

Sisters

By Danielle Steel

Four sisters, a Manhattan brownstone, and a tumultuous year of loss and courage are at the heart of Danielle Steel's new novel about a remarkable family, a stunning tragedy—and what happens when four very different young women come together under one very lively roof.

Candy—it's the only name she needs—is blazing her way through Paris, New York, and Tokyo as fashion's latest international supermodel. . . .

Her sister Tammy has a job producing the most successful hit show on TV, and a home she loves in L.A.'s Hollywood Hills. . . . In New York, oldest sister Sabrina is an ambitious young lawyer, while Annie is an American artist in Florence, living for her art. . . . On one Fourth of July weekend, as they do every year, the four sisters come home to Connecticut for their family's annual gathering. But before the holiday is over, tragedy strikes and their world is utterly changed.

Suddenly, four sisters who have been fervently pursuing success and their own lives—on opposite sides of the world—reunite to share one New York brownstone, to support each other and their father, and to pick up the pieces while one sister struggles to heal her shattered body and soul. Thus begins an unscripted chapter of their lives, as a bustling house is soon filled with eccentric dogs, laughter, tears, friends, men . . . and the kind of honesty and unconditional love only sisters can provide. But as the four women settle in, they are forced to confront the direction of their respective lives. As the year passes and another July Fourth approaches, a season of grief and change gives way to new beginnings—as a family comes together to share its blessings and a future filled with surprises and, ultimately, hope.

With unerring insight and compassion, Danielle Steel tells a compelling story of four sisters who love and laugh, struggle and triumph . . . and are irrevocably woven into the fabric of each other's lives. Brilliantly blending humor and heartbreak, she delivers a powerful message about the fragility—and the wonder—of life.

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From Publishers Weekly

Four stunningly beautiful Connecticut-bred sisters pursue their disparate careers in prolific Steel's (*H.R.H.*) latest. There's Candy, 21, a supermodel with an eating disorder, on location in Paris; Annie, 26, a RISD-grad studying painting in Florence; Tammy, at 29 an L.A. TV producer with a new hit and no life; and Sabrina, 34, a workaholic, commitment-phobic family attorney. No matter what, all meet at Mommy and Daddy's for July 4, Thanksgiving and Christmas. During one of the reunions, a disastrous car accident kills their beautiful, dutiful mother and leaves artist Annie blind. Sabrina comes up with a plan for the sisters to live *ensemble* in a New York brownstone, so that they might grieve and ease Annie's transition into the sightless world. The questions then become Will Candy eat? Will Sabrina commit? Will Tammy have a hit? Will Annie transition? And will Dad love again? Legions of fans expect an emphatic yes, and they won't be disappointed. But they can also expect decapitation, rape and emotional betrayal, which work like little shocks to keep pages turning. (*Feb.*)

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About the Author

Danielle Steel has been hailed as one of the world's most popular authors, with over 650 million copies of her novels sold. Her many international bestsellers include *Country*, *Prodigal Son*, *Pegasus*, *A Perfect Life*, *Power Play*, *Winners*, *First Sight*, *Until the End of Time*, *The Sins of the Mother*, and other highly acclaimed novels. She is also the author of *His Bright Light*, the story of her son Nick Traina's life and death; *A Gift of Hope*, a memoir of her work with the homeless; *Pure Joy*, about the dogs she and her family have loved; and the children's book *Pretty Minnie in Paris*.

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Chapter One

The photo shoot in the Place de la Concorde, in Paris, had been going since eight o'clock that morning. They had an area around one of the fountains cordoned off, and a bored-looking Parisian gendarme stood watching the proceedings. The model stood in the fountain for hours on end, jumping, splashing, laughing, her head

thrown back in practiced glee, and each time she did it, she was convincing. She was wearing an evening gown hiked up to her knees, and a mink wrap. A powerful battery-operated fan blew her long blond hair out in a mane behind her.

Passersby stopped and stared, fascinated by the scene as a makeup artist in a tank top and shorts climbed in and out of the fountain to keep the model's makeup perfect. By noon, the model still looked like she was having a fabulous time, as she laughed with the photographer and his two assistants between shots as well as on camera. Cars slowed as they drove by, and two American teenagers stopped and stared in amazement as they strolled by and recognized her.

"Oh my God, Mom! It's Candy!" the older of the two girls intoned with awe. They were on vacation in Paris from Chicago, but even Parisians recognized Candy easily. She was the most successful supermodel in America, and on the international scene, and had been since she was seventeen. Candy was twenty-one now, and had made a fortune modeling in New York, Paris, London, Milan, Tokyo, and a dozen other cities. The agency could barely handle the volume of her bookings. She was on the cover of *Vogue* at least twice a year, and was in constant demand. Candy was, without a doubt, the hottest model in the business, and a household name even to those who knew little about fashion.

Her full name was Candy Adams, but she never used her last name, just Candy. She didn't need more than that. Everybody knew her, her face, her name, her reputation as one of the world's leading models. She managed to make everything look like fun, whether she was running through snow barefoot in a bikini in the freezing cold in Switzerland, walking through the surf in an evening gown in the winter on Long Island, or wearing a full-length sable coat under a blazing sun in the Tuscan hills. Whatever she did, she looked as though she was having a ball doing it. Standing in the fountain in the Place de la Concorde in July was easy, despite the heat and the morning sun, in one of Paris's standard summer heat waves. The shoot was for another *Vogue* cover, for the October issue, and the photographer, Matt Harding, was one of the biggest in the business. They had worked together hundreds of times over the last four years, and he loved shooting with her.

Unlike other models as important as she was, Candy was always easy—good-natured, funny, irreverent, sweet, and surprisingly naive after the success she'd enjoyed since the beginning of her career. She was just a nice person, and an incredible beauty. She didn't have a single bad angle. Her face was virtually perfect for the camera, with no flaws, no defects. She had the delicacy of a cameo, with finely carved features, miles of naturally blond hair that she wore long most of the time, and blue eyes the color of sky and the size of saucers. Matt knew she liked to party hard and stay out late, and amazingly it never showed in her face the next day. She was one of the lucky few who could get away with playing and never have it show afterward. She wouldn't be able to get away with it forever, but for now she still could. If anything, she only got prettier with age, although at twenty-one, one could hardly expect her to be touched by the ravages of time, but some models started to show it even at her age. Candy didn't. And her natural sweetness still showed through just as it had the first day he'd met her, when she was seventeen and doing her first shoot for *Vogue* with him. He loved her. Everyone did. There wasn't a man or woman in the business who didn't love Candy.

She stood six foot one in bare feet, weighed a hundred and sixteen pounds on a heavy day, and he knew she never ate, but whatever the reason for her light weight, it looked great on her. Although she was thin in person, she always looked fabulous in the images he took of her. Just like *Vogue*, which adored her and had assigned him to work with her on this shoot, Candy was his favorite model.

They wrapped up the shoot at twelve-thirty, and she climbed out of the fountain as though she had only been in it for ten minutes, instead of four and a half hours. They were doing a second setup at the Arc de

Triomphe that afternoon, and one that night at the Eiffel Tower, with the sparklers going off behind them. Candy never complained about difficult conditions or long hours, which was one of the reasons photographers loved working with her. That, and the fact that you couldn't get a bad photograph of her. Her face was the most forgiving on the planet, and the most desirable.

"Where do you want to go for lunch?" Matt asked her, as his assistants put away his cameras and tripod and locked up the film, while Candy slipped out of the white mink wrap and dried her legs with a towel. She was smiling, and looked as though she had enjoyed it thoroughly.

"I don't know. L'Avenue?" she suggested with a smile. She was easy. They had plenty of time. It would take his assistants roughly two hours to set up the shoot at the Arc de Triomphe. He had gone over all the details and angles with them the day before, and he didn't need to be there until they had the shot fully ready. That gave him and Candy a couple of hours for lunch. Many models and fashion gurus frequented L'Avenue, also Costes, the Buddha Bar, Man Ray, and an assortment of Paris haunts. He liked L'Avenue too, and it was close to where they were going to shoot that afternoon. He knew it didn't matter where they went, she wasn't likely to eat much anyway, just consume gallons of water, which was what all the models did. They flushed their systems constantly so they didn't gain an ounce. And with the two lettuce leaves Candy usually ate, she was hardly likely to put on weight. If anything, she got thinner every year. But she looked healthy, in spite of her enormous height, and ridiculously light weight. You could see all the bones in her shoulders, chest, and ribs. Just as she was more famous than most of her counterparts, she was also thinner than most. It worried Matt for her sometimes, although she just laughed when he accused her of having an eating disorder. Candy never responded to comments about her weight. Most major models flirted with or suffered from anorexia, or worse. It went with the territory. Humans didn't come in these sizes, not after the age of nine. Adult women, who ate even halfway normally, just weren't that thin.

They had a car and driver who took them to the restaurant on the Avenue Montaigne, and as usual at that hour and time of year, it was mobbed. The couture collections were being shown the following week, and designers, photographers, and models had already started to fly in. In addition, it was high tourist season in Paris. Americans loved the restaurant, but so did trendy Parisians. It was always a scene. One of the owners spotted Candy immediately, and showed them to a table on the glassed-in terrace, which they referred to as the "Veranda." It was where she liked to sit. She loved the fact that she could smoke in any restaurant in Paris. She wasn't a heavy smoker, but indulged occasionally, and she liked having the freedom to do it, without getting dark looks or ugly comments. Matt commented that she was one of the few women who made smoking look appealing. She did everything with grace, and could make tying her shoelaces look sexy. She simply had that kind of style.

Matt ordered a glass of white wine before lunch, and Candy asked for a large bottle of water. She had left the giant water bottle she usually toted around in the car. She ordered a salad for lunch, without dressing, Matt ordered steak tartare, and they settled back to relax, as people at tables around them stared at her. Everyone in the place had recognized her. She was wearing jeans and a tank top and flat silver sandals she had bought the year before in Portofino. She often had sandals made there, or in St. Tropez; she usually got there every summer. You could see her nipples through the thin white cotton tank top, which didn't bother her at all, nor the men who watched her. She was totally at ease in her own skin, and with who she was.

"Are you coming down to St. Tropez this weekend?" Matt asked, assuming she was. "There's a party on Valentino's yacht." He knew that Candy would have been one of the first to be asked, and she rarely turned down an invitation, and surely not this one. She usually stayed at the Byblos Hotel, with friends, or on someone's yacht. Candy always had a million options, and was in huge demand, as a celebrity, a woman, and a guest. Everyone wanted to be able to say she'd be there, so others would come. People used her as a lure,

and proof of their social prowess. It was a hard burden to carry, and often crossed the line into exploitation, but she didn't seem to mind, and was used to it. She went where she wanted to, and where she thought she'd have the best time. But this time she surprised him. Despite her incredible looks, she was a woman of many facets, and not the mindless, superficial beauty some expected. Candy was not only gorgeous but decent, and very bright, even if still naive and young, despite her success. Matt liked that about her. There was nothing jaded about Candy, and she enjoyed it all, whatever she did.

"I can't go to St. Tropez," she said, picking at her lettuce. So far, he had seen her actually swallow two bites.

"Other plans?"

"Yeah," she said simply, smiling. "I have to go home. My parents give a Fourth of July party every year, and my mother would kill me if I didn't show up. It's a command performance for me and my sisters." Matt knew she was close to them. None of her sisters were models, and if he remembered correctly, she was the youngest. She talked about her family a lot and was very close to them.

"Aren't you doing the couture shows next week?" More often than not, she was Chanel's bride, and had been Saint Laurent's before they closed. She made a spectacular bride.

"Not this year. I'm taking two weeks off. I promised. Usually I go home for the party, and come back just in time for the shows. This year I figured I'd stay home for a couple of weeks and hang out. I haven't seen all my sisters in one place since Christmas. It's pretty hard with everyone away from home, mostly me. I've hardly been in New York since March, and my mom's been complaining, so I'm staying home for two weeks and then I have to go to Tokyo after that for a shoot for Japanese Vogue." It was where a lot of the models made big money, and Candy made more than most. The Japanese fashion magazines ate her up. They loved her blond looks and her height.

"My mom gets really pissed when I don't come home," she added, and he laughed. "What's so funny?"

"You. You're the hottest model in the business, and you're worried about your mom getting mad if you don't go home for the Fourth of July barbecue, or picnic, or whatever it is. That's what I love about you. You're really still a kid." She shrugged with an impish smile.

"I love my mom," she said honestly, "and my sisters. My mom gets really upset when we don't come home. Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas. I missed Thanksgiving once, and she gave me shit about it for a year. As far as she's concerned, family comes first. I think she's right. When I have kids, I want that too. This stuff is fun, but it doesn't last forever. Family does."

Candy still had all the same values she'd been brought up with, and believed in them profoundly, no matter how much she loved being a supermodel. But her family was even more important to her. Much more so than the men in her life, who thus far had been brief and fleeting, and from what Matt had observed were usually jerks, either young ones just trying to show off by being out with her, or older ones who often had a more sinister agenda. Like many other beautiful young women, she was a magnet to men who wanted to use her, usually by being seen with her, and enjoying the perks of her success. The most recent one had been a famous Italian playboy who was notorious for the beautiful women he went out with—for about two minutes. Before that, there had been a young British lord, who looked normal but had suggested whips and bondage, and Candy found out later he was bisexual and deep into drugs. Candy had been startled, and ran like hell, although it was not the first time she'd had that kind of offer. In the last four years, she'd heard it all. Most of her relationships had been short-lived. She didn't have the time or the desire to settle down, and the

kind of men she met were not the kind she wanted to stay with. She always said that she'd never been in love, although she had been out with a lot of men, but none of them worthwhile, since the boy she'd been involved with in high school. He was still in college now, and they had lost touch.

Candy had never gone to college. Her first big modeling break had happened in her senior year in high school, and she had promised her parents she'd go back to school later. She wanted to take advantage of the opportunities she had, while she had them. She put aside a ton of money, although she'd spent plenty on a penthouse apartment in New York, and a lot of great clothes and fancy pastimes. College was becoming an ever more unlikely plan. She just couldn't see the point. Besides, as she always pointed out to her parents, she wasn't nearly as smart as her sisters, or so she claimed. Her parents and sisters denied it, and still thought she should go to college when her life slowed down, if it ever did. But for now, she was still going at full speed, and loving every minute of it. She was on the fast track, fully enjoying the fruits of her enormous success.

"I can't believe you're going home for a Fourth of July picnic, or whatever the hell it is. Can I talk you out of it?" Matt asked hopefully. He had a girlfriend, but she wasn't in France, and he and Candy had always been good friends. He enjoyed her company, and it would be much more amusing having her in St. Tropez for the weekend.

"Nope," she answered, obviously unswayable. "My mom would be heartbroken. I can't do that to her. And my sisters would be really pissed. They're all coming home too."

"Yeah, but that's different. I'm sure they don't have choices like parties on Valentino's yacht."

"No, but they have stuff to do too. We all go home for the Fourth of July, no matter what."

"How patriotic," he said cynically, teasing her, as people continued to walk past their table and stare. You could see Candy's breasts through her paper-thin white tank top, which was a man's undershirt, a "wife beater" as they called it in the business. She wore them a lot, and didn't need a bra. She had had her breasts enlarged three years before, and they contrasted sharply with her rail-thin body. The new ones weren't huge, but they were spectacular looking and had been done well. They were still soft to the touch, unlike most breast implants, particularly those that cost less. She had had hers done at the best plastic surgeon in New York, much to her mother and sisters' horror. But she explained that she needed to do it for her work. None of her sisters or her mother would have considered doing such a thing, and two of them didn't need to. And her mother still had a great figure and was beautiful at fifty-seven.

All the women in the family were knockouts, although their looks were very different from each other. Candy looked nothing like the other women in her family. She was by far the tallest, and she had her father's looks and height. He was a very good-looking man, had played football at Yale, was six foot four, and he had blond hair like hers when he was young. Jim Adams was turning sixty in December. Neither one of her parents looked their age. They were still a striking couple. Like Candy's sister Tammy, her mother was a redhead. Her sister Annie's hair was chestnut brown with coppery auburn highlights, and her sister Sabrina's hair was almost jet black. They had one of every color, their father liked to tease them. And in their youth, they had looked like the old Breck ads, eastern, patrician, distinguished, and handsome. The four girls had been beautiful as children, and often caused comment, and still did when they went out together, even with their mother. Because of her height, weight, fame, and profession, Candy always got the most attention, but the others were lovely too.

They finished lunch at L'Avenue. Matt ate a pink *macaron* with raspberry sauce on it, while Candy grimaced

and said it was too sweet, and drank a cup of black *café filter*, allowing herself one tiny square of chocolate as a treat, which was rare. The driver took them to the Arc de Triomphe after lunch. They had a trailer for her there, parked on the Avenue Foch, behind the Arc de Triomphe, and after a short time she emerged in a startlingly beautiful red evening gown, trailing a sable wrap behind her. She looked absolutely breathtaking, as two policemen helped her cross through the traffic to where Matt and his crew were waiting for her under the huge French flag flying from the Arc de Triomphe. Matt beamed as he saw her coming. Candy was truly the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen, and possibly in the world.

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