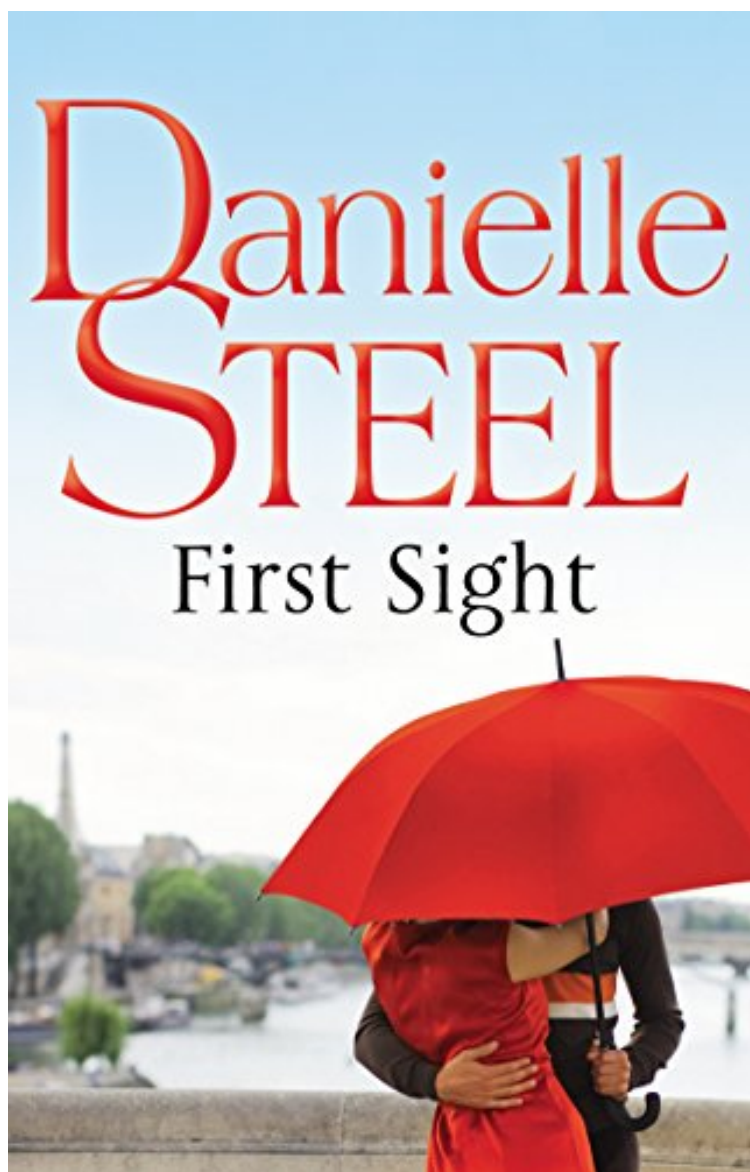


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# First Sight



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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurNew York. London. Milan. Paris. Fashion week in all four cities. A month of endless interviews, parties, unflagging work and attention to detail. At the centre of the storm is Timmie ONEill, who has created an international empire that inspires, fills, and consumes her life. Yet as blessed as Timmie feels by her success, she harbours the private wounds of a devastating childhood and past tragedy. Always willing to take risks in business, she never risks her heart until an intriguing Frenchman comes into her life during Paris Fashion Week. There is every reason why they must remain apart. But neither can deny their growing friendship and the electricity that sparks whenever they meet. Are they brave enough to face what comes next?ExtraitChapter 1The pilot's voice on the Alitalia flight to Paris from Milan woke Timmie from a

brief nap. She was exhausted after a week in New York, then two more in Europe, first in London, then in Milan. It was a pilgrimage she made twice a year in February and October for the ready to wear fashion shows, the famous "pret-a-porter." She was the founder, guiding light, principal designer, and CEO of the most important men's and women's ready to wear lines in the United States, with subsidiary companies in Europe, which was what brought her to the European ready to wear shows twice a year. She showed her U.S. lines with the other American designers in New York during the first week, and then showed her French subsidiary lines in Paris. And in between, she attended the London and Milan runway shows. And she went to Men's Fashion Week in Paris as well, for her men's lines. Timmie O'Neill had run her business single-handedly for twenty-three years, since she was twenty-five years old, when it all began. At forty-eight, her empire was so vast, it encompassed children's wear, home furnishings, and decorating accessories, including wallpaper, sheets, towels, and linens. Ten years before, they had added cosmetics, men and women's skin care products, and half a dozen perfumes, which had stunned them all with their universal appeal and almost instant success in every country where they were sold. Timmie O'Neill was a name that was known worldwide, and associated with style, fashion at a range of price points, and astonishing success. The world of Timmie O had been a legendary victory for more than two decades, and now its founder and CEO was heading for Paris to oversee the October ready to wear show of its European-based lines. The rest of the American designers wore themselves out during the frenzy of fashion week in New York, without adding the insanity of the European pret-a-porter. Only Timmie did both, with her boundless energy and success. But even she was exhausted after Milan, and absolutely drained when she thought of doing the show in Paris. The clothes they had shown in New York had been received with even greater than usual kudos from the press. For her entire career, it seemed, Timmie O'Neill had had a Midas touch, and could do no wrong in the eyes of the fashion world. Even during the occasional seasons when she had been less pleased with their lines herself, or the critics had been slightly less in love with them, they had done staggeringly well nonetheless. Everything Timmie did, she did well. She threw herself into all she undertook with perfectionism and inimitable style and grace. She was relentless in how hard she pushed herself, far more than anyone else, and what she expected of herself. She had an uncanny knack for predicting what the world would want to wear, live with, and smell like, long before they thought about it themselves. Along with their clothing lines, their perfumes were among the biggest sellers in the world. She had chosen the scents and designed the packaging herself. There was very little that Timmie O'Neill didn't do well, brilliantly, in fact, except maybe cook. And dress, she liked to say. As sensitive and forward thinking as her designs were, she insisted that most of the time she didn't care what she wore herself. She had little time to give it much thought, although the clothes she designed had made her famous, particularly her signature sportswear, which managed to be simultaneously casual, easy to wear, and chic. There was a simple, clean elegance to everything she designed, and without even trying, or thinking about it, she herself was the epitome of casual chic. On the flight from Milan, she was wearing jeans, a T-shirt, both of her own label, a vintage mink jacket she had found years before in the backstreets of Milan, and black ballerina flats she had designed the year before. She carried a large black alligator Hermes bag that had been the precursor of the Birkin, and was even more striking because of its size, and had real style because it looked well worn, after years of use on trips such as this. The pilot announced their descent toward Charles de Gaulle Airport in Roissy, just outside Paris, as Timmie stretched her legs out in front of her in one of the plane's eight first-class seats. She had slept for most of the brief flight and through the meal. She was wiped out after the pressure, work, and revels of Milan. She had visited the factories that produced knits, bed and table linens, and shoes for them. The European ready to wear shows particularly entailed endless parties and socializing as well. No one ever slept till the end. There was a priest sitting next to her on the plane, who had said nothing to her during the flight, and was probably one of the few people who wouldn't recognize her, and wasn't wearing something she'd designed. They had nodded to each other politely when she took her seat, and ten minutes later, after glancing at The International Herald Tribune to see what they said about the collection she'd seen in Milan, and London the week before that, she was sound asleep. As the landing gear came down, she glanced out the window with a smile, thinking of Paris, and then turned to her two assistants, who were seated across the aisle from her. The priest had been happy to take the window seat, and neither of Timmie's assistants had disturbed her while she slept. They'd all had a grueling three weeks, first at the shows in New York, then London and Milan. Paris was their last stop, much to their collective relief. All four shows were important, and the ready to wear shows in Paris were always high-pressure, fast paced, and stressful from beginning to end. Milan was an important mecca of the fashion world, but victory in Paris was what mattered to her most.

It always had. Paris was the city she loved best in the world, and the one that had spawned her dreams. Timmie still looked sleepy as she handed some notes to her assistants, David and Jade. David had been with her for six years, and Jade for twelve. They were passionately devoted to her for her kindness, fairness, and all they'd learned from her personally as well as professionally. Everything about Timmie was inspirational, from the genius of her work, to the thoughtful, compassionate way she treated people. David always said she was lit from within, like a beacon that shined through the darkness, pointing out the path for others. And the best of her was that she was entirely unaware of how remarkable she was. Humility was unheard of in the fashion world, but all who knew her agreed that she was amazingly uncomplicated and modest. She had a completely innate, instinctive sense about how to run her business, who she was designing for, and what they wanted to wear next season. She was quick to sense adjustments that had to be made, and never hesitated to make changes in the lines when necessary. There had been many over the years. She was never afraid to try something new, no matter how high risk. She was fearless in all she did. She lived life in bold strokes and had been a wonderful employer and friend to David and Jade over the years. Timmie was trustworthy, incredibly hardworking to the point of being driven, brilliant, creative, funny, compassionate, somewhat obsessive, a perfectionist in all things, and above all kind. The standard she set for competence, efficiency, creativity, and integrity was high. David Gold had come to her right after graduating from Parsons as an aspiring designer, and Timmie had rapidly determined that his designs were prosaic and tended to lean more toward past styles that had been reliable and solid, but he had little of the forward vision toward the future that she looked for in design assistants. But she had seen in him something far different and more useful. He had a knack for ingenious marketing ideas, was supremely organized and attentive to details, and had an ability to keep vast numbers of people on track at the same time. She had singled him out of the design team rapidly, and put him to work for her as an assistant. He still came to the shows with her twice a year, but his responsibilities had grown exponentially in his six years with her. At thirty-two, he was a vice president in charge of marketing, and she reviewed all their publicity and ad campaigns with him. Together they had honed their PR image till it gleamed. He was brilliant at what he did. As always, he had made everything about the New York and European shows easier for her. Timmie had often said that his business card should read "magician" instead of VP in charge of marketing. The creativity he had lacked as a designer he had a hundredfold when it came to ideas about marketing, advertising, and handling people, in ways Timmie insisted she couldn't have done herself. She was always fair about acknowledging others' achievements and quick to lavish praise where it was due. She was extremely fond of him, and had nursed him back to health herself during a bout of hepatitis four years before. They had been close friends ever since, and he revered her as his mentor, and said she had taught him everything he'd ever learned about the fashion industry, while Timmie claimed he had long since outstripped her skills. Their team efforts were a huge success to the immeasurable benefit of "Timmie O," the company as well as the woman. Jade Chin had been an editorial assistant at Vogue, and had come to Timmie's attention at a number of shoots at the magazine, which Timmie often attended herself, to make sure that the clothes were photographed and perceived in the right way. Jade had been just as meticulous as she, just as maniacal about details, and never flinched at an eighteen-hour day. Timmie had hired her after she had been at Vogue for five years, crawling her way up the seemingly endless ladder, which would have eventually landed her a title as editor of some section of the magazine, at pathetically meager pay, with a multitude of perks and little recognition. Instead, Timmie had offered her a salary that had seemed huge to her at the time, and a job as her personal assistant. Despite opportunities to move into the corporate structure of Timmie O over the years, Jade had chosen to remain Timmie's main personal assistant for the past dozen years. She loved her job, and everything it entailed. And she and David were a good team. She and Timmie worked together with exquisite synchronicity, and she had a sixth sense for what Timmie needed, almost before it entered her employer's mind. Timmie had long since said that having Jade as an assistant was every working woman's dream. Jade had almost become the wife Timmie would never have. She thought of every last detail, and even carried Timmie's favorite tea bags in her handbag on every trip. Cups of tea would appear discreetly just when Timmie needed them most, along with lunch, dinner, snacks, exactly the clothes she wanted to change into for an interview, and a detailed accounting of who to call, who had called her, who Jade had successfully fobbed off for her, and a constantly changing sheet of appointments. She kept Timmie moving in the right direction, and always on track, while handling all the minor details for her, and making her life run smoothly at all times. The three of them made a remarkable team. Jade and David allowed Timmie to dodge all the irritating details of her daily life, and focus on her work. As she put it, they made her look good, and feel

better than she would have otherwise. Jade had been to Paris with her some fifty times in twelve years, and David maybe half as many. Paris was Timmie's favorite city on the planet, and although her U.S. business was based in L.A., she went to Paris every chance she got and traveled all over Europe to keep track of her subsidiary companies there. She had been far braver than most U.S. designers about putting down roots and starting companies in Europe. It had served her well. The trip to Paris never seemed too long to her, and she would go at the slightest provocation, and merest excuse. As she always did after the ready to wear shows in Paris, since they were the last stop in what she referred to as Hell Month, she was planning to stay on for two days alone after the shows to relax. After that, she would join Jade and David in New York, to talk to production people, visit their factory in New Jersey, and meet with their ad agency to discuss a new campaign. Timmie was one of the few holdouts who refused to move her base of U.S. operations to New York. She preferred living in Los Angeles, and the life she enjoyed there, dividing her time between her beach house in the Colony in Malibu, and her city house in Bel Air. She had no desire whatsoever to live in a penthouse in New York, freezing in winter, and commuting to the Hamptons in the summer. She liked her life just fine the way it was, and insisted it worked for her. It was hard to argue with success. She hopped on a plane whenever necessary, at the drop of a hat, to go to Paris or New York, or Asia in some cases. David had tried to talk her into buying her own jet, and she insisted that she didn't need one, she was perfectly happy flying on commercial airlines, as she just had to Paris from Milan, and from London before that. Considering how successful she was, Timmie was surprisingly unspoiled. She never forgot her simple origins, the luck that had started her on her career, or the coffee shop where she'd worked as a waitress, when she worked on her first designs at night, and bought inexpensive and unusual fabrics with her tips. She had been making clothes for seven years, before her first big break at twenty-five, when a buyer from Barney's noticed some of the clothes Timmie had sold to her co-workers, which were kicky, fun, stylish, and exquisitely made. She bought half a dozen of Timmie's best designs and took them back to the old Barney's store on West 17th Street, long before they moved uptown, and they were an instant hit. Her next order was for twenty-five pieces, then fifty. When the buyer ordered a hundred pieces the following year, Timmie quit the coffee shop, rented a crumbling warehouse in the L.A. fashion district, and hired a dozen girls from an unwed mothers' home to help sew. She had paid them a decent wage, which had been a blessing for them as well as for her. After that, she was on her way. By thirty, she was a nationally known success, and in the eighteen years since, she had skyrocketed into the stratosphere. But she never forgot how and where it all began, or how lucky she had been to be singled out, and blessed with success. Although there had been some tough bumps in her life since, she still felt fortunate in many ways. Most of all in her work. *Revue de presse* Praise for *First Sight* A novel about love, in all its heartbreaking and splendid forms. Kirkus s Steel is one of the worlds most popular authors, and this poignant romance is sure to thrill her many loyal fans and reach many new readers, too. Booklist Steel deftly stages heartstring-tugging moments. Publishers Weekly