



The Velvet Glove

Alexandra Connor

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****Previously published as *The Houses of Razzio*****

An enthralling, expansive epic which covers the period from 1899 until 1995. It follows the lives of the Razzios and the Benning families: from Liverpool to London, and also to Rome. It is a story of a blood line which produces formidable and talented offspring, but also dangerous and lethal jealousies and a feud that tears the families apart.

Guido Razzio arrives in Liverpool on the eve of the new century. An immigrant outcast harbouring a secret, he opens a boxing gym and against the odds, becomes successful and wealthy. He is further vilified when he marries the redoubtable Mary against her mother's wishes. In amongst the spit and sawdust of the gym and the brutality of the fights, the couple bring up their children, Drago and Misia.

But the two siblings could not be more different. Devoted to her father, the ambitious Misia inherits the boxing gym after his death, but her arrogant brother is repelled by the business and trains as a surgeon, finally leaving London to practice in Rome where he is feted for his skills and becomes wealthy in his own right.

Misia marries the barrister Portland Benning. They have three sons with their youngest, Vincent, joining the family boxing and running the casino interests. In Rome, Drago marries the tentative Catherine, and grows to despise his only son, Courtney, who resents his father who is only concerned about his work. There is no love in the huge villa, only jealousies and resentment and evil is brewing. When Drago's daughter dies in London, the bitterness and unforgiving between the two families rises to insurmountable heights.

The two families remain estranged for decades – until a tragedy forces a reconciliation. Yet the evil in the Drago line has yet to run its course ...

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