



Going Home

By Danielle Steel

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From Danielle Steel, one of the world's most renowned and bestselling authors, comes a special reissue of her very first novel, in which a woman is forced to flee her past and come to terms with the truth.

In the sun swept beauty of San Francisco, Gillian Forrester is filled with the joy of a love that will surely last. But a painful betrayal forces her to flee to New York and begin a new life. There she discovers an exciting new career and a deep, enveloping passion...only to have her newfound happiness shaken to its core. Now Gillian must choose between her future and her past, and find in the deepest desires of her heart the one way, the only way of *Going Home*.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A Deeper Shade of Blue" takes great steps to provide us with a clear road map to a more complete understanding of depression during the childbearing years, its recognition and treatment, and...the extent to which it is treatable.

"From PMS, to depression during pregnancy, to postpartum mood disorders, women need to be able to distinguish what is normal from what is more serious and in need of definitive treatment.... Failure to recognize and treat depression during the childbearing years cannot be an option."

-- From the Foreword by Lee S. Cohen, M.D.

About the Author

Danielle Steel has been hailed as one of the world's most popular authors, with over 600 million copies of her novels sold in the US and 800 million worldwide. Her many international bestsellers include *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; *Pure Joy*, a practical guide for dog lovers featuring personal stories of her family's beloved canines; and *A Gift of Hope*, the story of her street outreach work with the homeless.

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Chapter 1

It was a gloriously sunny day and the call from Carson Advertising came at nine-fifteen. The stylist was sick and they needed someone to assist with a shooting up the coast. Was I free? Would I do it? And how much? I was, I would, and the price was right. One hundred and twenty dollars for the day, plus expenses. After working as a stylist in New York, I had been lucky in California. They were impressed, and they paid well. And it was easy work. All I needed was a job or two a week and, added to my alimony, Samantha and I could live well. Sometimes there was no work for a few weeks, but we made out anyway, and we were happy.

We had left New York one grizzly, rainy day, like pioneers off to another world. I was twenty-eight, she was almost five, and I think we were both scared Brave New World. And off we went. To San Francisco, where we knew no one, but it was pretty and it was worth a try. So we were trying.

We'd been there for a little less than three months the day that Carson called me for the job on the coast. We lived in a tiny flat in the Marina, with a peaceful view of the bay and Sausalito in the distance. We could look out the window and see the sailboat masts just out front, as the boats bobbed around tied up at the Yacht Club dock. And on sunny afternoons when I wasn't working, I could take Sam down to the tiny strip of beach, and I'd lie there while she raced up and down the sand and then up the steps onto the grass. It was still snowing in New York while we were lying on the beach. We had done the right thing, and we'd come to a lovely place. We were happy there. We were alone and still very green at being pioneers, but everything was going to be okay. I'd look at my daughter, all brown and healthy, and I'd look at myself in the mirror in the mornings, and I'd know we had been right. I looked ten years younger, and at last I was alive. Gillian Forrester had been reborn at twenty-eight, in a city that spread itself over a series of beautiful hills, next to

the mountains, and within breathing distance of the sea. San Francisco.

I looked out the window at Mount Tamalpais in the distance that morning, and then at my watch. It was nine-thirty, and the truck from Carson was due at ten. The crew was driving out together, except for the people from the film company who were shooting the commercial. They had their own truck. And probably their own ideas. I wondered briefly what they were going to think of having me to "help" them. Probably not much. The advertising agencies always liked to have an extra hand, but cameramen and the like never thought much of the idea. Thus far, it had been kind of "Who's she?...What?...A stylist?...Man, you've gotta be kidding...From New York?...Oh, Christ..." Yeah, but what the hell. I was getting paid for the job, and they didn't have to like me. As long as the agencies liked my work and kept calling.

The school bus had already picked up Sam, and I had just enough time to shower and climb into a pair of ancient jeans, a denim shirt, and my safari jacket. It was always hard to tell about the weather. It was early April, and it might be cold if the shooting got late. And sooner or later the fog would roll in. I dug my feet into an old pair of riding boots, put my hair in a knot on top of my head. And I was all set. A quick call to a neighbor who would wait for Sam to pile off the school bus at noon and keep her till I got home, and I was all ready for Carson Advertising.

We were to shoot a cigarette commercial on some cliffs overlooking the sea, north of Bolinas. And they were using four models, some horses, and a fair amount of props. It was going to be one of those healthy looking ads with the deceptive air of nonchalance and fresh air. Fresh air there would be, but nonchalance relatively little. Hence the need for me. I would spend the day making sure the models looked right, setting out the picnic, making sure the two female models didn't sit on the horses the wrong way round, and no one fell off the cliffs. Fairly easy work for a hundred and twenty dollars, and it might be fun.

A horn honked outside at exactly ten o'clock, and I sped out the door with my "magic bag" over my arm. Band-aids, aspirin, tranquilizers, hair spray, a variety of makeups, a note book, a collection of pens and pencils, safety pins, clothespins, and a book. The book was an anthology of short stories I never got to read at shootings. But it gave me a nice illusion of "one of these days."

As I hopped down the three steps outside our flat I saw a dark green pickup truck and a military-looking jeep out front. The truck was filled to the gills with equipment and props; there were two sleepy-looking girls in the back with sweaters pulled up to their chins and scarves over their heads. They looked like the Bobbsey Twins. Our female models. Sitting in front were two frighteningly virile-looking guys, also in turtle neck sweaters, with carefully kept earlength hair and strong jaw lines. Their whole look told me that they were gay, and I knew that they were the male half of our modeling team for the day. All set. At least they'd shown up for the shooting. But I had stopped worrying about things like that. In San Francisco, people show. It's not like New York. They don't get as much work, so when they get a call, they show. The male beauty queen seated nearest the window waved and the man in the driver's seat slid out and came toward me with a smile. He was small and sturdy-looking with jet black hair and bushy eyebrows, and I had met him at other shootings with Carson Advertising. He was their chief art director, and a hell of a nice guy. His name was Joe Tramino.

"Hi, Gillian. How've you been? I'm glad you could make it."

"So am I. Looks like a nice day for the shooting. Are the guys in the jeep with you too?" We stood on the sidewalk and he rolled his eyes in semi-Neapolitan style.

"You bet your ass. Those are the account guys. Three of them. This commercial is for our biggest account.

I'll introduce you." He strode over on his short legs and one of the men in the jeep rolled down the window. "This is our stylist, Gillian Forrester. Gill...John Ackley, Hank Todd, Mike Willis." They all nodded, smiled, and shook hands with me, without looking particularly interested. They had a fifty-thousand-dollar commercial to get out for an important client. And that was all they cared about. Making charm with the stylist wasn't what they had in mind.

"You wanna ride with them or with us? It's gonna be crowded either way." Joe shrugged his shoulders and watched me for a minute, wondering what I would decide. I could tell that he liked me and thought I was a "good looking broad." I was a little taller than he, and my complexion was as fair as his was dark. That was probably what fascinated him. My brown hair and blue eyes had never seemed like such a big deal to me, but he seemed to like the combination, and I could tell he liked my ass.

"I'll ride with the crew, Joe. No sweat....Nice to meet you, gentlemen. We'll see you there." I looked at Joe as we walked away from the jeep, and broke into a laugh. "Surprised? What do you think I am? A snob?" I gave him a friendly shove and then hopped in the back seat of the truck with the girls. One of them was asleep and the other was reading a magazine; the boys up front were talking "shop." According to them, men's fashion was going all to hell. I saw Joe roll his eyes and give me a wry grin in the rearview mirror and then we were off. He slid the gear into drive, let out the brake, and stomped on the accelerator, and we sped around the jeep and off toward Lombard Street, which would get us onto the Golden Gate Bridge.

"Jesus Christ, Joe, you drive like a goddam Italian." I was hanging on to the front seat so as not to squash the girl sleeping next to me.

"I make love like an Italian too."

"I'll bet."

"What's the point of betting? Try me sometime....Try it...you'll like it."

"Yeah, sure." I smiled back, and then sank into my own thoughts as we approached the Golden Gate Bridge which never failed to have an effect on me. A feeling of overwhelming power and beauty would sweep over me, and I'd raise my eyes to dizzying heights, like a child, feeling pleased with the effect. The deep orange color of its spires stood out in the blue sky, and its sweeping lines reminded me of kite strings.

"Whatcha looking at, New York?" Joe had seen the slow smile spread over my face, and I leaned against the window and looked upward.

"I'm looking at your bridge, Joe, just like a hick."

"Come on, I'll give you a better view than that." He leaned backward in the seat, turned a handle in the ceiling of the car, and slid a panel back. It was a sun roof, and by opening it the view had improved still further. The Golden Gate Bridge stood over our heads in the sunlight, and the fresh Northern California air whipped our faces.

"Wow...this is neat. Can I stand up?" The opening looked just big enough.

"Sure. Don't step on the girls though. And look out for the cops. They'll give me a ticket." I saw him watching my behind again as I gently placed my feet between the two sleeping girls and disappeared through the roof. He was some Italian. And that was some bridge! It was hard to breathe, standing unprotected in the

wind, and my hair started to whip around my head. And up above was...it. My bridge. And my mountains and my sea. And off in the distance behind us, the city. My California. It was stupendous.

I felt Joe tug at my jacket as we approached the end of it, and I came back in and sat down.

"Happy now?"

"Yeah."

"All you Easterners are nuts." But he looked pleased with what I'd done. There was a nice atmosphere in the car, everyone was minding his own business, we were all going to work, and no one was feeling hassled. It was a far cry from what I'd experienced working in New York, first at an ad agency and later at a decorating magazine. Everything was different in California.

"Who's shooting the commercial? Shazzam or Barclay?" I had learned that Shazzam was the "in" new group that did most of the really with-it movie production in town and Barclay was the most established production house around.

"Neither one. That's why all the account guys came along. They're tearing their hair out. I'm using a new house. They're young, but they're good. They're not even a house, really, just a team. A crazy young guy and his crew. They look like lazy, good for nothing freaks, but they've really got it. And their bid was terrific. I think you'll like them, they're easy to work with." I nodded, wondering if they'd like me. "Freaks" don't usually like stylists from New York, even if I didn't look like one anymore.

We were past Sausalito and Mill Valley by then and already on the winding mountain road toward Stinson Beach. It was lined with immense trees, and the smell of eucalyptus was everywhere. And it was beginning to feel more like a day in the country than a job.

The models were all awake by then and everyone was in a good mood. We started down the other side of the mountain and the view was breathtaking. Great splashes of panorama would appear, the mountains would drop down to cliffs at unexpected moments and the sea roared up to meet them with a great gush of spray. Everything was lush green and soft brown and bright blue. God's country.

We came down the mountain singing songs and then drove on past Bolinas up the coast to a place I didn't know. But it was more of the same. More mountains, more sea, more cliffs, and more splendor. And I was glad I'd come.

"You look like a kid at a birthday party, Gill."

"Oh shut up, you blasé dago. That's the way I feel about this place."

"It sure as hell ain't New York."

"Thank God."

"Is that so?" He grinned at me again and pulled the car off the road onto a dirt track which led across some hills, high above the coastline.

"Where the hell is this place?" The models were craning their necks but there was nothing to see. We were

miles from civilization. There was still no sign of a waiting film crew.

"You'll see in a minute. It took the camera boys three weeks to scout this place. It's fantastic. Belongs to some old lady who lives in Hawaii and hasn't been here in years. She rented it to us for the day."

We came to a bend in the road then and swooped down toward a plateau lodged between the hills and the cliffs. The sea was hurling itself at the shore with greater force than I'd seen at Big Sur, and there were trees sticking out along the cliffs like giant flags. Huge boulders stood in the water below and the spray sprang up from them so high that it seemed as though it could have watered the trees. Maybe it did.

I saw the jeep then and wondered how they got there before we did, especially the way Joe drove, but there they were, parked alongside a horse trailer, an old car, and a dilapidated truck with a lot of hippies crawling all over it. We hopped out of the pickup truck and the various groups merged into one as everyone prepared to do their bit and get the show on the road.

The account men from the Carson agency stood slightly aside in a nervous little clique and began to look over their notes. The models jumped back into the pickup and started doing their faces and hair. They left me with Joe and a bunch of rag-tag looking boys who looked like they had run away from home the day before.

I watched them unload their heavy equipment as though it were weightless and saw Joe standing near the cab of the truck with a tall, blond boy. He had a strong, muscular body, a full head of shaggy hair, strangely wideset eyes, and an incredible smile that exploded two deeply entrenched dimples. And I saw that he was watching me.

"Gill, come here a minute," Joe called out to me with a wave and I wandered toward them wondering which of the crew this boy was. He looked younger than the others and seemed to have less to do. "Gillian Forrester, Chris Matthews. He runs this madhouse."

"Hi." The smile widened and I saw that he had beautiful teeth. His eyes were of a soft green color. He didn't hold out a hand to shake, or seem particularly interested in who I was. He just stood there, nodded at me, seemed to keep an eye on his troops, and went on talking to Joe. It made me feel a little out of place.

"Hey...where you going?" Chris asked. I had decided to go back and check up on my models.

"I thought you two were busy. I'll be back."

"Wait a sec, I'll come with you. I want to see what I'm shooting." He left Joe and strode along the hillside with me, kicking through the weeds in his boots and looking up at the sky. He had all the mannerisms of a young boy.

The models introduced themselves and I was pleased to see them looking about right. They were pros and it was nice not to have to start from scratch with them. I had been on a shooting the week before with a bunch of kids who hardly knew how to comb their hair.

Chris stood aside from the group after a moment and then shook his head. "Joe!" His shout rang down the hill and caught Joe's attention instantly. The kid had a hell of a voice. He beckoned to Joe and I could see there was a problem but I didn't want to intrude. It was obviously between him and Joe.

"Okay. What's up?" The little Italian huffed and puffed as he got there and he didn't look happy. He sensed

that there was trouble and that was all he needed, with the account boys sitting on his neck.

"We've got a problem. And it's going to throw the budget out of shape. You've got five models. We only needed four." Chris looked unhappy about the excess and Joe looked baffled.

"We do?" He cast a glance into the truck and shook his head. "No, we don't, you jerk. What's a matter? You can't count? One, two, three, four." He pointed to them one by one, and he was right. Four.

"Five." Chris shook his head and pointed again. And Joe and I both burst into laughter as he did. He was pointing at me.

"Four. Relax. I'm the stylist. I thought you knew." Joe gave him a friendly shove. Chris burst into a laugh himself and the dimples came to life. Then he shook his head.

"Christ, you should've told me. What the hell do I know? All I do is take pretty pictures. I wouldn't mind taking some of you sometime either." He faced me with a long appraising look.

"Flattery will get you nowhere, Mr. Matthews."

"No. But it'll get me a friendly stylist. Get your ass in gear, lady. I start shooting in five minutes. And if your models aren't ready, you know what happens?" He was looking at me in a fierce, unfriendly way, and I suddenly decided that I wasn't so far from New York after all. They're all the same. I shook my head in answer to his question and waited for him to threaten to fire me. "If they're not ready, it's simple. We all quit and get stoned. You think I want to bust my ass working all day? No way." He shook his head and threw up his hands with a gentle look as Joe and I started to laugh again, and then Joe tried to put on a serious face. He could see that the men in the jeep were watching us.

"Listen, you lazy bastard. Stop threatening my fancy stylist. And get off your ass. Move it out." He gave a military sounding yell, and Chris ran back down the hill. We were finally about to start.

The horses were led toward us, the models were in full uniform, and the camera equipment was all set. Some of Chris's men lit a blazing campfire and I went to check out the food to make sure it looked right for the "picnic" we were shooting. The food was all cemented into place and heavily lacquered so as to look right, and it seemed fine to me. I spread it on the ground, loosened a scarf around the neck of one of the boys, calmed down the female models' hair, put a little more rouge on the second man, and moved back. I'd be busier later in the shooting when things started to look rumpled.

I watched Chris with amusement as we got under way. He joked with everyone, shot from a variety of strange positions, and heckled the models. He had everyone in hysterics at the end of half an hour and the account men looked alternately thunderous and panic-stricken. At one point he disappeared down the side of the cliff, and with a clutch of fear in the pit of my stomach I assumed we had lost our photographer. Joe and I raced to the edge to see what had happened, fear in our eyes. As we leaned over, Joe bellowed Chris's name toward the water, but there was no answer and there was nothing to see. He had vanished....Oh my God....

"Chris..." Joe tried again, and the echoes seemed endless, but then I saw him.

"Shhhh...what'd you want to do? Scare the shit out of me? I'm having a smoke. Come on down." He was sitting on an indented and well hidden ledge, not six feet down from the top, straddling a sturdy looking bush and smoking a joint.

"You crazy sonofabitch, what the hell..." Joe was incensed, but visibly relieved. And I burst into nervous laughter. The guy was obviously nuts but he was so natural about everything he did that he was easily forgiven the outrages he perpetrated on the world.

"Is this our break?" I tried to seem as though I were not impressed, but I was. For a moment, I had been so sure that he was gone.

"Yeah. Sure. You smoke?" I nodded and then shook my head.

"Yes. But not on a job."

"And neither should you, you crazy bastard. Get the hell up here and come back to work. What am I going to tell the account guys?" Joe looked genuinely nervous.

"You really want to know what to tell them?" Chris looked pleased at the idea. "Tell them that they can..." Joe cut him off and looked apologetically at me.

"Come on, Chris...please..." By then I was in stitches again. The whole scene was so absurd. Joe and I were leaning down talking to an invisible bush off the side of a cliff, and our chief film genius for the day was enjoying a leisurely smoke of dope. We had already waved to the rest of the crew to let them know that everything was okay, but it must have looked ridiculous anyway.

"Okay, little Joe. I'm a-comin'. Up, up, and away." And with that, the long, lean, muscular body of Christopher Matthews sailed past us and landed back on the plateau. He took something out of his pocket and the next thing I knew there was a shrill whistling sound in the air. He had blown a little toy whistle and pulled a water pistol out of his pocket. "Come on, you guys, let's get this show on the road." He then proceeded to squirt everyone within range, including the account men from Carson, and he looked immensely pleased with himself. He was having a good time. "Places...action...." A pair of sunglasses emerged from another pocket and he was busily playing director when I went back to set up the picnic again. One of the horses had walked across the set. It took me ten minutes to get everything back in place, and after that I sat back on the running board of Chris's truck to watch them shoot, feeling useless, but amused. It was the best shooting I'd been to in years.

"What do you think, Gill?" Joe collapsed next to me and lit a cigar.

"It's hard to tell. Either he's brilliant or he's a disaster. I'll reserve judgment till I see the film. He's nice to work with anyway. How old is he?" I figured he was about twenty-two and maybe fresh out of some new-wave film school.

"I'm not sure. Somewhere in his thirties, but nobody's told him yet. He acts like he's twelve. And man, I hope he does some good stuff for me today, or else I can forget my job, starting now." We both glanced over toward his colleagues and Joe shook his head. He was right, with the show Chris was putting on his work was going to have to be fantastic to justify the fooling around.

I watched in mild amazement as everyone went through their paces though, and there didn't seem to be any problems. His men did precisely what he wanted, the models were marvelously loose and unselfconscious, and things were moving along. It was hard to tell exactly where things were at, but it looked as though the shooting was almost over. And then suddenly I knew that, whether or not the work was done, it was. Chris stopped dead for a brief moment, looked around blindly at the crew, and then began to reel to one side,

clutching his heart. This time I was sure he wasn't faking, he was sick. I wondered briefly if it were an overdose of something as he slid to the ground and lay there unconscious.

Joe and I arrived at his side within the same instant and Joe gently turned him over. He had been lying face down on the ground. And as we rolled him onto his back and I reached for his pulse, his face broke into a vast, boyish grin, and he giggled.

"Fooled ya, huh?" He was delighted. But not for long. Joe pinned him to the ground and pointed toward something behind him while looking straight at me. And I knew what he meant. The water bucket for the horses. I ran to get it, emptied it a bit so I could carry it, and rushed back to dump it on Chris. All of it. But he only laughed harder, and then I was pinned to the ground and he was pulling my hair, which had come undone.

With that, the agency men ran up to see what was going on and Chris's men and the models joined in the fray. It was a free-for-all. I heard Joe shout over the din that we were all through shooting so not to worry, and I went right on wrestling with Chris Matthews until I felt Chris put something strange and pointed between my ribs. I tried to see what it was.

"Don't move, Forrestal. Just get up and start walking." His face and dialogue were straight out of a grade B Western.

"In the first place, the name's Forrester, and in the second place, just what exactly do you think you're doing?" I tried to sound unruffled and at the same time awesome, but didn't succeed.

"We're gonna ride, little lady. Just step lively...nice 'n easy...." I knew the guy was nuts as I suddenly realized that he had a gun in my ribs. What the hell had Joe gotten me into for a hundred and twenty bucks? I wasn't working for him to get shot in the back for chrissake...what about Samantha? "Keep moving...that's it...." He was walking gingerly at my side, and my eyes searched wildly for Joe in the tangle of arms and legs and water on the ground. They were still going at it. I saw that Chris was walking me toward the horses, and watched him deftly untie one from the back of their trailer with one hand while still keeping the gun on me, which I couldn't see.

"Come on, damn you. Cut it out. The fun's over." At least it was for me.

"Nope. It's just beginning." He spotted a megaphone lying near the trailer, dragged it closer with his foot, and then kicked it into the air so he could catch it, never loosening his hold on either the horse's reins or the gun. He seemed to know exactly what he was doing and punctuated most of his actions with his dazzling smile. To hell with his smile. I had had enough. "Bruno!" The sound of his voice boomed through the megaphone. "Pick me up at the Watson in Bolinas at eight." I saw an arm wave in the crowd and then felt the gun push harder into my flesh. What was the Watson? And why eight? It was only a little after one, and what the hell was he going to do to me? "Get up. You do know how to ride, don't you?" A momentary worried look crossed his face, like a little boy who's been given a cap gun with no caps in it.

"Yes, I can ride. But I don't think this is funny at all. I have a little girl and if you shoot me you're going to wreck a whole lot of lives." It was a dumb melodramatic thing to say, but it was all I could think of under the circumstances.

"I'll keep that in mind." He looked singularly unmoved by my speech and I swung into the saddle, glad I'd worn my boots, and wondering what was next. He hopped up behind me, I felt the gun still in the same place,

and burst into a fresh wave of worry as he nudged the horse into a fast trot and then a slow gallop. What if the gun went off by mistake? What would happen then? The mountains were rough terrain to ride over and the horse might stumble, and then...

In less than a minute, we were out of sight of the plateau where we'd been shooting and we were faced with the splendid range I'd admired on the drive over. But it was a whole other thing to ride over the mountains and I didn't give a damn if they were beautiful, I'd had it. Suddenly a wave of fury swept over me at this insane boy-man who was playing with my life. He was a snotty, pompous, careless, stupid hippie who thought he could do anything he damn well pleased, from getting stoned on a job, to pretending he had died or fainted, to shooting me....Well, he was wrong. He couldn't shoot me at least. My body had tensed into a steel beam and I swung around with every intention of knocking him off the horse. But when I turned around my attack was temporarily delayed by a squirt of cold water in my face. The water pistol...that's what he had been holding in my back all along.

"You lousy, rotten...", I spluttered within two inches of his face, trying to wipe the water out of my eyes, and wanting to kill him. "You big shit...you...I thought..."

"Shut up." He squirted the pistol in my mouth this time, and I choked on a burst of laughter. Christopher Matthews was something else.

The horse had come to a stop at some point during Chris's watery attack on me, but I didn't notice until I had wiped the water from my eyes and saw that we were standing near another cliff again, with the Pacific stretching as far as we could see.

"Pretty, isn't it?" His face was peaceful and he looked like a cowboy in repose. The mischievous child was momentarily gone. I nodded and looked out to sea, again with that immense feeling of having found my way to where I had been meant to be all my life. The hysterical feeling of riding over the mountains at gunpoint was gone, and I was watching a bird swoop slowly down toward the water and wondering what it would feel like to do that when Chris slowly turned my face toward his and kissed me. It was a long, tender, gentle kiss. Not the kiss of a lunatic juvenile. The kiss of a man.

When we pulled away from each other and I opened my eyes, I saw him smiling at me and looked pleased. "I like you, lady. What did you say your name was?"

"Oh, go to hell." I pulled the reins from his hands, exhorted him to hang on, and I took over the horse. That was one thing I could do well. I had been riding since I was five and it was a marvelous, heady feeling to be pounding over the mountains, not a house or a human being in sight, just a lovely, leggy horse under us and a beautiful man in the saddle behind me, however crazy he was.

"Okay, smartass. So you can ride. But do you know where you're going?" I had to giggle to myself as I realized that I didn't, and I shook my head in the wind, my hair whipping his face, but I didn't think he'd mind. His hair was almost as long as mine anyway.

"Where do you want to go?" As if I'd know how to get there. We were in his world and I was just a tourist. But a happy one.

"Bolas. Head back toward that road down there, take the first right, without falling into the water, please. I can't swim."

"Bullshit." But I followed his instructions, walking the horse down the mountainside and then cantering along near the road in silence until I saw another road off to the right.

"That's it." He kicked the horse for me and I tried to slap him playfully but the water pistol was suddenly aimed at my ear again.

"You know what you are, Mr. Matthews?" I shouted into the wind. "You're a pain in the ass. And a bully."

"So I've been told. Hey, take this next right too, and then a left." There were only one or two cars on the road, and I moved the horse onto it and took the appropriate turns. It was fun riding again, and I was beginning to like the nut with the shaggy hair and the water pistol. He had a nice grip on my waist and I could feel his thighs pressed into mine.

"Is this it?" We were in a nondescript-looking place, down on shore level, but there was nothing much to see but trees.

"Ride through those trees over there...you'll see." And I did. A long sandy strip of beach, the sea, and an inlet. And on the other side a still more beautiful beach which stretched for a couple of miles and then was stopped by the mountains again, dropping down to meet the sea. It was a splendid sight.

"Wow!"

"This is Bolinas and that's Stinson Beach. Can you swim?" He looked pleased at the expression on my face and he dismounted and held out his hands to catch me. I realized again how tall he was as I slipped to the ground next to him. I'm 5'7" and he must have been at least 6'3".

"Sure I can swim, but you can't. Remember?"

"Well, I'll learn." I watched what he was doing with sudden surprise and wondered just what he had in mind. He had pulled off his jacket and boots and was proceeding to remove his T-shirt. What next? His jeans? I wasn't quite sure what this was all about. "Whatcha looking at?"

"Let me ask first. What are you doing?" He stopped and looked at me for a long moment.

"I thought we'd swim the horse from here to the end of the land spit over there -- it's an easy distance -- and then we can ride on the beach. And swim, and stuff. Take off your clothes, I'll tie them to the saddle." Yeah...sure...and swim and stuff. Stuff, huh?...Oh well.

I tied up my hair again and then pulled off my own jacket and boots...and then my T-shirt, my jeans, and my pants. There was no one else on the beach. It was warm that April, yet on that side of the bay and on that Tuesday afternoon there was no one on the Bolinas Beach but us. Christopher Matthews and I stood facing each other beneath the mountains, stark naked and smiling peacefully, while the horse seemed to wonder what was next. And so did I. I wondered if Chris were going to leap at me and rape me, or squirt me with the water pistol again, or what. He was hard to predict. But he seemed matter-of-fact as he strapped my clothes to the saddle and led the horse toward the water. The three of us walked in, Chris showing nothing of the shock of the cold water, only slowly leading the horse into it and checking back over his shoulder to make sure I was okay. I was, but I was freezing my ass off and hated to show it. I dove under the water to see if that would feel better, and swam past him towards the opposite shore. It felt fabulous, and I smiled to myself as I surfaced and looked over my shoulder at Chris. Here I was in California, swimming from one beach to

another with a horse and a crazy young filmmaker. Not bad, Mrs. Forrester, not bad at all.

We walked slowly up on the beach on the other side and Chris tied the horse to a long piece of drift wood. Again, there was no one on the beach but us. It looked like a movie and felt like a dream. He stretched out in the sun and closed his eyes, making no move toward me. He was doing what he wanted to do and I was free to do the same.

"Do you always run your shootings like this, Chris?" I was stretched out on the sand, with a respectable distance between us, my head was propped up and I was looking out to sea.

"Not always. Just most of the time. There's no point working if it's going to be a drag." Apparently he really believed that.

"Joe says you're good."

"Joe's got his head up his ass, but he's a nice guy. He's been giving me a lot of work."

"Me too. And I need it. He's nice to work for." We were roaming around comfortable subjects and it seemed a little funny to me to be making small talk about work as we lay naked in the sun.

"Where are you from, Gill? Back East?"

"Yes. New York, but I hate to admit it."

"That's a bad place. Bad for the head. I wouldn't go near it flying 40,000 feet above the ground."

"You're probably right. I've been here three months and I'm beginning to feel that way myself."

"Married?" It seemed a little late to ask, but maybe that was his style.

"No. Divorced. You?"

"Nope. Free as that bird over the water." He pointed to a gull drifting slowly downward in a lazily swooping arc. "It's a nice way to be."

"Lonely sometimes though. Isn't it for you?" He didn't look as though he'd suffered from much loneliness. He didn't have that sharp look about the eyes that one gets from trying to survive.

"I guess it's lonely sometimes, but...well, I work a lot. And I guess I don't think about being lonely." I envied him and wondered briefly if he was living with a girl, but I didn't want to ask. I didn't want to know. He was the first man I'd met in a long time who had guts and style and a sense of humor. "You look like a thinker. Are you?" He had rolled over on his stomach and was watching me with an amused grin.

"A thinker?" He nodded. I was stalling...yes...I was a thinker...what was wrong with that? "Yeah, I'm a thinker."

"And you read a lot." I nodded. "And you're lonely as hell." I nodded again, but what he was saying was beginning to bother me. It was as though he lived on the top of Mount Olympus and was looking down.

"And you talk too much." I stood up and looked at him for a second before walking toward the water and slipping into the waves. I liked him but I wanted to be alone for a bit. He seemed to stand very close and see a lot. And I suspected I could care about him. A lot. About what he thought, and what he was. I even liked how he looked....Chris Matthews was what I'd been waiting for, but now that he'd arrived I was afraid.

A sudden splash in the water next to me caught me by surprise and I turned quickly to see if I was being attacked by a local sea monster. But it was only Chris swimming by, and then turning back to swim at me again. He was really just a giant kid. I waited for him to dive at me from underwater, or try to dunk me, but he didn't, he just swam toward me and then kissed me as the waves swept by.

"Let's go back." He had a quiet look on his face as he said it and I was glad. I was getting tired of the games.

We swam toward the shore side by side and I started to walk toward where we had lain before, but he took me by the hand for a moment and looked at me.

"There's a nice cove back there. I'll show you." He kept my hand in his and walked me slowly around the point to a tiny cove nestled in the tall dune grass, like a secret garden. And suddenly I felt stronger and more desirable than I'd felt in years. I wanted him and he knew it and I knew he wanted me....But it was too soon, I hardly knew him...it couldn't be right...it...I was scared.

"Chris...I..."

"Shhh...everything's going to be okay." He wrapped his arms around me as we stood in the tall grass with our feet dug into the sand, and then I felt my body swaying with his, until we lay in the sand, and I was his.

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