

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Miracle  
Danielle Steel

## **About the Book**

Out of the storm, a miracle happens...

New Year's Eve - and the storm of the century hits California. What happens in the storm's wake will deeply affect three people: Quinn Thompson, who has built a barrier around himself since his wife's death; his neighbour Maggie Dartman, still grieving a terrible loss; and Jack Adams, a carpenter who will repair Quinn's and Maggie's homes and who hides a painful secret.

Quinn, a man who has scaled heights of success in business at the expense of his family, is now adrift, waiting as the finishing touches are made to his newest passion, a 180-foot yacht he plans to sail around the world. Consumed by guilt, focused only on escaping to the sea, Quinn faces a choice - between a safe haven and an adventure of the heart. The choice he makes will take him on an extraordinary journey and into a second, terrifying storm, one that will bring him danger... or deliverance.

## **Contents**

Cover

About the Book

Title Page

Dedication

Epigraph

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

About the Author

Also by Danielle Steel

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DANIELLE STEEL

MIRACLE

To miracles,  
large and small,  
that bring forgiveness  
And to great loves,  
oh so rare,  
and hard won.

with all my love,  
d.s.

“... all human wisdom was contained  
in these two words: Wait and Hope!”

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

*The Count of Monte Cristo*

# 1

THE SAILING YACHT *Victory* made her way elegantly along the coast toward the old port in Antibes on a rainy November day. The sea was choppy, as Quinn Thompson stood silently on the deck, looking up at the sails, savoring his last few moments aboard her. He didn't mind the weather or the gray day, or even the rough seas. He was an inveterate and seasoned sailor. The *Victory* was a hundred-fifty-foot sailboat, with auxiliary engines, that he had chartered from a man he had done business with frequently in London. Her owner had had business reversals that year, and Quinn had been grateful to have use of the boat since August. He had used her well, and the time he had spent aboard had been good for him in every way. He was healthy, strong, and more peaceful than he had been when the trip began. He was a handsome, vigorous, youthful-looking man. And more than he had been in months, he was resigned to his fate.

He had boarded the yacht in Italy, and after that spent time in Spanish and French waters. He had hit a traditionally rough patch in the Gulf of Lions, and relished the excitement of a brief and unexpected storm. He had sailed on to Sweden and Norway afterward, and returned slowly through several German ports. He'd been on the boat for three months, and it had served a useful purpose. It had given him all the time away that he needed, time he had used well to think and recover from all that had occurred. He had been stalling his return to California for months. He had no reason to go home. But with winter

setting in, he knew he couldn't delay his return much longer. The owner of the *Victory* wanted her in the Caribbean for his own use by Christmas, as they had discussed when they agreed to the charter. Quinn had paid a fortune for three months aboard, but he didn't regret a penny of it. The stiff price of the charter meant nothing to Quinn Thompson. He could afford that, and a great deal more. Materially and professionally, he had been a very lucky man.

The time on board had also served to remind him of how passionately he loved sailing. He didn't mind the solitude, in fact he thrived on it, and the crew were both expert and discreet. They had been impressed by his skill, and quickly realized he knew far more about the *Victory*, how to sail her hard and well, than did her owner, who knew next to nothing. Above all, for Quinn, she had provided both a means of escape and a gentle haven. He had particularly enjoyed his time in the fjords, their stern beauty seemed to suit him far more than the festive or romantic ports in the Mediterranean, which he had assiduously avoided.

His bags were packed in his cabin as he stood on deck, and, familiar with the efficiency of the crew by then, he knew that within hours of his departure, all evidence of his time aboard would have vanished. There were six male crew members on board, and one woman, the wife of the captain, who acted as stewardess. Like the others, she had been discreet and polite, and rarely said much to him, and like the owner, the entire crew was British. And he and the captain had enjoyed a comfortable and respectful rapport.

"Sorry for the chop on the way in," the captain said with a smile as he joined Quinn on deck. But he knew by now that Quinn wouldn't mind. Quinn turned to nod at him, undisturbed by the waves breaking over the bow, and the rain beating down on them. He was wearing foul weather gear, and in fact, he liked the challenge of hard sailing, rough seas, and the occasional storm. The only thing he



didn't like was leaving. Quinn and the captain had spent hours talking about sailing, and the places they'd been. And the captain couldn't help but be impressed by Quinn's extensive travels, and the depth of his knowledge. Quinn Thompson was a man of many hats and many faces, a legend in the world of international finance. The yacht's owner had told the captain before Quinn arrived that he had been a man of humble beginnings who had made a vast fortune. He had even gone so far as to call him brilliant, and after three months on the boat with him, the captain didn't disagree with that opinion. Quinn Thompson was a man whom many admired, some feared, a few hated, sometimes with good reason. Quinn Thompson was direct, sure, powerful, mysterious in some ways, and unrelenting about anything he wanted. He was a man of infinite ideas, endless imagination in his field, and few words, except when he was in one of his rare expansive moods, which the captain had enjoyed as well, usually after a few brandies. For the most part, they had kept their conversations confined to sailing, a topic that they both enjoyed, more than any other.

The captain knew Quinn had lost his wife the previous spring, and Quinn had mentioned her once or twice. There were times when a wistful look came over him, and some somber days in the beginning. But for most of the hours they stood beside each other on deck, Quinn kept his own counsel. The captain knew he had a daughter as well, because he'd mentioned her once, but Quinn seldom talked about her either. He was a man who was quick to share ideas, but rarely feelings.

"You ought to make Mr. Barclay an offer for the *Victory*," the captain said hopefully as the crew took down the sails, and he turned on the motor, glancing at Quinn over his shoulder as they headed into port. Quinn smiled in answer to the comment. His smiles were hard won, but when they came, they were well worth it. They lit up his face like

summer sunshine. The rest of the time, and far more frequently, he seemed lost in winter. And when he laughed, he was a different person.

"I've thought about it," Quinn admitted, "but I don't think he'd sell her." Quinn had asked John Barclay before chartering her, if there was any chance he would, and Barclay had said only if he had to, and had admitted he would give up his wife and children before his sailboat, a point of view Quinn both understood and respected. He didn't repeat the comment to the captain. But in the past three months, Quinn had fallen in love with the idea of buying a boat. He hadn't owned one in years, and there was no one to stop him now.

"You should have a boat, sir," the captain ventured cautiously. He would have loved to work for him. Quinn was hard but fair, respectful, and exciting to sail with. He had done things with the *Victory*, and gone places, John Barclay would never have dared or dreamed of. The entire crew had loved the three months they had spent sailing for Quinn Thompson. And Quinn himself had been thinking of buying or building a boat since August, especially now that his months on the *Victory* were over. It would be the perfect answer to getting out of San Francisco. He had already decided to sell the house, and was thinking of buying an apartment somewhere in Europe. At sixty-one, he had been retired for nearly two years, and with Jane gone, he had no reason to stay in San Francisco. He realized that a boat might restore joy to his life. In fact this one already had. He hated the fact that people often disappointed each other. But boats never did.

"I've been coming to the same conclusion myself all morning," Quinn said quietly. He hated to leave the *Victory*, and he knew she was sailing in two days for Gibraltar, and after that to St. Martin, where her owner was meeting her for Christmas with his wife and children. The price Quinn had paid to charter her was helping Barclay to afford her,

and had made an enormous difference. She would surely be his for at least another year as a result. "Do you know of anything comparable up for sale at the moment?" Quinn asked with interest, as the captain kept his eyes straight ahead, watching their course as they came into the channel, and he pondered the question.

"Nothing up to your standards, I suspect, not a sailboat." There were always large power boats changing hands, but fine sailboats of the caliber Quinn would want were harder to come by. In most cases, their owners loved them—and wouldn't part with them easily. He was still thinking about it when the first mate joined them, and the captain asked him the question, and Quinn was intrigued when the young man nodded.

"I heard about one two weeks ago, when we left Norway. She's not finished yet, but she's up for sale. She's still in a shipyard in Holland. Bob Ramsay commissioned her last year, and he just decided to sell her. He wants a bigger one. I hear the one for sale's a beauty." All three men knew she would be if she had been commissioned by Bob Ramsay, he was a notable sailor with three handsome yachts he competed with in all the European races, and he generally took all the prizes. He was an American with a French wife and they lived in Paris. He was a hero in the international sailing world, and all the boats he had built were exquisite.

"Do you know which yard she's in?" Quinn asked, suddenly wondering if this was the answer to his prayers, as the young man brightened.

"I do. I'll call them for you, if you like, as soon as we dock."

Quinn was leaving on a flight to London that afternoon, spending the night at a hotel, and flying to San Francisco the next morning. He had called his daughter, Alex, in Geneva about seeing her before he flew home, and she had said she was too busy with the children. He knew the real reason for her not seeing him, and he no longer had the

energy to fight it. The battles between them were too bitter and had gone on for too long. She had never forgiven him for what she perceived as his failures in her childhood. And she had told him months before that she would never, ever forgive him for calling her so late in her mother's illness. In fact, he realized now that blind hope and denial had kept him from calling her earlier than he had. Both he and Jane had refused to believe she would actually die. They kept telling themselves and each other that she would survive. And by the time Jane agreed to let him call their daughter, it was only days before the end. And even then they didn't think she would die. He wondered at times if he and Jane had wanted to be alone for her last days, and had unconsciously failed to include Alex.

When Alex had flown home to see her mother, Jane was ravaged. Alex had arrived two days before Jane died, and she was either in such extreme pain or so heavily sedated, Alex had hardly been able to speak to her mother, except in rare lucid moments when Jane continued to insist she would be fine. Alex had been numb with grief and shock, and blazed with fury at her father. All her misery and sense of loss had channeled itself into the resentment she already felt for him, and the flames of disappointment and grief and anguish were fanned into outrage. She sent Quinn one searing letter of agony as soon as she returned home, and for months after that she hadn't returned a single one of his phone calls. In spite of Jane's final pleas for them to make peace and take care of each other, Quinn had all but given up on Alex since his wife's death. He knew how distressed Jane would have been over their estrangement, and he felt badly about it, but there was nothing he could do. And in his heart, he thought Alex was right. Without meaning to, he and Jane had cheated her of enough time to say good-bye.

The phone call he had made two days before from the *Victory* had been one last futile attempt to reach out to her,

and he had been met by an icy rebuff. There seemed to be no way now to bridge the chasm, and her anger over her childhood had smoldered for too long. For all the years he had been building his empire, he had spent almost no time with Jane and the children. She had forgiven him, Jane always understood what he was doing, and what it meant to him, and never reproached him for it. She had been proud of his victories, whatever they cost her personally. But Alex had come to hate him for his absences, and his seeming lack of interest in her early life. She had told him that on the day of the funeral, along with her fury at not having been warned of the severity of her mother's illness. And although she had her mother's fragile looks, she was as tough as he was—in some ways even more so. She was as unrelenting and unforgiving as he had often been in the past. And now he had no defense in the face of her ire. He knew she was right.

There was a tender side of Quinn that few knew, and Jane had always been certain of, a soft underbelly that he kept well concealed, and that she cherished, even when it was least visible. And while Alex had his strength, she had none of Jane's compassion. There was an icy side to her that even frightened Quinn. She had been angry at him for years, and it was clear she intended to stay that way, particularly now that she felt he had cheated her of her last days with her mother. That was the final blow to their relationship as father and daughter. And he realized now, in the face of Alex's accusations, that he had wanted Jane to himself for her last days, and hadn't wanted to share her with Alex. Terrified of Jane's death, he had clung to denial. There had been so much to say to each other, after all the years he'd been away, all the things he had never said to her, and never thought he had to. In the end, he had said it all to her, they both had. And it was in those last weeks that she shared all her journals and poems with him. He had

always thought he knew his wife, and it was only at the very end that he discovered he hadn't.

Beneath her calm, quiet, bland exterior had lived a woman of boundless warmth and love and passion, all of which had been directed at him, and the depths of which he had never fully understood until far too late. More than anything Alex could accuse him of, he now knew that he could never forgive himself for it. He had hardly ever been there for Jane. He realized he had abandoned his wife even more than he had abandoned their daughter. Jane should have been as angry at him as Alex was, but all she had done was love him more, in his endless absences. He was deeply ashamed of it and consumed with guilt he knew he would suffer for a lifetime. It seemed an unpardonable crime even to him, and even more so now that he had read all her journals. He had brought them with him on the trip, and had been reading them for months, each night. And even more than the journals, her love poems sliced into him like scalpels and tore his heart out. She had been the most compassionate, forgiving, generous woman he had ever known, and she had been a treasure far greater than he had ever suspected. The worst of all ironies was that it was only now that she was gone that he understood it. Too late. So much, much too late. All he could do now was regret his failures and her loss for the rest of his lifetime. There was no way to repair it, or make amends, or even atone for it, although he had apologized for it before she died. Worse yet, Jane had assured him he had nothing to regret, nothing to reproach himself for. She promised him that she had been happy with him for the years they shared, which only made his guilt worse. How could she have been happy with a man who was never there, and paid almost no attention to her? He knew what he had been guilty of, and why he had done it. He had been obsessed with his empire, his achievements, and his own doings. He had rarely thought of anyone else, least of all his wife and children. Alex had

every right to be angry at him, he knew, and Jane had had every reason to hate him, and didn't. Instead she had written him love poems and was fiercely devoted to him and Quinn knew better than anyone how little he deserved it. In fact, he had dreams about it almost every night now. Dreams in which she was begging him to come home, and pleading with him not to abandon her, or forget her.

Quinn had retired the year before she died, and they had spent a year traveling to all the places he wanted to explore. As usual, Jane had been a good sport about following him wherever he wanted. They went to Bali, Nepal, India, the far reaches of China. They had gone back to places they both loved, Morocco, Japan, Turkey. They hadn't stopped traveling all year, and for the first time in years, grew ever closer to each other. He had forgotten how entertaining she was, what good company, and how much he enjoyed her. They fell in love all over again, and had never been happier together than they were then.

It was in Paris that they discovered how ill she was, and the seriousness of it. She had had stomach problems for months, which they both thought were a harmless by-product of their travels. They flew home after that and had it checked out again. And it was even worse than they thought, but even then, they had both denied it. He realized now from her journals that she had understood the severity of what ailed her before he did. But she remained convinced nonetheless that she would beat it. She had been suffering in silence for months before that, not wanting to spoil the traveling he wanted so much to do, and had waited so long for. She was upset because their coming home had meant canceling a trip to Brazil and Argentina. It all seemed so pointless now, and so empty without her.

Jane was fifty-nine when she died, and they had been married for thirty-seven years. Alex was thirty-four, and her brother Doug would have been thirty-six now, if he had lived. He died in a boating accident at thirteen, and Quinn

realized now that he had scarcely known him. He had much to regret and repent for. And he had the rest of his life in which to do it. Jane had died in June, and now, as they sailed into port in Old Antibes, it was November. It had been an agonizing, interminable five months without her. And Quinn knew with absolute certainty that he would never forgive himself for having failed her. His dreams and Jane's journals were a constant reminder of his failures. Alex had long since tried him and found him guilty. He didn't disagree with her.

The captain came to Quinn's cabin after they docked, to give him the information about the sailboat that was under construction and up for sale in Holland. He had just called the boatyard. He was smiling as he crossed the threshold.

"She's a hundred and eighty feet long, and she sounds like a beauty," he beamed. "She's a ketch, and the yard says there's been some interest, but so far no one's bought her. Ramsay only just decided to sell her." The two men's eyes met, and a slow smile spread over Quinn's face. It was the happiest the captain had seen him. For most of the trip, Quinn had seemed tormented. "Are you going to go and see her, sir?" the captain asked with interest. "I'd be happy to change your flight for you. There's a flight for Amsterdam half an hour after the one you were going to take to London."

Quinn couldn't believe what he was hearing. It was more than a little crazy. A hundred-and-eighty-foot sailboat. But why not? He could sail around the world for the rest of his life. He couldn't think of anything he would have liked better. He could live on the boat, and sail around to all the places he loved, and those where he hadn't been yet. All he needed with him were Jane's poems and journals. There was nothing else in the world now that mattered to him. He had read them again and again. Their crystal clarity and open love for him were like a blow each time he read them.