front doorbell, grabbed you, and tied you up. She hit the panic button as soon as he rang the bell and tiptoed to the front door to get a better look at him through the peephole. He was just standing there, and she knew the police would arrive in less than ten minutes. Ardith told Benicia to stay in the kitchen—she didn't want her housekeeper getting hurt—and stood on the opposite side of the front door, wondering what to do before the police arrived. Bill had been gone for exactly three hours and they were under attack. She remembered then that he had told *Variety* that he was leaving town for two months on location, which she didn't like. Not that he would be any match for the hoodlum on their front steps, who was built like a bodybuilder and looked about thirty years old, if that, probably younger.

“Who is it?” Ardith shouted through the door, curious what he'd say, and trying to sound fierce herself. Her throat was dry, and she was shaking, but the adrenaline rush of fear made her brave.

“It's Josh Gray. Ms. Law's assistant,” he said, sounding much meeker than Ardith as she let out a gasp and felt her knees go weak.

“You're *what*?” She unlocked and pulled open the door and stared at him, in her bathrobe and bare feet, with her hair piled on top of her head,

and her face green with the forgotten face mask. She and the fierce-looking alleged assistant stared at each other in disbelief.

“I’m her new assistant...your new assistant,” he said, hesitantly, assuming she was Ardith Law. “I’m supposed to start this morning. Mr. West’s producer sent me.”

“And you came to work looking like *that*?” she said with blatant disapproval. “I thought you were going to break into the house and kill us. And you’re supposed to be a woman.”

“Sorry, they sent me. For two months.” Oscar the toy poodle ran into the hall from the kitchen and barked frantically at the man. Ardith could hear sirens in the distance, and in less than a minute, two squad cars arrived and four officers ran toward them with guns drawn, as Josh Gray looked panicked.

“Hands in the air,” the police shouted at him, as one of them pushed him to the ground and he lay facedown on the lawn. Ardith looked embarrassed.

“I’m sorry,” she said to the officers, as two of them stared at her. “It was a misunderstanding. I thought it was a break-in, but it was just my assistant coming to work.” She tried to look starlike and sound charming and casual, as Josh looked up at them from the ground in shock, and she caught a glimpse of herself in the hall mirror and saw the green face mask she had forgotten. “Oh my God. I’m really sorry.” The police withdrew quickly, and Josh got to his feet and stared at her. She was unrecognizable with the green goo on her face, but she was obviously Ardith Law. It was a hell of an introduction to his new boss, and he hadn’t wanted the job anyway. Josh was an actor, out of work, his next movie had just been canceled so Bill’s producer on the film assigned him to Ardith as an assistant for two months, which Josh had been dreading.

He had read about her reputation as a diva and had no desire to be her cabana boy for two months, but he was being paid to do it and he needed the money, since the sci-fi movie he’d been hired to do hadn’t happened. But this was a lot worse than a bad movie. He was forty-one years old and had been acting in second-rate movies for the last ten years, and waiting on tables. He was still hoping for his big break, and it hadn’t happened yet. Ardith Law was clearly not it.



“Come in,” she said to him sternly, “before the whole neighborhood sees us.” She picked up Oscar, Josh walked into the front hall, and she shut the door hard behind him. “What are you doing coming to work on that *thing*? You’ll terrify the whole neighborhood. I thought you were a Hell’s Angel.”

“So you called the police?” He was still stunned at what had happened.

“You look dangerous. And why didn’t they send a woman?”

“I think they were going to, but she got a part on some teen vampire movie, so you got me instead. The sci-fi movie I was supposed to do got canceled so I was free. I have a friend in the producer’s office. He set me up for the job.”

“Great. You look like Darth Vader. You can’t come to work on that thing,” she told him as he followed her into the kitchen, and Benicia stared at them both, unable to understand why Ardith had invited their attacker into the house.

“I don’t have a car,” he said politely, wondering if she was crazy, or just weird with the green face.

“Take an Uber. My neighbors will kill me for that racket. I can give you a car to drive while you’re at work.”

“What exactly am I going to be doing?” he asked, looking worried. “They said you needed an assistant while Mr. West is away.”

“Exactly. You can take the dog to the groomer, pick up packages, do errands for me. Whatever I need,” but having a male assistant was going to be a problem. He couldn’t come into the room when she was undressed or take orders while she was in the bathtub. He wasn’t what she wanted at all, and they had never told Bill they might send a man. He was almost useless to her.

“I’m not a trained bodyguard,” he warned her.

“I don’t need one. Or I didn’t until you showed up. You scared poor Benicia to death,” she scolded him. “And you have to come to work decently dressed, you can’t run around town looking like a Hell’s Angel. Do you have a jacket, like a blazer or something?”

He nodded. “Do you want me to wear a suit and tie?” he asked dismally.

“No, a proper shirt, clean untorn jeans, and a jacket will be fine, and real shoes or running shoes, no axe murderer boots.” She looked at him with disapproval. “Do you like dogs?”

“I’ve never had one.” Oscar was still barking, and Josh didn’t look enthused at the prospect. “Does he bite?”

“Only people he doesn’t like,” Ardith said curtly. “He weighs three pounds. You don’t need to worry about him.” As she said it, Oscar bared his fangs and looked more like a rabid guinea pig than a dog. Josh looked miserable.

“Do you want me to go home and change?” She considered it, still in her green face, which she had forgotten again while berating him. He had upset them all, even the dog.

“You’re fine for today. Try not to scare us to death tomorrow.” He nodded, still remembering when he had been lying facedown on the lawn minutes before, with two armed LAPD officers pointing their guns at him. “I’ll get dressed. You can run me into Beverly Hills to do some errands, that way I won’t have to park.”

“Fine.” He nodded, still stunned by the first moments of his new job. The next eight weeks seemed frightening, given what he’d seen so far. A crazed mouse of a dog, a boss with a green face, armed police forcing him down on her front lawn. If he could have hit his own panic button, he would have. This was a lot worse than he had feared. She wasn’t a diva, she was insane, and he was stuck with her for the next eight weeks. A drink to calm his nerves would have been appealing, and then maybe she’d fire him and he wouldn’t have to deal with her for the next two months. But for now, he was on the hook, because his damn movie had been canceled and he had to be an errand boy to a lunatic. He wanted to run screaming out the door, but he knew he couldn’t. He needed the money to pay his rent. Benicia looked at him suspiciously as he sat down at the kitchen table and waited for Ardith to reappear so he could drive her somewhere. As far as Josh was concerned, she needed an exorcist, not an assistant, and as he waited, he reached down to pet the frenzied toy poodle, who bared his fangs at him again, aspiring to be Cujo.

“Be nice,” Josh whispered to him. “I’m not liking this any more than you are. I promise not to bother you if you don’t bite me. Deal?” Oscar

hesitated for a minute, stared Josh in the eye, uncurled his lips, and marched off to find his mistress, while Josh wondered what the production company would do to him if he quit on the first day. It was very tempting, and he wondered if he'd need a tetanus shot if Oscar bit him. This was definitely a high stress job, and not at all what he'd expected. But how much worse could it get? At least the cops didn't shoot him, but he couldn't bring his Harley to work, and he had to dress to cater to her. It was possibly the worst job he'd ever had, and diva didn't begin to describe it. A diva with a green face and a savage toy poodle. He couldn't wait to get home, smoke a joint, and have a martini. It was going to be a very, very long eight weeks working for Ms. Ardith Law!

## Chapter 2

When Ardith came back to the kitchen half an hour later, she was wearing slacks, a sweater, and a black cashmere coat, and looked casual and chic, with her hair pulled back in a sleek ponytail, and just a hint of makeup. She looked surprisingly normal and young, and there was no hint of the green *Wizard of Oz* face. She was carrying Oscar in a black Birkin bag. Since Josh hadn't gone home to change, he was still wearing the same Metallica T-shirt, his battered leather biker's jacket, and torn jeans. He could see now why his outfit was inappropriate compared to how she looked. He was startled by how beautiful she was without the green face, and she looked surprisingly young.

"I'm sorry," he said softly, "I'll wear decent clothes tomorrow. They didn't tell me what you'd want me to do."

"It's all right," she said more calmly. "You can stay in the car. I have to pick up something I ordered at Hermès, look at something at Chanel, and get some things to send to Mr. West in England that he forgot to buy before he left, some special skin creams and shampoo. And I want to get a book to send to my daughter," she explained, as she led him to the garage, where he saw an elegant black Rolls, a black Range Rover, and a navy blue Bentley sports car. She headed to the Bentley and handed him the keys. "I assume you can drive a car too."

Josh broke into a broad smile. "I see your point. I'd look like I stole it if you weren't in the car with me." She laughed, and looked even prettier, much to his surprise.