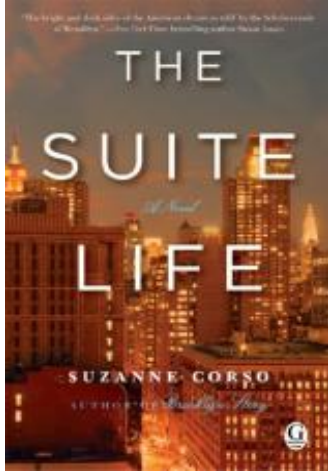


# The Suite Life

by Suzanne Corso

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## About the Book

Hailed as one of *USA Today*'s New Voices for her 2011 literary debut, **BROOKLYN STORY**, Suzanne Corso brings back the "true female voice" (*The New York Times*) of aspiring author Samantha Bonti in this breathtaking companion novel.

IT WAS THE DECADE OF BIG MONEY, BIG RISKS, BIG HAIR, AND BIG DREAMS . . . AND THERE WAS ONLY ONE BIG CITY WHERE IT COULD ALL HAPPEN

Growing up in Brooklyn, Samantha Bonti knew the writer's life she was meant to live waited across the bridge in Manhattan. Summoning the courage to break free from an abusive mobster boyfriend, Sam finally leaves Bensonhurst and begins her new life, working as a temp in a Wall Street brokerage firm. Quickly, she's swept off her feet by Wall Street player Alec DeMarco, a man of boundless energy, appetites, desires, and the wealth to indulge it all. In a whirlwind courtship, Alec showers Sam with exquisite gifts, the city's finest cuisine, spontaneous weekend getaways, and, most of all, the love and security a girl from an unstable Brooklyn upbringing craves. But when the party's over --- when Alec's high-flying career turns litigious and the big money is left on the table --- will love be enough to sustain them? With her dream of publishing her novel still very much alive, Sam can't back down now; she must choose the life that's most true to who she really is inside.

## Discussion Guide

1. While dating Alec, does Samantha turn a blind eye to warning signs about his true nature, or was she unaware of his dark side until after they married? Does Alec genuinely care for Samantha, or is she simply another acquisition to him?

2. At numerous points in the story Samantha is shocked at Alec's behavior, especially when he punches Hercules and later when he slaps her glasses off her face. Why does she continue to stay with him? Why is she so bothered by her failure to defend Hercules? What larger implications are there in her silence?
3. In what ways does Alec remind Samantha of Tony Kroon, her former boyfriend? Are the two men more alike than they are different? Why does she compare Wall Street to the mob?
4. What role does religion play in Samantha's life? When Alec asks her how she survived her relationship with Tony, she responds, "My faith sustains me" (page 30). Cite examples of how she draws on her faith during her marriage to Alec.
5. Samantha's grandmother provided her with encouragement and a loving foundation, while her mother was a drug addict and an alcoholic. How do her past relationships with each woman continue to affect her and influence her life, both in positive and negative ways? In particular, how do Samantha's fears about her mother impact her own parenting of Isabella?
6. Of all Alec's family members, why is it Giovanni to whom Samantha feels the closest? Why does she sense she no longer belongs in Alec's family? or his Wall Street crowd? once Giovanni is gone?
7. At one point Samantha wonders, "Do I even have any negotiating power anyway?" (page 203) Why does she feel so powerless in her marriage to Alec? How much of it has to do with her ceding all financial control to him? Does money equal power in a relationship?
8. Compare Samantha's two different worlds? the wealthy Wall Street circle and the theater industry. Why does she credit the latter, including her friendships with Doris, Marvin and Gregory, with preserving her sanity?
9. How does Samantha stay grounded in Alec's over-the-top world? As he inducts her into his lavish lifestyle, she vows, "No matter what happened, I fully intended to remain true to myself" (page 48). Does she manage to do this?
10. When Alec's career begins to unravel, why is Samantha better able to handle the reversal of fortune than he is? Do you agree with her theory that society was at least partly responsible for Alec's failures? as a husband, father, and businessman? by "causing him to believe that it was wealth that defined him" (page 304)?
11. Why is Samantha so determined to see that *The Blessed Bridge* be published? What does the book represent to her? How is it a touchstone in her life, especially in darker times?
12. What draws Samantha to Spiro Stavros? What does he offer her that Alec does not? Would Spiro be a good match for her? Why or why not?
13. Samantha finally admits that she no longer loves or even likes Alec. Why then does she choose to stay with him? What do you suppose the future holds for her, romantically and otherwise?

14. The recent "Occupy Wall Street" movement brought the country's top 1% into the media spotlight. After reading *THE SUITE LIFE*, what is your opinion of the world of high finance? Did the book dispel or confirm any preconceived ideas you had about Wall Street elite? How so?

## Author Bio

Suzanne is the author of two feature film screenplays, which are based on her novels. *Brooklyn Story*, a young woman's coming of age tale (Simon & Schuster Jan 2011). She has also penned other screenplays, such as *A Simple Road* and *Gary Granite*. Suzanne has also produced for the New York and London stages *Roman Nights*, about screen legend Anna Magnani and playwright Tennessee Williams. Suzanne has produced two documentaries; *Indonesia, A Personal Journey* and *HEAR THEM ROAR*, shot entirely at the Endangered Animal Rescue Sanctuary in Citra, Florida. Narrated by Lorraine Bracco. This documentary was the foundation that inspired her children's book *Sammy & Sue? Go Green Too!*, (Beaufort Books Apr 2009) an eco-friendly, environmentally educational book of this mother/daughter explorer team, geared for 5 yrs and older.

## Critical Praise

"*THE SUITE LIFE* is the bright and dark sides of the American dream. But imagine this dream being told by a fabulous friend, the Scheherazade of Brooklyn. She can mesmerize with her story, wow you with details, and keep you on the edge of your chaise longue or beach chair until the very last page. Suzanne Corso has written a dandy book!"

— Susan Isaacs, *New York Times* Bestselling Author

"Although writer Suzanne Corso moved out of her native Bensonhurst years ago, she still has the same fuhgeddaboudit attitude that she picked up during her childhood?Corso has put her straight-talking personality into her debut novel, *BROOKLYN STORY*."

— Patty Lee, *The Daily News*

## From Suzanne herself

"Yes, we lost all our money, yet I gained a strong sense of who I am—a woman who will never again be controlled by another person or defined by material possessions. These days I can wander out in a T-shirt and jeans and feel far more beautiful than I did two decades ago."

— Suzanne Corso as told to Michelle Burford in an interview with *O Magazine*

"I was determined to leave Brooklyn, have legitimate friends and become a writer. But when I tried to break up, Tony wouldn't let me—and, of course, when you're seeing a mob guy, you're not just with him; you're dating his whole network. You're completely trapped?Today I can't imagine a man telling me to shut up. Forget the furs and diamonds; I'd rather lead my own life."

— Suzanne Corso in *Glamour*

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## **The Suite Life**

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