

# DANIELLE STEEL

## THE KLONE AND

♥  
I

A High-Tech Love Story

Delacorte  Press

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To Tom Perkins,  
and his many faces,  
Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde,  
and Isaac Klone, who,  
of them all, gives the best  
jewelry . . .  
but most of all, to Tom,  
for giving me the Klone,  
and so many good times.

With all my love,  
d.s.

## Chapter One

My first, and thus far only, marriage ended exactly two days before Thanksgiving. I remember the moment perfectly. I was lying on the floor of our bedroom, halfway under the bed, looking for a shoe, with my favorite well-worn flannel nightgown halfway to my neck, when my husband walked in, wearing gray flannel slacks and a blazer. As always, he looked immaculate, and was impeccably dressed. I heard him say something vaguely unintelligible as I found the glasses I'd been looking for, for two years, a fluorescent plastic bracelet I never knew was gone, and a red sneaker that must have belonged to my son, Sam, when he was a toddler. Sam was six by the time I found the lost sneaker. So much for thorough cleaning at our house. Apparently none of the parade of cleaning ladies I had ever looked under the beds.

As I emerged, Roger looked at me, and I politely rearranged the nightgown. He looked embarrass-

ingly formal, as I glanced at him, the top of my hair still sticking up from my foray under the bed.

“What did you say?” I asked with a smile, unaware that one of the blueberries from the muffin I’d eaten an hour before was delicately lodged next to my eye-tooth. I only discovered it half an hour later, when my nose was red and I was crying, and happened to see myself in the mirror. But at this point in the saga, I was still smiling, with no inkling of what was to come.

“I asked you to sit down,” he said, eyeing my costume, my hairdo, and my smile, with interest. I have always found it difficult to discuss anything intelligent with a man when he is dressed for Wall Street, and I am wearing one of my well-loved nightgowns. My hair was clean, but I hadn’t had time to comb it since the night before, my nails were trimmed and also clean, but I had given up wearing nail polish sometime in college. I thought it made me look more intelligent not to wear it. Besides, it was too much trouble. After all, I was married. At that point, I was still suffering from the delusion that married women don’t have to try as hard. Apparently, I was sorely mistaken, as I discovered only moments later.

We sat down across from each other in the two satin-covered chairs at the foot of our bed, as I thought again how stupid it was to have them there. They always looked to me as though we were meant to sit there and negotiate going to bed. But Roger

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said he liked them that way, apparently they reminded him of his mother. I had never looked past that statement for a deeper meaning, which was, perhaps, part of the problem. Roger talked a lot about his mother.

He looked as though he had something important to say to me, while I carefully buttoned up the nightgown, sorry that I had not yet made it into a sweat-shirt and blue jeans, my daily costume much of the time. Sex appeal was not foremost on my mind. Responsibility was, my kids were, being Roger's wife was important to me. Sex was something we still played at, once in a while. And lately it had not been often.

"How are you?" he asked, and I grinned again, somewhat nervously, the mischievous little blueberry undoubtedly still twinkling naughtily at him.

"How am I? Fine, I think. Why? How do I look?" I thought maybe he meant I looked sick or something, but as it so happened, that came later.

I sat, waiting expectantly to hear him tell me he'd gotten a raise, lost his job, or was taking me to Europe, as he sometimes did, when he had time on his hands. Sometimes he just liked to take me on a trip as a surprise, it was usually his way of telling me he'd lost his job. But he didn't have that sheepish look in his eyes. It wasn't his job this time, or a holiday, it was a different kind of surprise.

The nightgown looked a little frail as we sat in the satin chairs, me sliding slowly forward uncomfort-



ably. I had forgotten how slippery they were, since as a rule I never sat there. There were several small tears in the ancient flannel I was wearing, nothing too revealing of course, and since I get cold at night, I was wearing a frayed T-shirt underneath. It was a look that had worked well for me, for thirteen years of marriage with him. Lucky thirteen, or at least it had been till then. And as I sat looking at him, Roger looked as familiar to me as my nightgown. It felt as though I had been married to him forever, and I had, and of course I knew I always would be. I had grown up with him, had known him when we were both kids, and he had been my best friend for years, the only human being I truly trusted in the world. I knew that whatever other failings he had, and there were a few, he would never hurt me. He got cranky now and then, as most men do, he had trouble hanging on to a job, but he had never seriously hurt me, and he was never mean.

Roger had never been a raging success in his career. He had played at advertising when we were first married, had a number of jobs in marketing after that, and invested in a series of less than stellar deals. But I never really cared. He was a nice man, and he was good to me. I wanted to be married to him. And thanks to the grandfather who had set up a trust fund for me before he died, we always had enough money not just to get by, but to live pretty comfortably. Umpa's trust fund had not only provided well for me,

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but for Roger and the kids, and allowed me to be understanding about the financial mistakes Roger made. Let's face it, and I had years before, when it came to making money, or keeping a job for more than a year or two, Roger did not have whatever it took. But he had other things. He was great with the kids, we liked to watch the same shows on TV, we both loved spending our summers on the Cape, we had an apartment in New York we both loved, he let me pick the movies we went to once a week, no matter how sappy they were, and he had great legs. And when we were sleeping with each other in college, I thought Casanova paled in comparison to him in bed. I lost my virginity to him. We liked the same music, he sang in my ear when we danced. He was a great dancer, a good father, and my best friend. And if he couldn't hold on to a job, so what? Umpa had taken the sting out of that for me. It never occurred to me that I could, or should, have more. Roger was enough for me.

"What's up?" I asked cheerfully, crossing one bare leg over the other. I hadn't shaved my legs in weeks, but it was November after all, and I knew Roger didn't care. I wasn't going to the beach, only talking to Roger, sitting at the foot of our bed on those stupid, slippery satin chairs, waiting to hear the surprise he had for me.

"There's something I want to tell you," he said, eyeing me cautiously, as though he secretly knew I

was wired with an explosive device, and he was waiting for me to blow up in a million pieces. But discounting the stubble on my legs and the blueberry in my teeth, I was relatively harmless, and always had been. I'm pretty even-tempered, a good sport most of the time, and never asked a lot of him. We got along better than most of my friends, or so I thought, and I was grateful for that. I always knew we were in it for the long haul, and figured that fifty years with Roger would not be a bad deal. Certainly not for him. And not even for me.

"What is it?" I asked lovingly, wondering if he had gotten fired after all. If he had, it certainly wasn't anything new to either of us. We'd gotten through that before, though lately he seemed to be getting defensive about it, and I'd noticed that the jobs seemed to be shorter and shorter. He felt he was being picked on by his boss, his talents were never appreciated, and there was "just no point taking any more crap at work." I had figured one of those moments was heading our way again, as I'd noticed that he'd been crabbiest than usual for the past six months. He was questioning why he should have to work at all, and talking about spending a year in Europe with me and the kids, or trying to write a screenplay or a book. He had never mentioned anything like it before until recently, and I figured he was having a mid-life crisis of some sort, and contemplating trading in the daily grind at an office for "art" in-

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stead. If so, Umpa's trust fund would have to get us through that too. In any case, so as not to embarrass him, I never talked about his frequent failures or countless jobs, or the fact that my dead grandfather had supported our family for years. I wanted to be the perfect wife to him, and even if he wasn't the wizard of Wall Street, he had never promised to be, and I still thought he was a good guy.

"What's up, sweetheart?" I asked, holding a hand out to him. But to his credit, he didn't let me touch him. He was acting as though he were about to go to jail for sexually harassing someone, or exposing himself at one of his clubs, and was embarrassed to tell me. And then it came. Roger's Big Announcement.

"I don't think I love you." He stared me right in the eye, as though he were looking for an alien in there somewhere, and he was talking to that person, instead of me with my torn nightgown and my stray blueberry.

"*What?*" The word shot out of me like a rocket.

"I said, I don't love you." He looked as though he meant it.

"No, you didn't." I stared back at him, my eyes narrowing. And for no reason in the world, I remember noticing that he was wearing the tie I had given him last Christmas. Why the hell had he put that on just to tell me he didn't love me? "You said you *think* you don't love me, not 'you don't love me.' There's a difference." We always argued about stupid things

like that, the small stuff, about who had finished the milk and who had forgotten to turn the lights off. We never argued about the important stuff, like how to bring up the children, or where they went to school. There was nothing to argue about. I took care of all that. He was always too busy playing tennis or golf, or going fishing with friends, or nursing the worst cold in history, to argue with me about the kids. He figured that was my domain. He may have been a great dancer, and a lot of fun at times, but responsibility was not his thing. Roger took care of himself more than he took care of me, but in thirteen years I had somehow managed not to notice that. All I had wanted was to get married at the time, and have kids. Roger had made my dreams come true. And undeniably, we had great kids. But what I'd failed to see until that point, was how little he did for me.

"What happened?" I asked, fighting a rising wave of panic over what he had just said. My husband "didn't think" he loved me. How did that fit into the scheme of things?

"I don't know," Roger said, looking uncomfortable. "I just looked around and realized I don't belong here." This was a lot worse than getting fired. It sounded like he was going to fire me. And he looked as though he meant it.

"You don't *belong* here? What are you talking about?" I asked, sliding still farther off the satin chair, suddenly feeling unbelievably ugly in my night-

gown. Sometime in the last ten years, I should have found the time to buy new ones, I realized. "You live here. We love each other. We have two children, for chrissake. Roger . . . are you drunk? Are you on drugs?" Then suddenly I wondered, "Maybe you should be. Prozac. Zoloft. Midol. Something. Are you feeling sick?" I wasn't trying to discredit what he had said, I just didn't understand it. This was the craziest thing he'd come up with yet. More so even than saying he was going to write a book or a screenplay. In thirteen years of marriage, I had never even known him to write a letter.

"I'm fine." He stared at me blankly, as though he no longer knew me, as though I had already become a stranger to him. I reached out to touch his hand, but he wouldn't let me.

"Steph, I mean it."

"You can't mean it," I said, tears leaping to my eyes, and suddenly running down my cheeks faster than I could stop them. Instinctively, I lifted the hem of the nightgown to my face, and saw that it came away black. The mascara I had worn the day before was now smeared all over my face, and my nightgown. A pretty picture. Most convincing. "We love each other, this is crazy. . . ." I wanted to scream at him, "You can't do this to me, you're my best friend." But in the blink of an eye, he no longer was. In a matter of moments, he had become a stranger.

"No, it isn't crazy." His eyes looked empty. He was

already gone, and at that precise moment, I knew it. My heart felt as though it had been hit with a battering ram, which had not only shattered it to bits, but driven right through it.

“When did you decide this?”

“Last summer,” he said calmly. “On the Fourth of July,” he added with absolute precision. What had I done wrong on the Fourth of July? I wasn’t sleeping with any of his friends, I hadn’t lost any of the children so far. My trust fund hadn’t run out, and shouldn’t for both our lifetimes. What in hell was his problem? And without Umpa’s trust fund and my good nature about the jobs he lost, how did he think he was going to eat?

“Why the Fourth of July?”

“I just knew when I looked at you that it was over,” he said coolly.

“Why? Is there someone else?” I could hardly get the words out and he looked wounded by what I said to him.

“Of course not.” Of course not. My husband of thirteen years tells me he no longer loves me and I’m not supposed to at least suspect a rival with enormous breasts who remembers to shave her legs more often than just at the change of the seasons. Now, don’t get me wrong, I’m not entirely disgusting, nor am I covered with fur, nor do I have a mustache. But I will admit to you now, as I look back at that painful time, I had grown a little careless. People did not retch as I

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walked past them on the street. Men at cocktail parties still found me attractive. But with Roger . . . perhaps . . . I had become a little less than attentive. I wasn't fat or anything, I just didn't dress up much at home, and my costumes in bed were a little odd. So sue me. He did.

"Are you leaving me?" I asked, sounding desperate. I couldn't believe this was happening to me. All my adult and married life I had been supercilious about women who lost their husbands, i.e., those whose husbands divorced them. *That* could never happen to me, nor would it. I was about to discover it could, and had, and was happening at that exact moment, as I slipped almost entirely off the goddam slippery satin chair in my own bedroom, with Roger watching me as though he were a stranger, and I were someone he hadn't been married to for thirteen years. He looked at me like an alien from another planet.

"I think so," he said in answer to my question about whether he was leaving.

"But *why*?" I was beginning to sob then. I was convinced he had killed me, or was trying to. I have never been so frightened in my entire life. The status and the man who had been my identity, my security, my life, were about to disappear. And then who would I be? No one.

"I have to leave. I need to. I can't breathe here." I had never noticed him having any trouble breathing.



He breathed fine, from what I could see. In fact he snored like a Zamboni on an ice rink. I kind of liked it. To me, it sounded like a large cat purring. But then again I wasn't the one who was leaving, he was. "The kids drive me nuts," he explained. "It's just too much pressure all the time, too much responsibility . . . too much noise . . . too much everything . . . and when I look at you, I see a stranger."

"Me?" I asked, with a look of amazement. What stranger would parade around his house with uncombed hair, unshaven legs, and a torn flannel nightgown? Strangers wore micro miniskirts, stiletto heels, and tight sweaters over enormous silicone implants. Apparently, no one had told him.

"We're not strangers after knowing you for nineteen years, Roger, you're my best friend." But not any longer. "When are you leaving?" I managed to choke out the words, while still smearing the watery black mascara all over my nightgown. It wasn't a very pretty picture. *Pathetic* barely began to touch it. *Ugly* would have done it better. *Revolting* would have said it all. I must have looked nothing short of disgusting, and to add to the romance of it all, my nose started running.

"I thought I'd stay through the holidays," Roger said grandly. It was nice of him, I guess, but it also meant I had approximately one month to either adjust to it, or talk him out of leaving. Maybe a vacation in Mexico . . . Hawaii . . . Tahiti . . . the Galápa-