

# DANIELLE STEEL

# JOURNEY

Delacorte



Press

# JOURNEY

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LOVING

TO LOVE AGAIN

SUMMER'S END

SEASON OF PASSION

THE PROMISE

NOW AND FOREVER

PASSION'S PROMISE

GOING HOME

To my children,  
Beatie, Trevor, Todd, Sam,  
Victoria, Vanessa, Maxx, and Zara,  
who have traveled far with me,  
with faith and good humor and so much love.

And to Nick,  
who is safely in God's loving hands.

with all my love,

d.s.

My journey has been long. I do not regret it. At times, it has been dark, a perilous course. At other times, joyous, dappled with sunlight. It has been hard more often than easy.

The road was fraught with dangers for me from the beginning, the forest thick, the mountains high, the darkness terrifying. And through it all, even in the mists, a small pinpoint of light, a tiny star to guide me.

I have been both wise and foolish. I have been loved, and betrayed, and abandoned. And much to my despair, I have unwittingly wounded others, and humbly beg their forgiveness. I have forgiven those who have hurt me, as I pray they will forgive me for allowing them to hurt me. I have loved much, and given of my whole heart and soul. And even when badly wounded, have continued on the path, with faith, and hope, and even blind belief, toward love and freedom. The journey continues, easier than it has been.

For those of you still lost in the darkness, may your traveling companions treat you well. May you find safe havens when you need them, and clearings in the forest. May you find cool waters where you can safely drink, quench your thirst, and bathe your wounds. And may you one day find healing.

When we meet, our hands will join, and we will know each other. The light is there, waiting for us. We must each, in our own way, journey on until we find it. To reach it, we will need determination, strength and courage, gratitude and patience. And after all that, wisdom. And at journey's end, we will find ourselves, we will find peace, and the love that, until now, we have only dreamed of.

May God speed you on your journey, and protect you.

d.s.

## “Journey”

“ . . . All my life long  
Over my shoulder have I looked at peace;  
And now I fain would lie in this long grass  
And close my eyes.”

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

# Chapter 1

*THE LONG BLACK LIMOUSINE* pulled up slowly, and came to a stop, in a long line of cars just like it. It was a balmy evening in early June, and two Marines stepped forward in practiced unison, as Madeleine Hunter emerged gracefully from the car in front of the east entrance to the White House. A brightly lit flag was fluttering in the summer breeze, and she smiled at one of the Marines as he saluted. She was tall and thin, in a white evening gown that draped elegantly from one shoulder. Her hair was dark and swept up in a neat French twist which showed off her long neck and single bare shoulder to perfection.

Her skin was creamy, her eyes blue, and she moved with enormous poise and grace in high-heeled silver sandals. Her eyes danced as she smiled, and stepped aside as a photographer flashed her picture. And then another, as her husband stepped out of the car and took his place beside her. Jack Hunter was powerfully built, a man of forty-five, he had made his first fortune in the course of a career in pro football, invested it brilliantly, and in time had traded and sold and bought first a radio station, then added television to it, and by forty owned one of the major cable networks. Jack Hunter had long since turned



his good fortune into big business. And he was very big business.

The photographer snapped their photograph again, and then they swiftly disappeared into the White House. They made a striking couple, and had for seven years. Madeleine was thirty-four, and had been twenty-five when he discovered her in Knoxville. Her drawl had long since disappeared, as had his. Jack was from Dallas, and he spoke in powerful, clipped tones that convinced the listener instantly that he knew exactly what he was doing. He had dark eyes that pursued his quarry to all corners of the room, and he had a way of listening to several conversations at once, while still managing to seem intent on the person to whom he was speaking. There were times, people who knew him well said, when his eyes seemed to bore right through you, and other times when you felt he was about to caress you. There was something powerful and almost hypnotizing about him. Just looking at him, sleekly put together in his dinner jacket and perfectly starched shirt, his dark hair smoothly combed, he was someone one wanted to get to know and be close to.

He had had the same effect on Madeleine when they met, when she was barely more than a girl in Knoxville. She had had a Tennessee drawl then, she had come to Knoxville from Chattanooga. She'd been a receptionist at the television station where she worked, until a strike forced her into doing first weather, and then news, on camera. She was awkward and shy, but so beautiful that the viewers who saw her sat mesmerized as they stared at her. She looked more like a model or a movie star, but she had a girl-next-door quality about her that everyone loved, and a breathtaking ability to get right to the heart of a story. And Jack was bowled over when he first saw her. Her words as well as her eyes were searing.

"What do you do here, pretty girl? Break all the boys' hearts, I'll bet," he'd said to her. She didn't look a minute over twenty,

## *Journey*

though she was nearly five years older. He had stopped to talk to her when she came off the air.

"Not likely," she laughed. He was negotiating to buy the station. And he had, two months later. And as soon as he did, he made her co-anchor, and sent her to New York to teach her first everything she needed to learn about network news, and then how to do her hair and makeup. And the effect, when he saw her on the air again, was impressive. Within months, her career was off and running.

It was Jack who helped extricate her from the nightmare she had been living, with a husband she'd been married to since she was seventeen, who had committed every possible kind of abuse on her. It was no different from what she had seen happen in Chattanooga as a child, between her parents. Bobby Joe had been her high school sweetheart, and they'd been married for eight years when Jack Hunter bought the cable network in Washington, D.C., and made her an irresistible offer. He wanted her as his prime-time anchor, and promised her that if she came, he'd help her sort her life out, and cover all the most important stories.

He came to Knoxville himself in a limousine. She met him at the Greyhound bus station, with one small Samsonite bag and a look of terror. She got into the car with him without a sound, and they drove all the way to Washington together. It took Bobby Joe months to figure out where she was, and by then she had filed for divorce, with Jack's help, and a year later, they were married. She had been Mrs. Jack Hunter for seven years, and Bobby Joe and his unthinkable abuse on her were a dim nightmare. She was a star now. She led a fairy-tale life. She was known and respected and adored all across the country. And Jack treated her like a princess. As they walked into the White House arm in arm, and stood in the reception line, she looked relaxed and happy. Madeleine Hunter had no worries. She was married to an important, powerful man, who loved her, and she

knew it. She knew that nothing bad would ever happen to her again. Jack Hunter wouldn't let it. She was safe now.

The President and First Lady shook hands with them in the East Room, and the President said in an undervoice to Jack that he wanted to catch a private moment with him later. Jack nodded, and smiled at him, as Madeleine chatted with the First Lady. They knew each other well. Maddy had interviewed her several times, and the Hunters were invited to the White House often. And as Madeleine drifted into the room on her husband's arm, heads turned, people smiled and nodded, everyone recognized her. It was a long, long way from Knoxville. She didn't know where Bobby Joe was now, and no longer cared. The life she had known with him seemed entirely unreal now. This was her reality, a world of power and important people, and she was a bright star among them.

They mingled with the other guests, and the French Ambassador chatted with Madeleine amiably and introduced her to his wife, while Jack moved away to speak to a Senator who was the head of the Senate Ethics Committee. There was a matter before them that Jack had been wanting to discuss with him. Madeleine saw them out of the corner of her eye, as the Brazilian Ambassador approached her, with an attractive Congresswoman from Mississippi. It was, as always, an interesting evening.

Her dinner partners, when they moved into the State Dining Room, were a Senator from Illinois and a Congressman from California, both of whom she had met before, and who vied all evening for her attention. Jack was sitting between the First Lady and Barbara Walters. It was late in the evening before he joined his wife again, and they moved smoothly onto the dance floor.

"How was it?" he asked casually, watching several key players as he danced with her. Jack rarely lost track of the people around him, and he usually had an agenda, of those he wanted

to see, and meet, and touch base with again, either about a story or a matter of business. He rarely, if ever, missed opportunities, and never simply spent an evening without some plan to what he was doing. He had spent a few minutes in a quiet aside with the President, and then President Armstrong had invited him to Camp David for lunch that weekend to continue the conversation. But Jack was concentrating on his wife now.

"So how was Senator Smith? What did he have to say for himself?"

"The usual. We talked about the new tax bill," she smiled at her handsome husband. She was a worldly woman now, of considerable sophistication and enormous polish. She was, as Jack liked to say, a creature entirely of his making. He took full credit for how far she had come, and the enormous success she enjoyed on his network, and he loved to tease her about it.

"That sounds pretty sexy," he said, referring to the tax bill. The Republicans were having a fit over it, but Jack thought the Democrats would win this one, particularly with the President behind them, which he was squarely. "What about Congressman Wooley?"

"He's so cute," she said, smiling up at Jack again, as always, still a little dazzled by his presence. There was something about her husband's looks, his charisma, the aura that surrounded him, that still impressed her. "He talked about his dog and his grandchildren. He always does." She liked that about him, and he was crazy about the woman he had been married to for nearly sixty years now.

"It's a wonder he still gets elected," Jack said as the music ended.

"I think everyone loves him." The warm heart of the girl next door from Chattanooga hadn't left her, despite her good fortune. She never lost sight of where she'd come from, and there was still a certain ingenuousness about her, unlike her husband, who was sharply honed, and on occasion somewhat abrasive

and aggressive. But she liked talking to people about their kids. She had none of her own, and Jack had two sons in college in Texas, though he rarely saw them, but they were fond of Maddy. And despite his vast success, their mother had few good things to say about their father, or Maddy. They had been divorced for fifteen years, and the word she used most often to describe him was *ruthless*.

"Ready to call it a night?" Jack asked, as he assessed the room again, and decided that he had already touched base with everyone that mattered, and the party was nearly over. The President and First Lady had just left, and their guests were free to go now. Jack saw no reason to stay any longer. And Maddy was happy to go home, she had to be in the newsroom early the next morning.

They left the party quietly, and their driver was waiting for them near the door, as they made a graceful exit. And Maddy settled comfortably into the limousine beside her husband. It was a long way from Bobby Joe's old Chevy truck, the parties they had gone to at the local bar, and the friends they had visited in trailers. Sometimes she still had trouble believing that her two very different lives were part of one lifetime. This was all so different. She moved in the world of Presidents and Kings and Queens, politicians and princes and tycoons like her husband.

"What did you and the President talk about tonight?" she asked, stifling a yawn. She looked as lovely and as beautifully put together as she had at the beginning of the evening. And more than she realized, she was an incredible asset to her husband. Rather than being recognized as the man who had invented her, he was seen now as Madeleine Hunter's husband, and if he knew it, he never acknowledged it to Maddy.

"The President and I discussed something very interesting," Jack said, looking vague, "I'll tell you about it when I'm free to talk about it."

"When will that be?" she asked with renewed interest. She was not only his wife, but had become a skilled reporter, and she loved what she did, the people she worked with, and the newsroom. She felt as though she had her fingers on the pulse of the nation.

"I'm not sure yet. I'm having lunch with him on Saturday at Camp David."

"It must be important." But it all was. Anything that involved the President was potentially a big story.

They drove the short distance to R Street, chatting about the party. And Jack asked her if she'd seen Bill Alexander.

"Only from a distance. I didn't realize he was back in Washington." He had been in seclusion for the past six months, after the death of his wife in Colombia the year before. It had been a terrible story, which Maddy remembered all too clearly. She had been kidnapped by terrorists, and Ambassador Alexander had handled the negotiations himself, awkwardly apparently. After collecting the ransom, the terrorists had panicked and killed her. And the Ambassador had resigned shortly after.

"He's a fool," Jack said without preamble or pity for him. "He never should have tried to handle it himself. Anyone could have predicted that would happen."

"I don't suppose he believed that," Maddy said quietly, glancing out the window.

And a moment later, they were home, and she and Jack walked up the stairs as he took his tie off.

"I have to be in the office early tomorrow," she said, as he unbuttoned his shirt in their bedroom, and she slipped her dress off and stood before him in nothing more than pantyhose and her high-heeled silver sandals. She had a spectacular body which was never wasted on him, nor had it been in her previous life, though the two men she had been married to were extraordinarily different. The one brutal and unkind and rough

with her, indifferent to her feelings, or cries of pain when he hurt her, the other so smooth, so careful, so seemingly respectful of her. Bobby Joe had once broken her arms, and she had broken her leg when he pushed her down the stairs. That had been right after she had met Jack, and he had been in a jealous rage about him. She had sworn to him that she wasn't involved with Jack, and she hadn't been then. He was her employer and they were just friends, the rest had come later, after she left Knoxville and moved to Washington to work for him at his cable network. Within a month of her arrival in Washington she and Jack had become lovers, but her divorce was already in the works then.

"Why are you going in early?" Jack asked over his shoulder as he disappeared into his black marble bathroom. They had bought the house five years before, from a wealthy Arab diplomat. There was a full gym and a swimming pool downstairs, beautiful reception rooms Jack liked to use to entertain, and all six of the house's bathrooms were marble. The house had four bedrooms, a master, and three guest rooms.

There was no plan to turn any of the guest rooms into a nursery. Jack had made it very clear to her right from the beginning that he didn't want children. He hadn't enjoyed the two he had when they were growing up, and he had no desire to have more, in fact he absolutely forbade it. And after a brief period of mourning for the babies she would never have, at Jack's insistence, Maddy had had her tubes tied. She thought it was better in some ways, she had had half a dozen abortions during her years with Bobby Joe, and she wasn't even sure anymore if she could have a normal baby. It seemed easier to give in to Jack's wishes and not take any chances. He had given her so much, and wanted such great things for her, she could see his point that children would only be an obstacle she'd have to overcome, and a burden on her career. But there were still times when she regretted the irreversibility of her decision. At thirty-four, a lot

of her friends were still having babies, and all she had was Jack now. She wondered if she'd regret it even more when she grew older and had no grandchildren, or children of her own. But it was a small price to pay for the life she shared with Jack Hunter. And it had been so important to Jack. He had insisted on it.

They met again in their large comfortable bed, and Jack pulled her close, as she cuddled up to him, and rested her head on his shoulder. They often lay there for a while before they went to sleep, talking about what had happened that day, the places they'd been, the people they'd met with, the parties they'd been to. As they did now, and Maddy tried to guess what the President was up to.

"I told you, I'll tell you when I can, stop guessing."

"Secrets drive me crazy," she giggled.

"You drive me crazy," he said, turning her gently toward him, and feeling the satin of her flesh beneath the silky nightgown. He never tired of her, she never bored him, in bed or out, and he took pleasure in knowing that she was his, body and soul, not only at the network, but in their bedroom. Most particularly there, he had an insatiable appetite for her, and at times she felt as though he were going to devour her. He loved everything about her, knew everything she did, liked knowing where she was every moment of the day, and what she was doing. And he had a lot to say about it. But all he could think of now was the body he could never get enough of, and as he kissed her and grabbed her hard, she moaned softly. She never resented or objected to the way he took her, or how often. She loved the fact that he wanted her so much, and it pleased her to know that she still excited him so intensely. It was all so different than it had been with Bobby Joe. Bobby had wanted nothing more than to use her and to hurt her. What excited Jack was beauty and power. Having "created" Maddy made him feel powerful, and "possessing" Maddy in bed nearly drove him out of his senses.



