

LAUREN CONRAD

L.A. Candy



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First Edition

GOSSIP

YOUR #1 SOURCE FOR ALL
THE HOLLYWOOD DIRT
THAT'S FIT TO SLING

Which up-and-coming reality starlet is in for a rude awakening? She may star in the hottest show on PopTV, but rumors are swirling about her off-camera behavior. Does L.A.'s newest darling have a sweet tooth for trouble? Well, she won't be able to keep her secrets from viewers for long. Cameras are following her every move . . . even when PopTV is not filming. Welcome to Hollywood!

A few months earlier ...

ALWAYS LOOK ON THE CLOSET FLOOR FIRST

Jane Roberts leaned against her dresser, studying the way her white silk nightie looked against her sun-kissed skin. Her loose blond curls cascaded softly over her shoulders as she pretended not to be interested in the guy in her bed.

“Come over here—or am I going to have to come get you?”

Jane smiled mischievously at the ground, then raised her face to him, staring into his chocolate brown eyes.

She slinked back to the bed, slid onto the white silk sheets, and nestled next to him.

“Janie, you’re the most amazing girl I’ve ever met. I’m so in love with you, it’s crazy,” he said, gazing into her eyes.

“Really, Caleb?” Jane smiled, and reached for him . . .

. . . and woke up to find herself lying next to some strange, sweaty guy. Some strange, sweaty, *half-naked* guy. He smelled like bad cologne and armpits and pot.

He rolled over sleepily in her direction. “Cassandra?”

Jane yanked the sheet (not silk) around herself as she sat up—which was not entirely necessary, since she was wearing her favorite faded baby blue Gap jammies that covered . . . well, everything.

“Who the hell are *you*?” she yelled.

The guy flinched at the decibel level of her voice. He rubbed his bloodshot eyes and stared at her. “Your hair was, like, black or brown last night,” he said, confused. “And really long. It kept swishing against my face when we—”

“Okay, that’s enough,” Jane cut him off.

Soooo.

This was one of Scarlett’s friends. Or, more accurately, one of Scarlett’s here-today, gone-tomorrow hookups. Jane’s BFF (and, as of a week ago, roommate), Scarlett Harp, was famous for giving guys the wrong name, or the wrong phone number, or both—deliberately, so she wouldn’t have to see them again. If it turned out the next morning that she actually *liked* the guy and wanted to see him again, she’d tell him she’d been too wasted the night before to get her contact info straight—*so sorry!*

But this rarely happened. When it came to long-term relationships, Scarlett had Commitment Issues (according to Jane) and High Standards (according to Scarlett).

In any case, WTF was this guy doing in her bed?

“*Cassandra* is in the next room,” Jane informed him curtly.

The guy grinned sheepishly. “Oh! Sorry, dude. I got

up to take a leak, and—”

“I don’t need the details.” Jane gave him a gentle shove. “Bye!” She turned away as he pushed himself from her bed, but not before catching an eyeful of the snake tatt that slithered creepily across his back. *Ew.*

Jane jumped out of bed and slammed the door behind him. She had to take a shower, like, *immediately*. Who knew how long he had been in her bed, polluting it with Old Spice and man sweat?

In the glass bowl on her nightstand, her goldfish, Penny, zipped through the water, her tail swishing excitedly. “Breakfast in two seconds, Pen,” Jane promised. She hoped she wasn’t out of fish food. Could goldfish eat granola—or maybe English muffin crumbs? What was in fish food, anyway? And, more important, *where* was the fish food?

First things first. Shower. Her eyes scanned the floor for her bathrobe. She headed for her closet, stepping over a couple of cardboard boxes that she hadn’t gotten around to unpacking yet. The boxes were marked JANE’S BEDROOM STUFF in plum eye pencil, because she hadn’t been able to find a Sharpie during her marathon packing spree back home in Santa Barbara.

She and Scarlett had moved to L.A. less than seven days ago, and she still had a lot of settling in to do. In fact, she’d been living under what her father called “battlefield conditions”: ripping open boxes at the last minute when she needed something, like her favorite blue bikini or her blender for

making strawberry-banana smoothies. Every day she promised herself that she would finish unpacking soon. Maybe tomorrow. Or maybe next month. Whenever.

Jane's procrastination was something her new roomie was familiar with. There was very little the two friends didn't know about each other. Jane had first met Scarlett fourteen years ago, in kindergarten. Back then, Jane loved to raid the costume trunk and dress up her classmates in feather boas, silk scarves, velvet capes, and strings of plastic beads. Then she'd organize tea parties, pouring pretend tea into tiny plastic teacups. But five-year-old Scarlett wouldn't play along, saying that dress-up and tea parties were "shallow games for shallow people." Jane had no idea what the word *shallow* meant then, but Scarlett had intrigued her with her rebellious personality and above-grade-level vocab.

They had been best friends ever since. Scarlett was still the same old Scarlett: a rebel with off-the-charts SAT scores who never hesitated to say whatever was on her mind. And despite the fact that she refused to brush her hair or wear anything fancier than jeans, she was gorgeous.

And Jane was still the same old Jane: wanting to dress everybody up and organize parties. In fact, that's why she had moved to L.A., after doing the backpacking-around-Europe-after-high-school thing with Scar—to intern for event planner Fiona Chen, who specialized in celebrity weddings and parties. Since Scarlett was starting her first semester at the "University of Spoiled Children," better

known as the University of Southern California, or U.S.C., the two had found an apartment together in Hollywood. It wasn't the fanciest place in the world. Or the biggest. Or the quietest—Jane's bedroom window was about twenty feet away from the entrance to the 101 freeway. This may have been a blessing in disguise though, because she shared a thin wall with Scarlett, and Scarlett had her, um, boy habit. So the steady hum of traffic was kind of like a white noise machine. Kind of.

She might not have fully unpacked yet, but Jane already had ideas for how to decorate their humble new home. With a little paint (she was thinking turquoise, tangerine, cream), some plants (bromeliads, cactus, a ficus tree with tiny Christmas lights), and some goodies from Target (silk pillows, velvet throws, faux vintage lamps), it could be a palace. (Optimism was another known Jane personality trait.)

In her head, Jane was always planning, imagining, simmering with creativity. Even now, standing in front of her closet door, she was distracted by a magazine clipping that she had taped up—a photo of an antique purple fan with tiny glass beads. Flipping through *Elle*, *Vogue*, *Dwell*, and other magazines, she was constantly inspired, thinking about what would go with an Oscar after-party or a beachy wedding or a black-tie-at-midnight birthday bash. (A lot of her friends lived to party, whereas Jane lived to *plan* parties.) She had papered her beige, or cappuccino, walls (or were they just dirty?) with clippings of gorgeous

venues and locations, flower arrangements, clever centerpieces, random pretty objects.

Jane spotted her fuzzy blue bathrobe on the closet floor, right next to Penny's fish food. *Always look on the closet floor first*, she told herself. She was really excited about her internship. She was really excited about being in L.A., period. She couldn't wait to begin enjoying her new job, new boys, new adventures, new everything. She and Scarlett were going to have so much fun.

Jane's life had always (well, almost always) been pleasant, predictable. She wasn't sure when or how, exactly, but all that was about to change. Moving to L.A., putting off college for the Fiona Chen internship . . . all of it was meant to shake things up, to make room for something new and amazing in her life.

Jane's happy fantasy was interrupted by the sound of a loud burp, then a toilet flushing. A moment later, there was a knock on her door. "Cassandra?" a guy's voice called out.

"One door down!" Jane shouted back.

Ugh. Her new and amazing life would have to wait until she and Scarlett settled on some house rules. Like . . . Scarlett was not allowed to bring home guys who were too stupid or too baked to find their way back to her room.

On second thought, maybe Jane would just invest in a lock for her bedroom door.