

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Second Chance

Danielle Steel

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Second Chance

Danielle Steel

When two people couldn't be more different ...
the fun begins!

SECOND

CHANCE

PRAISE FOR
DANIELLE STEEL

"Steel pulls out all the emotional stops ... She delivers."

—Publishers Weekly

"Steel is one of the best!"

—Los Angeles Times

"The world's most popular author tells a good, well-paced story and explores some important issues ... Steel affirm[s] life while admitting its turbulence, melodramas, and misfiring passions."

—Booklist

"Danielle Steel writes boldly and with practiced vividness about tragedy—both national and personal ... with insight and power."

—Nashville Banner

"There is a smooth reading style to her writings which makes it easy to forget the time and to keep flipping the pages."

—Pittsburgh Press

"One of the things that keep Danielle Steel fresh is her bent for timely storylines ... the combination of Steel's comprehensive research and her skill at creating credible characters makes for a gripping read."

—Newark Star-Ledger

"What counts for the reader is the ring of authenticity."

—San Francisco Chronicle

"Steel knows how to wring the emotion out of the briefest scene."

—People

"Ms. Steel excels at pacing her narrative, which races forward, mirroring the frenetic lives chronicled; men and women swept up in

bewildering change, seeking solutions to problems never before faced."

—Nashville Banner

"Danielle Steel has again uplifted her readers while skillfully communicating some of life's bittersweet verities. Who could ask for a finer gift than that?"

—Philadelphia Inquirer

PRAISE FOR THE RECENT NOVELS OF
DANIELLE STEEL

SECOND CHANCE

"Vintage Steel."

—St. Paul Pioneer Press

"Gazillions of readers around the globe worship Steel's books."

—New York Post

ECHOES

"Romance and risk mark the latest adventure from the prolific Steel, as a young woman must survive the Nazi regime if she is to be reunited with her family."

—Sacramento Bee

"Get out your hankies ... Steel put her all into this one."

—Kirkus Reviews

"Courage of conviction, strength of character and love of family that transcends loss are the traits that echo through three generations of women ... a moving story that is Steel at her finest."

—Chattanooga Times Free Press

RANSOM

"This suspense novel has automatic appeal for Steel fans."

—Booklist

"A surefire best seller."

—Daily News

SAFE HARBOUR

"Danielle Steel offers readers a poignant tale of friendship, family, and hope. The relationships are full, and the unforgettable spirit with

which the characters struggle to renew their love for life marks this book a treasure."

—Oklahoman

"Her page-turning plot and charming depiction of loving relationships will endear Ms. Steel to her fans."

—Library Journal

JOHNNY ANGEL

"Call us sentimental, but sometimes we prefer the classic authors. Make it a point of pride to read Johnny Angel."

—Chicago Sun-Times

A MAIN SELECTION OF
THE LITERARY GUILD
AND THE DOUBLEDAY BOOK CLUB

Also by Danielle Steel

IMPOSSIBLE	VANISHED
ECHOES	MIXED BLESSINGS
RANSOM	JEWELS
SAFE HARBOUR	NO GREATER LOVE
JOHNNY ANGEL	HEARTBEAT
DATING GAME	MESSAGE FROM NAM
ANSWERED PRAYERS	DADDY
SUNSET IN ST. TROPEZ	STAR
THE COTTAGE	ZOYA
THE KISS	KALEIDOSCOPE
LEAP OF FAITH	FINE THINGS
LONE EAGLE	WANDERLUST
JOURNEY	SECRETS
THE HOUSE ON HOPE STREET	FAMILY ALBUM
THE WEDDING	FULL CIRCLE
IRRESISTIBLE FORCES	CHANGES
GRANNY DAN	THURSTON HOUSE
BITTERSWEET	CROSSINGS
MIRROR IMAGE	ONCE IN A LIFETIME
HIS BRIGHT LIGHT:	A PERFECT STRANGER
<i>THE STORY OF NICK TRAINA</i>	REMEMBRANCE
THE KLONE AND I	PALOMINO
THE LONG ROAD HOME	LOVE: POEMS
THE GHOST	THE RING
SPECIAL DELIVERY	LOVING

THE RANCH	TO LOVE AGAIN
SILENT HONOR	SUMMER's END
MALICE	SEASON OF PASSION
FIVE DAYS IN PARIS	THE PROMISE
LIGHTNING	NOW AND FOREVER
WINGS	PASSION's PROMISE
THE GIFT	GOING HOME
ACCIDENT	

DANIELLE STEEL

SECOND
CHANCE

To the lucky few who get a second chance,
and make it work.

And to my wonderful, wonderful children,
Beatrix, Trevor, Todd, Nick, Samantha,
Victoria, Vanessa, Maxx, and Zara,
who are my reason for living,
and the joy in my life,

with all my love,
d.s.

We are all seeking that special person who is right for us. But if you've been through enough relationships, you begin to suspect there's no right person, just different flavors of wrong.

Why is this? Because you yourself are wrong in some way, and you seek out partners who are wrong in some complementary way. But it takes a lot of living to grow fully into your own wrongness. It isn't until you finally run up against your deepest demons— your unsolvable problems—the ones that make you who you truly are—that you're ready to find a lifelong mate. Only then do you finally know what you are looking for.

You are looking for the wrong person. But not just any wrong person: the “right” wrong person—some-one you lovingly gaze upon and think, “This is the problem I want to have.”

I will find that special person who is wrong for me in just the right way.

—Andrew Boyd
Daily Afflictions

Chapter 1

The air-conditioning had just stopped working in the offices of *Chic* magazine on a blisteringly hot June day in New York. It was their second brownout of the day, and Fiona Monaghan looked as if she were ready to kill someone as she strode into her office after being trapped in the elevator for twenty minutes. The same thing had happened to her the day before. Just getting out of the cab on the way back from lunch at the Four Seasons made her feel as though the air had been sucked out of her lungs. She was leaving for Paris in two weeks—if she lived that long. Days like this were enough to make anyone hate New York, but in spite of the heat and the aggravation, Fiona loved everything about living there. The people, the atmosphere, the restaurants, the theater, the avalanche of culture and excitement everywhere—even the brownstone on East Seventy-fourth Street that she had nearly bankrupted herself to buy ten years ago. She had spent every penny she had on remodeling it. It was stylish and exquisite, a symbol of everything she was and had become.

At forty-two, she had spent a lifetime becoming Fiona Monaghan, a woman men admired and women envied, and came to love when they knew her well and she was their friend. If pressed, she could be a fearsome opponent. But even those who disliked her had to admit they respected her. She was a woman of power, passion, and integrity, and she would fight to the death for a cause she believed in, or a

person she had promised to support. She never broke a promise, and when she gave her word, you knew you could count on her. She looked like Katharine Hepburn with a little dash of Rita Hayworth, she was tall and lean with bright red hair and big green eyes that flashed with either delight or rage. Those who met Fiona Monaghan never forgot her, and in her fiefdom she was all knowing, all seeing, all powerful, and all caring. She loved her job above all else, and had fought hard to get it. She had never married, never wanted to, and although she loved children, she never wanted any of her own. She had enough on her plate as it was. She had been the editor-in-chief of *Chic* magazine for six years, and as such she was an icon in the fashion world.

She had a full personal life as well. She had had an affair with a married man, and a relationship with a man she had lived with for eight years. Before that, she had dated randomly, usually artists or writers, but she had been alone now for a year and a half. The married lover was a British architect who commuted between London, Hong Kong, and New York. And the man she had lived with was a conductor, and had left her to marry and have children, and was living in Chicago now, which Fiona considered a fate worse than death. Fiona thought New York was the hub of the civilized world. She would have lived in London or Paris, but nowhere else. She and the conductor had remained good friends. He had come before the architect, whom she had left when the affair got too complicated and he threatened to leave his wife for her. She didn't want to marry him, or anyone. She hadn't wanted to marry the conductor either, although he had asked her repeatedly. Marriage always seemed too high-risk to her, she would have preferred to do a high-wire act in the circus than risk marriage, and she warned men of that. Marriage was never an option for her.

Her own childhood had been hard enough to convince her that she didn't want to risk that kind of pain for anyone. Her

father had abandoned her mother when her mother was twenty-five and she was three. Her mother had attempted two more marriages to men Fiona hated, both were drunks, as her father had been. She never saw her father again after he left, nor his family, and knew only that he had died when she was fourteen. And her mother had died when she was in college. Fiona had no siblings, no known relatives. She was alone in the world by the time she was twenty, graduated from Wellesley, and made it on her own after that. She crawled her way up the ladder in minor fashion magazines and landed at *Chic* by the time she was twenty-nine. Seven years later, she became editor-in-chief, and the rest was history. Fiona was a legend by the time she was thirty-five, and the most powerful female magazine editor in the country at forty.

Fiona had nearly infallible judgment, an unfailing sense for fashion and what would work, and a head for business that everyone she worked with admired. And more than that, she had courage. She wasn't afraid to take risks, except in her love life. In that arena she took none at all, and had no need to. She wasn't afraid to be alone, and in the past year and a half she had come to prefer it. She was never really alone anyway, she was constantly surrounded by photographers, assistants, designers, models, artists, and a flock of hangers-on. She had a full calendar and an active social life and a host of interesting friends. She always said that it wouldn't bother her if she never lived with anyone again. She didn't have room in her closets anyway, and had no desire to make room for anyone. She had enough responsibilities at the magazine, without wanting to be responsible to or for a man as well. Fiona Monaghan had a breathtakingly full life, and she loved all of it. She had a high tolerance for, and a slight addiction to, confusion, excitement, and chaos.

She was wearing a long narrow black silk skirt that fell in tiny pleats from her waist, as she walked off the elevator she'd been trapped in for twenty minutes, on her way back from lunch. She wore a white peasant blouse with it, off her shoulders, with her long red hair swept up in a loose knot. Her only piece of jewelry was a huge turquoise bracelet that nearly devoured her wrist and was the envy of all who saw it. It had been made for her by David Webb. She was wearing high-heeled black Manolo Blahnik sandals, an oversize red alligator Fendi bag, and the entire combination of accessories and long, clean lines gave an impression of inimitable elegance and style. Fiona was as dazzling as any of the models they photographed, she was older but just as beautiful, although her looks meant nothing to her. She never traded on sex appeal or artifice, she was far more interested in the soul and the mind, both of which shone through her deep green eyes. She was thinking about the cover for the September issue, as she sat down at her desk, kicked off her sandals, and picked up the phone. There was a new young designer in Paris she wanted one of her young assistant editors to research and pursue. Fiona was always on a mission of some kind, it took a flock of underlings and minions to keep up with her, and she was feared as much as she was admired. You had to move fast to match her pace, and she had no patience for slackers, shirkers, or fools. Everyone at *Chic* knew that when Fiona shined the spotlight on you, you'd better be able to come up with the goods, or else.

Her secretary buzzed her ten minutes later to remind her that John Anderson was coming in to see her in half an hour, and she groaned. She had forgotten the appointment, and between the heat, the lack of air-conditioning, and the interlude in the elevator, she wasn't in the mood. He was the head of the new ad agency they'd hired, it was a solid old firm that, thanks to him, had come up with some

exciting new ideas. It had been her decision to make the switch, and she had met nearly everyone in the agency but him. Their work and their track record spoke for itself. The meeting was merely a matter of form to meet each other. He had been reorganizing the London office when she decided to hire the firm, and now that he was back in town, they had agreed to meet. He had suggested lunch, but she didn't have time, so she'd suggested he come to her office, intending to keep it brief.

She returned half a dozen calls before the meeting, and Adrian Wicks, her most important editor, dropped in for five minutes to discuss the couture shows in Paris with her. Adrian was a tall, thin, stylish, somewhat effeminate black man who had been a designer himself for a few years before he came to *Chic*. He was as smart as she was, which she loved. Adrian was a graduate of Yale, had a master's in journalism from Columbia, worked as a designer, and had finally landed at *Chic*, and together they were an impressive team. He was her right arm for the last five years. He was as dark as she was pale, as addicted to fashion as she, and as passionate about his ideas and the magazine as Fiona. In addition, he was her best friend. She invited him to join the meeting with John Anderson, but he was meeting with a designer at three, and just as Adrian left her office, her secretary told her that Mr. Anderson had arrived, and Fiona asked her to show him in.

As Fiona looked across her desk to the doorway, she watched John Anderson walk in, and came around her desk to greet him. She smiled as their eyes met, and each took the other's measure. He was a tall, powerfully built man with impeccably groomed white hair, bright blue eyes, and a youthful face and demeanor. He was as conservative as she was flamboyant. She knew from his biographical material, and mutual friends, that he was a widower, he had just turned fifty, and he had an M.B.A. from Harvard. She also

knew he had two daughters in college, one at Brown and the other at Princeton. Fiona always remembered personal details, she found them interesting, and sometimes useful to help her know who she was dealing with.

"Thank you for coming over," she said pleasantly as they stood eyeing each other. She was nearly as tall as he was in the towering Blahnik heels she had slipped back on before she came to greet him. The rest of the time, she loved walking around her office barefoot. She said it helped her think. "I'm sorry about the air-conditioning. We've had brownouts all week." She smiled agreeably.

"So have we. At least you can open your windows. My office has been like an oven. It's a good thing we decided to meet here," he said with a smile, glancing around her office, which was an eclectic hodgepodge of paintings by up-and-coming young artists, two important photographs by Avedon that had been a gift to her from the magazine, and layouts from future issues leaning against the walls. There was a mountain of jewelry, accessories, clothes, and fabric samples almost entirely covering the couch, which she unceremoniously dumped on the floor, as her assistant brought in a tray with a pitcher of lemonade and a plate of cookies. Fiona waved John Anderson toward the couch, and handed him a glass of the ice-cold lemonade a moment later, and sat down across from him. "Thank you. It's nice to finally meet you," he said politely. She nodded, and looked serious for a moment as she watched him. She hadn't expected him to look quite that uptight, or be that good-looking. He seemed calm and conservative, but at the same time there was something undeniably electric about him, as though there were an invisible current that moved through him. It was so tangible she could feel it. Despite his serious looks, there was something very exciting about him.

She didn't look as he had expected her to either. She was sexier, younger, more striking, and more informal. He had

expected her to be older and more of a dragon. She had a fearsome reputation, not for being disagreeable but for being tough, though fair, in her dealings, a force to be reckoned with. And much to his surprise, as she smiled at him over the lemonade, she seemed almost girlish. But despite her seemingly friendly air, within minutes she got to the point of their meeting, and was clear and concise in outlining *Chic's* expectations. They wanted good solid advertising campaigns, nothing too trendy or exotic. The magazine was the most established in the business, and she expected their advertising to reflect that. She didn't want anything wild or crazy. John was relieved to hear it. *Chic* was a great account for them, and he was beginning to look forward to his dealings with her. More so than before the meeting. In fact, as he drank a second glass of lemonade, and the air-conditioning finally came back on, he had actually decided that he liked her. He liked her style, and the straightforward way she outlined their needs and issues. She had clear, sound ideas about advertising, just as she did about her own business. By the time he stood up to leave, he was almost sorry the meeting was over. He liked talking to her. She was tough and fair. She was totally feminine, and strong at the same time. She was a woman to be feared and admired.

Fiona walked him to the elevator, something she did rarely. She was usually in a hurry to get back to work, but she lingered for a few minutes, talking to him, and she was pleased when she went back to her office. He was a good man, smart, quick, funny, and not as stuffy as he looked in his gray suit, white shirt, and sober navy tie. He looked more like a banker than the head of an ad agency, but she liked the fact that he wore elegant expensive shoes that she correctly suspected he'd bought in London, and his suit was impeccably tailored. He had a definite look about him, in sharp contrast to her own style. In all things, and certainly

her taste and style, Fiona was far more daring. She could wear almost anything, and make it look terrific.

She left the office late that afternoon and as always was in a hurry. She hailed a cab outside their offices on Park Avenue, and sped uptown to her brownstone. It was after six when she got home, already wilted from the heat in the cab. And the moment she walked in she could hear chaos in her kitchen. She was expecting guests at seven-thirty. She kept her house ice-cold, as much for her own comfort as for that of her ancient English bulldog. He was fourteen years old, a miraculous age for the breed, and beloved by all who knew him. His name was Sir Winston, after Churchill. He greeted her enthusiastically when she got home, as she hurried into the kitchen to check on progress there, and was pleased to find her caterers working at a frenzied pace, preparing the Indian dinner she had ordered.

Her part-time house man was wearing a loose yellow silk shirt, and red silk harem pants made of sari fabric. He loved exotic clothes, and whenever possible, she brought him wonderful fabrics from her travels.

She was always amused by what he turned them into. His name was Jamal, he was Pakistani, and although he was a little fey at times, most of the time he was efficient. What he lacked in expertise in the domestic arts, he made up for in creativity and flexibility, which suited her to perfection. She could spring a dozen people or more on him for dinner at the drop of a hat, he would manage to do fabulous flower arrangements and come up with something for the guests to eat, although tonight the caterers were performing that task for him. There were half a dozen of them in Fiona's kitchen, and Jamal had covered the center of the dining table with moss, delicate flowers, and candles. The whole room had been transformed into an Indian garden, and he had used fuchsia silk place mats and turquoise napkins. The

table looked sumptuous. It was just the right look for one of Fiona's parties, which were legendary.

"Perfect!" she approved with a broad smile, and then dashed upstairs to shower and change, with Sir Winston lumbering slowly behind her. By the time the dog got upstairs, Fiona had peeled off her clothes and was in the shower.

Forty-five minutes later, she was back downstairs again, in an exquisite lime-green sari. And an hour after that, there were two dozen people in her living room, conversing loudly. They were the usual crop of young photographers, writers her own age, a famous artist and his wife, an ancient editor of *Vogue* who had been Fiona's mentor, a senator, a flock of bankers and businessmen, and several well-known models—a standard evening at Fiona's. Everyone was having a good time, and by the time they reached the dinner table, the conversations had intertwined, people felt like old friends, and Jamal passed trays of champagne and the hors d'oeuvres the caterers had provided. The evening was a success almost before it started. Fiona loved evenings like that, and entertained often. Her dinner parties always appeared casual but in fact were always more carefully orchestrated than she admitted, however impromptu or last minute the arrangements. She was a perfectionist, although she enjoyed eclectic people, and collected an odd assortment of acquaintances from a wide range of artistic fields. And by coincidence more than design, the people at her table were often wonderful to look at. But the star who always stood out among them as the most intriguing, most fashionable, most impressive was Fiona. She had a gift of style and grace and excitement like few others. And she drew interesting people to her like a magnet.

When the last of the guests left at two A.M., she went up to bed, after thanking Jamal for his efforts. She knew that he would leave the house impeccable, the caterers had left the