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KIT

JACKIE

A Novel

DAWN TRIPP

Bestselling author of GEORGIA

“A brilliant, beautiful book [that] touches the soul.”

—CHRIS BOHJALIAN, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Princess of Las Vegas*

“The historian will tell you what happened. The novelist will tell you what it felt like.”

—*E.L. Doctorow*

A LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

Jackie is a novel, a work of fiction inspired by the life of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. It is the story of a woman who projected a myriad of selves and who was, at her core, a deeply private person, with a nuanced and formidable intellect. It is also the story of a love affair, a complicated marriage, and the fracturing of identity that comes in the wake of unthinkable violence. A lover, a mother, a wife, Jackie reckoned with the decades-long challenge of living in the glare of the public eye, learning to harness the power surrounding her, to forge an authentic life and emerge as her true self: a brilliant, fiercely creative woman who grew up to be an artist and whose medium was fame.

E. L. Doctorow once said, “The historian will tell you what happened. The novelist will tell you what it felt like.” In *Jackie*, that interstice is what I wanted to explore—the space between what took place and what she might have felt; what happened to her and how the world perceived it versus how she might have experienced it.

I came to Jackie’s story through a photograph. It’s not a well-known image, but to me it was striking. A black-and-white photograph of Jackie and Jack, in the summer of 1957, at the airport. Her back is to the camera, her skirt filled with wind, a triple strand of pearls around her neck. She is standing with Jack in a doorway. He leans in toward her, perhaps to say something, perhaps to kiss her goodbye. It fascinated me—that photograph and the intimacy that was captured between these two young people. It was clear they had little idea they were being photographed. The moment was private, a faint tension between them, a stiltedness or a longing held in check, something said or left unsaid, and, also, a vulnerability, a tenderness. I found it a moment of heartbreaking beauty, a leave-taking. Jack might have been setting off on a campaign trip. Jackie was pregnant by then with Caroline. I studied this photograph and, to me, it was like fire. Over the next few days, I wrote several different passages about it, longhand, from both Jack’s and Jackie’s perspective. In *Jackie*, they each remember the photograph years after it was taken, and it matters to each of them for different reasons and in different ways.

Who was Jackie? Who were Jack and Jackie together, before they were myth? When they were just two people—young, newly married, with all the incipient joys and thorns that come with a complex love affair. Who were they? As people? Who was she?

I printed out that image, their bodies in shadow, their faces close, a bright rush of the white sky behind. The vulnerability in that tentative intimacy became the heart of this novel. I researched for years before I felt I could begin to write. The story seemed too immense at first, too public. So much had already been written. But the deeper I moved into the research, the more I began to feel how incomplete our collective understanding of Jackie might be. Doris Kearns Goodwin, who knew Jackie, once said: “Culturally something happened between her and the decade that she lived in. . . .” This statement, for me, was a key. I found it exhilarating—the possibility of creating a novel that could be an extended interrogation of Goodwin’s words.

I read many, many books about Jackie, Jack, Bobby Kennedy, and other historical figures featured in this novel. A list of works I found particularly helpful is in the Sources section at the end of the book. I also read countless articles, magazines, newspapers. I read letters and spent time at the JFK Library. I went to see places where Jackie had traveled. I read poems she loved. I read lines of Caroline’s and John’s about their mother’s passion for books and literature. In the introduction to a collection of poems I read to my sons years ago, Caroline reflected on how she inherited a love of poetry and language from her mother, and how that love gave rise to her desire to instill

a similar love in her own children, “not only because of the pleasure it will bring, but because the power of ideas, and the ability to express them, is the greatest power we have.” Those words stayed with me. They said something not just about Jackie but also about a driving belief that she had passed on to her children.

Looking at photographs, even iconic photographs—Jackie and Jack on a sailboat before they were married; Jackie holding Caroline as a baby with her little teeth digging into her mother’s string of pearls; Jackie in a white column dress, whispering with Jack in a White House corridor; Jackie and Bobby in the years after Jack was assassinated; Jackie riding her bike alone in Aquinnah—I began to wonder not about those images per se but what might have happened directly before a photograph was taken, what might have happened directly after. I began to seek out photographs that captured her when she might not have known the camera was on her: a photograph of her swinging Caroline through the surf; another of her kneeling next to John, their backs to the camera as they watch Jack leave in a helicopter from the lawn. There was a moving, free simplicity in those candid images. What might she have been thinking, feeling? There were so many facets of her—those she projected, and those projected onto her. Jackie, Jacks, Jacqueline, Miss Bouvier, Mrs. Kennedy, Mrs. Onassis, Jackie O.

At the same time, I felt that almost everything I read or learned seemed to miss dimensions of what was most human and, in doing so, missed a kind of magic. I became more curious about her apparent contradictions: her instinctive strength; her cool, at times leveling wit; her vulnerability, empathy, and warmth; her hunger for solitude and the freedom it allowed; her formidable will, her tenacity, her passion for literature, adventure, art, architecture, history; the magnitude and scope of her intellect; her fragility, fear, and how she responded to grief. The tensile relationship she had with power.

Early on, it became clear to me that her love for her children and her identity as a mother were fundamental to her character, as was her determination to construct—with measure and intention—a relatively normal life for Caroline and John and to nurture in them a spirit of inquiry and a sense of responsibility to the larger world. I saw this reflected not just in her words about her children but in their words and care for her as she aged. I was fascinated by her desire to explore, observe, learn; and by her faith in the power of art and literature as forces of social change. I realized that if I wanted to write about Jackie, I needed to absorb historical sources and non-fiction accounts, and then I needed to leave it—all of it—to enter the story in a new way, to try to capture the spirit of a bold and brilliant young woman who falls in love, builds a family, endures unthinkable violence and shattering loss. A woman who rises out of that broken dark to create a legacy, who seeks to embrace life, love, work, and continues to grow, with purpose and grace—taking risks, making mistakes, often deeply public ones. That was the story I became riveted by, a story told through a human lens, which felt close to emotional and psychological truth.

Jackie’s moments of irreverence were interesting to me, but I expected those, no matter how unexpected the swerves in her humor were. What I found revelatory was her passion, her genuine warmth, and the unique bond between her and Jack. Looking closely at candid photographs of Jack and Jackie—including that 1957 photograph and other moments of intimacy when they might not have known they were being observed—I felt how they were aligned, conspiratorial even. I felt that there was something deeply beautiful and real between them, an integrity in how they understood each other—with all their strengths, flaws, willfulness, play. Something resonant and irrevocable in the love that existed between them.

Jackie described herself once as “an outsider.” I love that she bit her nails and read *everything*. That she loved the books of theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, as well as the novels of Irish writer Edna O’Brien. She memorized whole stanzas of Tennyson’s “Ulysses” and would devour books of poetry to find lines she’d give to Jack to integrate into his speeches. She often explicitly stated she would prefer to erase her own authorship. In her career as a book editor, she didn’t like her name to be in the acknowledgments. That was interesting to me, and given all that’s been written about her, it felt new and integral to a holistic understanding of a woman and her complicated relationship

with power—a woman who'd been written into myth and who had, at certain stages of her life, taken a role in forging that myth even as she was living it. I wondered how Jackie's love of art, literature, and stories might have given rise to an instinct to incarnate art and myth through her own life. Throughout this novel, I wanted her to strike against that boundary between self-as-subject, as a perceiving, sentient being, and self-as-object, constantly being watched, deconstructed. I wanted to render the consequent sense of disconnect that can come with that split and how a woman might have worked to reconcile various dimensions of who she was and what she wanted with how the world saw her. She was clear, in her own intention, that the White House restoration was about restoring an integrity—a beauty and grace—that might express the past and future ideals of a nation, not its exact historical past. That process of the restoration felt aligned with what I sought to do in this exploration of her story.

Throughout this novel, lines or fragments of things Jackie said or wrote that are found in the public record inspired lines of dialogue and interior thought. In *Jackie*, I've attempted to capture her spirit by reimagining her voice, her thoughts, and conversations between her and others in her circle of family, friends, and acquaintances. Since this is a work of historical fiction, I adapted anecdotes and verbal exchanges that have previously appeared in biographies, published interviews, speeches, forums, and other writings. On occasion, some of Jackie's actual words from these sources are woven into the dialogue and story. Less frequently, short phrases from other sources are in the narrative. Examples of this include, but are not limited to, two lines adapted from Jackie's entry for *Vogue* magazine's Prix de Paris contest; exchanges in Parts II and III drawn from Norman Mailer's articles about Jack and Jackie; exchanges in Part IV drawn from published interviews conducted by Theodore White, Arthur Schlesinger, William Manchester, and The Warren Commission; lines of dialogue, as well as other scenes in Parts III and IV, inspired by Clint Hill's moving memoir *Mrs. Kennedy and Me*. Memoirs like Mr. Hill's provide insight into the care and respect consistently integral to Jackie's close relationships. I wanted to explore scenes and anecdotes chronicled by people who knew Jackie and who experienced firsthand the complex nuances of her heart, wit, vulnerability, and intellect—the intimate *realness* of her as a human being—and I wanted to reimagine those moments from her point of view as she might have experienced them. These are only a few examples of how published nonfiction sources have been useful in my creative process. Other works are highlighted in the Sources section at the back of this book. My use of statements that the historical record tells me were made and my reference to incidents or events that did happen are not intended to change the entirely fictional nature of this book.

There are many stellar, insightful nonfiction works written about Jackie. I believe that fiction, when it hews to the historical record, can access a different kind of truth, an experiential truth that allows us to enter the emotional heart of a story. Historical accounts are interpretations too, dependent on the selection and elision of facts, how facts are ordered and assembled, what is emphasized, where the gaps or lacunae fall. Scholarship is not static; it is an evolving body, and the historical record may always be incomplete. Truth is kaleidoscopic, continually changing according to our perspective and as new documents and understandings come to light. Women have rarely been at the center of historical narratives. Fiction can be a means of cutting past the surface of what we think we know, to reshape our collective understanding of a person, an era, a life.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was your opinion of Jackie Kennedy Onassis before you started reading this novel? How did *Jackie* change—or align with—your previous view?
2. Discuss the idea that a novel can tell us more about what a person feels than a straightforward biography. In what ways can fiction provide a “truer” picture of a person’s life?
3. What surprised you most about Jackie, as Dawn Tripp wrote her?
4. Books were central to Jackie’s life. She loved literature and poetry, and both she and Jack were passionate about reading. How did books shape Jackie’s evolution? What did they offer to her?
5. Tripp describes Jackie as “an artist whose medium was fame.” Discuss what you think she means by this. Was Jackie the first of her kind? Do you think this line could describe anyone in the public eye today?
6. How were fame and celebrity different during the 1950s and 1960s than they are today? How might that have informed choices Jack and Jackie made, and failed to make?
7. How would you characterize Jackie and Jack’s marriage? Do you think they would have stayed together?
8. What traits did Jack bring out in Jackie? What traits did Onassis bring out? How did these versions of Jackie differ from the working girl—both Jackie the Camera Girl and Jackie the Editor?
9. What parts of herself did Jackie feel she needed to hide in her marriages—or throughout her life? Which parts did she exaggerate?
10. “It occurred to me that if the marriage question were neatly settled, to a perfectly respectable catch, I might be not more trapped . . . but free,” Jackie says. Explain her reasoning.
11. Jackie’s fierce love for her children shaped her determination to create a stable sense of family despite extraordinary circumstances. Discuss how Jackie’s identity as a mother determined many key choices that she made.
12. What scene from the book stands out the most to you?
13. Jackie was a woman who worked to shape her own identity and brand in ways that were progressive for her time. How do the complex politics of power, love, marriage, and gender play out in the novel?
14. What did you think of the brief sections from Jack’s point of view? What did they add to the narrative?
15. “Such an easy net to get tangled in, isn’t it? That belief a woman sometimes has that she can change herself to change a man.” Discuss this quote. Have you ever fallen prey to this belief? Why do you think it’s so pervasive?
16. *Jackie* is the story of a woman who lives through incredible trauma and loss, who strives to forge an independent life and balance societal and cultural expectations. How are these aspects of Jackie’s experience aligned with the experiences of women today?
17. Toward the end of the novel, Jackie reflects, “And why does it seem like such a radical thing? The idea of a woman in love with her own life?” How did this resonate with you, both in terms of Jackie’s story and how we understand it, and in light of your own experience?

PLAYLIST: WRITING JACKIE

These are some of the voices that made this novel. Songs and singer-songwriters whose music and lyrics bent the shape of my mind during the years I was writing.

As I build a playlist for a book, I search out particular songs, not necessarily a soundtrack aligned with the era or specifics of the story, but songs that open the world of that story to me—its mystery, the nuances of feeling, its heart. I seek out songs and voices that move me, that evoke the emotional turns of a story—the architecture of a love affair, the private intensity of grief—the secrets, fears, and dreams that mark a life.

Because *Jackie* was a novel that I started, set aside, turned away from, then found my way back into, the full playlist is long. It took me years to feel like I understood—in a clear and intimate way—the complex structures of loss, vulnerability, identity, and desire that underpin Jackie's story. Some of these songs are ballads, with an attenuated, even piercing sense of longing; some have a brilliant combination of depth, edge, intelligence, and sass.

Jackie had it all.

—Dawn Tripp

Listen on Spotify—and get a taste below.

1. “Fields of Gold” – Sting
2. “This Woman’s Work” – Kate Bush
3. “I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free” – Nina Simone
4. “When You Say Nothing at All” – Alison Kraus & Union Station
5. “Touched by the Sun” – Carly Simon
6. “Brick by Brick” – Train
7. “When We Were Young” – Adele
8. “Who’s Gonna Ride Your Wild Horses” – U2
9. “Ultra Violet (Light My Way)” – U2
10. “Hallelujah” – k.d. lang
11. “Feels Like Forever” – Kygo, Jamie N Commons
12. “World on Fire” – Sarah McLachlan
13. “Leaving New York” – R.E.M.
14. “I Say a Little Prayer” – Aretha Franklin
15. “In the Garden” – Van Morrison
16. “Sitting” – Yusuf/ Cat Stevens
17. “One Crowded Hour” – Augie March
18. “Heavenly Day” – Patty Griffin
19. “Hold On” – Tom Waits
20. “Solsbury Hill” – Peter Gabriel
21. “The Promise” – Tracy Chapman
22. “Over the Rainbow” – Eva Cassidy

JACK AND JACKIE'S FAVORITE BOOKS

I originally came to Jackie's story through her passion for books, her love of poetry, and her faith in the power of words to inspire empathy and create change. Jack shared her passion for literature. He, too, was a voracious reader of history and biography and, like Jackie, he loved the poetry of Byron, Frost, Millay, and Langston Hughes, among many others. Jackie's reading was exceptionally varied—eclectic, far-ranging, diverse. This dimension of her was endlessly inspiring to me as a writer, a reader, and a mother who has worked to instill a lifelong love of reading in her children. As Jackie once said: "There are many little ways to enlarge your child's world. Love of books is the best of all."

Jackie

The Odyssey by Homer

The Jungle Book by Rudyard Kipling

The Poems of William Butler Yeats

Les Fleurs du Mal by Charles Baudelaire

War and Peace by Leo Tolstoy

Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys

Report to Greco by Nikos Kazantzakis

Out of Africa by Isak Dinesen

Time and Tide by Edna O'Brien

Palace Walk by Naguib Mahfouz

The Three Golden Keys by Peter Sís

JFK

Memory-Hold-the-Door (published in the US under the title *Pilgrim's Way*) by John Buchan

The Red and the Black by Stendhal

Casino Royale by Ian Fleming

Byron in Italy by Peter Quennell

Lord Melbourne by David Cecil

Marlborough: His Life and Times by Winston S. Churchill

The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire by Edward Gibbon

RECIPES

We think of Jackie as someone with a tightly controlled diet, someone who limited her breakfasts to a boiled egg and Hollywood toast. But what we don't often realize is that she was also down-to-earth and would grab a cookie off the warming rack, author Dawn Tripp notes.

"I love that," Tripp says. "I love too . . . how when she first invited Jack to Hammersmith Farm, she was very concerned about her stepbrother Yusha making daiquiris, since JFK was known to love them." Jackie's recipe for JFK's daiquiris was very precise—they had to be made just the way he liked them. "These little details say so much about who she was, as a human, and I just love that," Tripp says.

Get a "taste" of Jackie's world with these recipes.

Jackie's Favorite Poached Salmon and Haricot Verts

Poached Salmon

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1/2 cup water
- 3 sprigs of fresh dill or dried dill, to taste
- 1 sprig of fresh parsley
- 1 shallot, thinly sliced
- 1 lb. salmon filets, plus more to taste, pin bones removed
- Salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 slices of fresh lemon, optional, for serving

Directions

1. Put the wine, water, dill, parsley, and shallots in a sauté pan.
2. Bring the mixture to a simmer over medium heat.
3. Sprinkle the salmon filets with salt.
4. Place the salmon skin-side down in the pan.
5. Cover and cook until the salmon reaches desired doneness and a minimum internal temperature of 145°F, for about 5–10 minutes.
6. Serve sprinkled with freshly ground black pepper and a slice or two of lemon on the side.

Source: heartlandcooking.com/recipe/jackie-kennedy-s-favorite-poached-salmon

Haricots Verts

Ingredients

- 1 lb. haricots verts (green beans), rinsed and ends trimmed
- 1 small shallot, minced (about 1 tablespoon)
- 2 teaspoons grainy Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 3 to 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Instructions

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Prepare a large bowl of ice water and place nearby. Add the haricots verts to the boiling water and cook for 4–5 minutes or until bright green and tender-crisp.
2. Drain the haricots verts and quickly plunge them into the ice water. Let sit for 2 minutes or until cool; drain. Pat dry and place in a large bowl.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together the shallot, mustard, and vinegar. Whisk in 3 tablespoons of the olive oil. Taste—if it's too spicy you can add the additional tablespoon of olive oil. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Drizzle the vinaigrette over the haricots verts and toss to coat evenly; season with salt and pepper. Place on a platter and serve immediately.

Source: theyellowtable.com/recipes/best-haricots-verts-dijon-shallot-vinaigrette-recipe

RECIPES

Kennedy Family Chocolate Chip Cookies

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 lb. Kerry Irish Gold unsalted butter
- 1 3/4 cups packed light brown sugar
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 5 eggs
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- 4 1/2 cups flour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons water
- 3 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips

Directions

1. Beat butter and sugars until very light and fluffy.
2. Beat in the eggs.
3. Add vanilla.
4. Add dry mixture of flour combined with the baking soda and salt.
5. Blend.
6. Add 2 tablespoons of water that is room temperature to hot and blend well.
7. Add chocolate chips and blend with your hands.
8. Refrigerate.
9. Using 2 spoons, scoop 1 tablespoon of the dough off one spoon with the other and space dough 2 inches apart to allow for them to spread.
10. Bake at 350°F for 10 minutes.

Source: [food.com/recipe/kennedy-family-chocolate-chip-cookies-309308](https://www.food.com/recipe/kennedy-family-chocolate-chip-cookies-309308)

JFK's Daquiris

Ingredients

- 2 oz. light rum
- 1 oz. fresh lime juice
- 2 oz. limeade
- 2–3 drops Falernum
- Lime twist

Directions

In a shaker with ice, add rum, lime juice, limeade, and Falernum. Shake for 15 seconds or until shaker is cold. Strain into a chilled glass and garnish with a lime twist.

Source: [abcfws.com/jfks-daiquiri/jfks-daiquiri](https://www.abcfws.com/jfks-daiquiri/jfks-daiquiri)