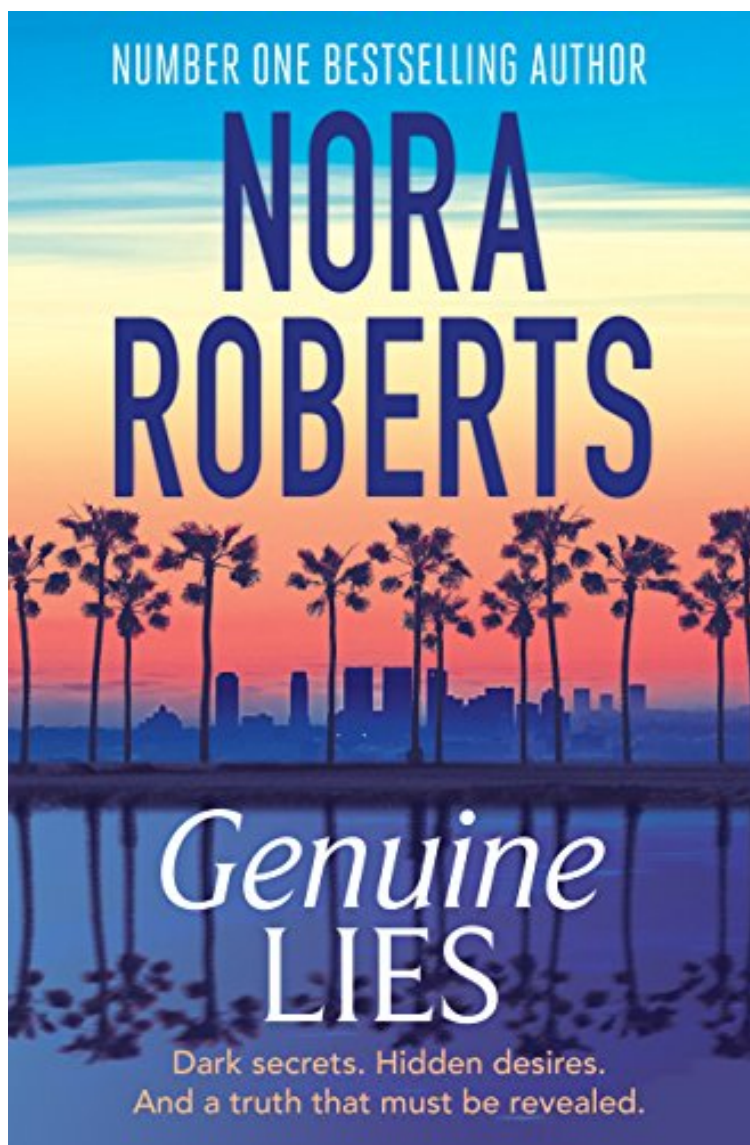


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## Genuine Lies (English Edition)



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### Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurEve Benedict is a legend: a movie goddess with two Oscars, four ex-husbands and a legion of lovers to her name. She knows the truth behind every Hollywood scandal - and now she's planning to tell all in a no-holds-barred memoir. But telling the truth can be a dangerous business, especially in a town built on dreams and secrets. Eve's stepson Paul Winthrop is worried that the book will only bring trouble. But he can't argue with Eve's choice of ghostwriter, the talented and very beautiful Julia Summers. As Paul and Julia clash over Eve's book, they also have to fight a deep and growing attraction to each other. Struggling against their intense feelings, they don't realise they are also tangled in a very dark plot. Eve has one last, great secret to reveal - and it will put them all in danger . . .ExtraitSomehow, using a combination of pride and terror, she managed to keep her head up and to choke back the nausea.It wasn't a nightmare.It

wasn't a dark fantasy she would shake off at dawn. Yet, dreamlike, everything was happening in slow motion. She was fighting to push her way through a thick curtain of water beyond which she could see the faces of the people all around her. Their eyes were hungry; their mouths opened and closed as if they would swallow her whole. Their voices ebbed and flowed like the pounding of waves on rock. Stronger, more insistent, was her heart's jerky beat, a fierce tango inside her frozen body. Keep moving, keep moving, her brain commanded her trembling legs as firm hands pushed her through the crowd and out onto the courthouse steps. The glare of sunlight made her eyes tear, so she fumbled for her sunglasses. They would think she was crying. She couldn't allow them that dip into her emotions. Silence was her only shield. She stumbled and felt a moment of panic. She could not fall. If she fell, the reporters, the curious, would leap on her, snarling and snapping and tearing like wild dogs over a rabbit. She had to stand upright, to stand behind her silence for a few yards. Eve had taught her that much. Give them your brains, girl, never your guts. Eve. She wanted to scream. To throw her hands up over her face and scream and scream until all the rage, the fear, the grief, emptied out of her. Shouted questions assaulted her. Microphones stabbed at her face like deadly little darts as the news crews busily tapped the finale of the arraignment for murder of Julia Summers. "Bitch!" shouted someone whose voice was harsh with hate and tears. "Coldhearted bitch." She wanted to stop and scream back: How do you know what I am? How do you know what I feel? But the door of the limo was open. She climbed in to be cocooned by cool air, shielded by tinted glass. The crowd surged forward, pressing against the barricades along the curb. Angry faces encircled her; vultures over a still-bleeding corpse. As the car glided away, she looked straight ahead, her hands fisted in her lap and her eyes mercifully dry. She said nothing as her companion fixed her a drink. Two fingers of brandy. When she had taken the first sip, he spoke calmly, almost casually, in the voice she had come to love. "Well, Julia, did you kill her?" \* \* \* She was a legend. A product of time and talent and her own unrelenting ambition. Eve Benedict. Men thirty years her junior desired her. Women envied her. Studio heads courted her, knowing that in this day when movies were made by accountants, her name was solid gold. In a career that had spanned nearly fifty years, Eve Benedict had known the highs, and the lows, and used both to forge herself into what she wanted to be. She did as she chose, personally and professionally. If a role interested her, she went after it with the same verve and ferocity she'd used to get her first part. If she desired a man, she snared him, discarding him only when she was done, and--she liked to brag--never with malice. All of her former lovers, and they were legion, remained friends. Or had the good sense to pretend to be. At sixty-seven, Eve had maintained her magnificent body through discipline and the surgeon's art. Over a half century she had honed herself into a sharp blade. She had used both disappointment and triumph to temper that blade into a weapon that was feared and respected in the kingdom of Hollywood. She had been a goddess. Now she was a queen with a keen mind and keen tongue. Few knew her heart. None knew her secrets. "It's shit." Eve tossed the script onto the tiled floor of the solarium, gave it a solid kick, then paced. She moved as she always had, with a thin coat of dignity over a blaze of sensuality. "Everything I've read in the last two months has been shit." Her agent, a round, soft-looking woman with a will of iron, shrugged and sipped her afternoon cocktail. "I told you it was trash, Eve, but you wanted to read it." "You said trash." Eve took a cigarette from a Lalique dish and dug into the pockets of her slacks for a book of matches. "There's always something redeeming in trash. I've done plenty of trash and made it shine. This"--she kicked the script again with relish--"is shit." Margaret Castle took another sip of vodka-laced grapefruit juice. "Right again. The miniseries--" A snap of the head, a quick glance with eyes sharp as a scalpel. "You know how I detest that word." Maggie reached for a piece of marzipan and popped it into her mouth. "Whatever you choose to call it, the part of Marilou is perfect for you. There hasn't been a tougher, more fascinating Southern belle since Scarlett." Eve knew it, and had already decided to take the offer. But she didn't like to give in too quickly. It wasn't just a matter of pride, but a matter of image. "Three weeks location-shooting in Georgia," she muttered. "Fucking alligators and mosquitoes." "Honey, your sexual partners are your business." And earned a quick snort of laughter. "They've cast Peter Jackson as Robert." Eve's bright green eyes narrowed. "When did you hear that?" "Over breakfast." Maggie smiled and settled deeper into the pastel cushions on the white wicker settee. "I thought you might be interested." Calculating, still moving, Eve blew out a long stream of smoke. "He looks like this week's hunk, but he does excellent work. It might almost make running around in a swamp worthwhile." Now that she had a nibble, Maggie reeled in her catch. "They're considering Justine Hunter for Marilou." "That bimbo?" Eve began to puff and pace more rapidly. "She'd ruin the picture. She hasn't the talent or the brains to be Marilou. Did you see her in *Midnight*? The only thing that wasn't flat about her performance was her bustline. Jesus." The reaction was exactly what Maggie had expected. "She did very

well in Right of Way. "That's because she was playing herself, an empty-headed slut. My God, Maggie, she's a disaster." The TV audience knows her name, and ... Maggie chose another piece of marzipan, examined it, smiled. "She's the right age for the part. Marilou is supposed to be in her mid-forties." Eve whirled around. She stood in a patch of sunlight, the cigarette jutting from her fingers like a weapon. Magnificent, Maggie thought as she waited for the explosion. Eve Benedict was magnificent, with her sharp-featured face, those full red lips, the sleekly cropped ebony hair. Her body was a man's fantasy--long and limber, full-breasted. It was clad in a jewel-toned silk, her trademark. Then she smiled, the famous lightning-quick smile that left the recipient breathless. Tossing back her head, she gave a long, appreciative laugh. "Dead center, Maggie. Goddammit, you know me too well." Maggie crossed her plump legs. "After twenty-five years, I should." Eve moved to the bar to pour herself a tall glass of juice from oranges fresh from her own trees. She added a generous splash of champagne. "Start working on the deal." "I already have. This project is going to make you a rich woman." "I am a rich woman." With a shrug, Eve crushed out her cigarette. "We both are." "So, we'll be richer." She toasted Eve with her glass, drank, then rattled ice cubes. "Now, why don't you tell me why you really asked me out here today?" Leaning back against the bar, Eve sipped. Diamonds glinted at her ears; her feet were bare. "You do know me too well. I've got another project in mind. One I've been thinking about for some time. I'll need your help with it." Maggie arched one thin blond brow. "My help, not my opinion?" "Your opinion's always welcome, Maggie. It's one of the few that is." She sat in a high-back wicker chair cushioned in scarlet. From there she could see her gardens, the meticulously tended blooms, the carefully trimmed hedges. Bright water fumed up in a marble fountain and glinted in its basin. Beyond was the pool, the guest house--an exact reproduction of a Tudor home from one of her most successful films. Behind a stand of palms were the tennis courts she used at least twice a week, a putting green she had lost interest in, a shooting range she had installed after the Manson murders twenty years before. There was an orange grove, a ten-car garage, a man-made lagoon, and a twenty-foot stone fence to close it all in. She'd worked for every square inch of her estate in Beverly Hills. Just as she'd worked to turn a smoky-voiced sex symbol into a respected actress. There had been sacrifices, but she rarely thought of them. There had been pain. That was something she never forgot. She had clawed her way up a ladder slippery with sweat and blood--and had been at the top for a long time. But she was there alone. "Tell me about the project," Maggie was saying. "I'll give you my opinion, and then my help." "What project?" Both women looked toward the doorway at the sound of the man's voice. It carried the faintest of British accents, like polish over fine wood, though the man had not lived in England for more than a decade in his thirty-five years. Paul Winthrop's home was southern California. "You're late." But Eve was smiling easily and holding out both hands for him. "Am I?" He kissed her hands first, then her cheek, finding them both as soft as rose petals. "Hello, gorgeous." He lifted her glass, sipped, and grinned. "Best damn oranges in the country. Hi, Maggie." "Paul. Christ, you look more like your father every day. I could get you a screen test in a heartbeat." He sipped again before handing the glass back to Eve. "I'm going to take you up on that one day--when hell freezes over." He crossed to the bar, a tall, leanly built male with a hint of muscle beneath his loose shirt. His hair was the color of aged mahogany and was windswept from driving fast with the top of his convertible down. His face, which had been almost too pretty as a boy, had weathered--much to his relief. Eve studied it now, the long, straight nose, the hollowed cheeks, the deep blue eyes with their faint lines that were a woman's curse and a man's character. His mouth was quirked in a grin and was strong and beautifully shaped. It was a mouth she had fallen in love with twenty-five years before. His father's mouth. "How is the old bastard?" she asked with affection. "Enjoying his fifth wife, and the tables at Monte Carlo." "He'll never learn. Women and gambling were always Rory's weaknesses." Because he planned to work that evening, Paul sipped his juice straight. He'd interrupted his day for Eve, as he would have done for no one else. "Fortunately, he's always had uncanny luck with both." Eve drummed her fingers on the arm of the chair. She'd been married to Rory Winthrop for a brief and tumultuous two years a quarter of a century before, and wasn't certain she agreed with his son's verdict. "How old is this one, thirty?" "According to her press releases." Amused, Paul tilted his head as Eve snatched up another cigarette. "Come now, gorgeous, don't tell me you're jealous." If anyone else had suggested it, she would have raked them clean to the bone. Now Eve merely shrugged. "I hate to see him make a fool of himself. Besides, every time he takes the plunge, they run a list of his exes." A cloud of smoke veiled her face for a moment, then was whipped up into the current from the ceiling fan. "I detest seeing my name linked with his poorer choices." "Ah, but yours shines the brightest." Paul lifted his glass in salute. "As it should." "Always the right words at the right time." Pleased, Eve settled back. But her fingers moved restlessly on the arm of the chair. "The mark of the

successful novelist. Which is one of the reasons I asked you here today. "One of?" "The other being that I don't see enough of you, Paul, when you're in the middle of one of your books." Again she held out a hand for his. "I might have been your stepmama for only a short time, but you're still my only son." Touched, he brought her hand to his lips. "And you're still the only woman I love." "Because you're too damn choosy." But Eve squeezed his fingers before she released them. "I didn't ask both of you here for sentiment. I need your professional advice." She took a slow drag on her cigarette, knowing the value of the dramatic timing. "I've decided to write my memoirs." "Oh, Christ," was Maggie's first reaction, but Paul merely lifted a brow. "Why?" Only the sharpest of ears would have heard the hesitation. Eve always had her lines cold. "Having a lifetime achievement award thrust on me started me thinking." "That was an honor, Eve," Maggie put in. "Not a kick in the pants." "It was both," Eve said. "It was fitting to have my body of work honored, but my life--and my work--are far from finished. It did cause me to reflect on the fact that my fifty years in this business have been far from dull. I don't think even someone with Paul's imagination could dream up a more interesting story--with such varied characters." Her lips curved slowly, with malice as well as humor. "There will be some who won't be pleased to see their names and their little secrets in print." "And there's nothing you like better than to stir the pot," Paul murmured. "Nothing," Eve agreed. "And why not? The sauce sticks to the bottom and burns if it isn't stirred now and again. I intend to be frank, brutally so. I won't waste my time on a celebrity biography that reads like a press release or a fan letter. I need a writer who won't soften my words or exploit them. Someone who will put my story together as it is, not as some might want it to be." She caught the expression on Paul's face and laughed. "Don't worry, darling, I'm not asking you to take the job." "I gather you have someone in mind." He took her glass to freshen her drink. "Is that why you sent the Robert Chambers bio over to me last week?" Eve accepted the glass and smiled. "What did you think of it?" He shrugged. "It was well done for its kind." "Don't be a snob, darling." Amused, she gestured with her cigarette. "As I'm sure you're aware, the book received excellent reviews and stayed on the New York Times list for twenty weeks." "Twenty-two," he corrected her, and made her grin. "It was an interesting work, if one was into Robert's bravado, and machismo, but what I found most fascinating was that the author managed to ferret out a number of truths among the carefully crafted lies." "Julia Summers," Maggie put in, debating hard and long over another piece of candy. "I saw her on Today when she was doing the promotion rounds last spring. Very cool, very attractive. There was a rumor that she and Robert were lovers." "If they were, she maintained her objectivity." Eve made a circle in the air with her cigarette before crushing it out. "Her personal life isn't the issue." "But yours will be," Paul reminded her. After setting his glass aside, he moved closer to her. "Eve, I don't like the idea of your opening yourself up. Whatever they say about sticks and stones, words leave scars, especially when they're tossed by a clever writer." "You're absolutely right--that's why I intend for most of the words to be mine." She waved away his protest, impatiently, so that he saw her mind was already made up. "Paul, without getting on your literary hobby horse, what do you think of Julia Summers professionally?" "She does what she does well enough. Maybe too well." The idea made him uneasy. "You don't need to expose yourself to public curiosity this way, Eve. You certainly don't need the money, or the publicity." "My dear boy, I'm not doing this for the money or the publicity. I'm doing it as I do most things, for the satisfaction." Eve glanced toward her agent. She knew Maggie well enough to see that the wheels were already turning. "Call her agent," Eve said briefly. "Make the pitch. I'll give you a list of my requirements." She rose then to press a kiss to Paul's cheek. "Don't scowl. You have to trust that I know what I'm doing." She walked with perfect poise to the bar to add more champagne to her glass, hoping she hadn't started a ball rolling that would ultimately flatten her. From the Paperback edition. *Revue de presse* You can't bottle wish fulfillment, but Nora Roberts certainly knows how to put it on the page. *New York Times* "Roberts does a beautiful job weaving together the movie star's titillating tales and the love story that develops." *USA Today*