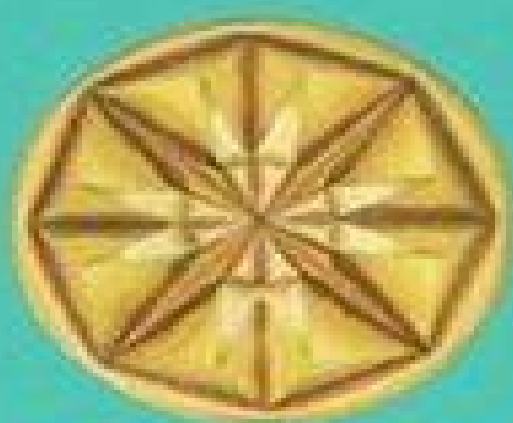


AMERICA'S #1 BESTSELLER

DANIELLE STEEL

AUTHOR OF THE KISS AND LEAP OF FAITH



KALEIDOSCOPE

Kaleidoscope

Kaleidoscope

Kaleidoscope
kaleidoscope
the first,
shimmering moment
of life,
like a diamond
in the sea,
glittering
in the noonday
sun,
brightly lit
and glowing
flame,
a brand new name,
a shining light,
then gentle twist
and darkest night
comes
for the first
time,
then happy rhymes
and gentle songs,
hearts that belong
until one stands
alone,
from brightest
dawn
to deepest dusk,
from morning sun
to twilight dreams,
fantastic schemes,
and lives
that sometimes

go awry,
such shining
hopes,
such sudden turns,
from bright
to dark
from grim
to grand
from joy
to sorrow,
always waiting
for tomorrow
and a twist
of fate,
a ray of hope . . .
with the faintest
sleight of hand,
the alteration
of all life's
schemes
and all its scope . . .
all with one tiny turn
of life's kaleidoscope.

Kaleidoscope

PART ONE

Solange

Kaleidoscope

Chapter 1

The rains were torrential northeast of Naples on the twenty-fourth of December 1943, and Sam Walker huddled in his foxhole with his rain gear pulled tightly around him. He was twenty-one years old and he had never been in Europe before the war. It was a hell of a way to see the world, and he had seen more than he'd ever wanted. He had been overseas since November of '42, fighting in North Africa, and taking part in Operation Torch until May of '43. He had thought Africa was bad with the deadly heat and desert winds and the sandstorms that left you half blind with red eyes that burned for days and tears constantly pouring down your cheeks, but this was worse. His hands were so numb he could hardly hold the cigarette butt his buddy had given him as a Christmas gift, let alone light it.

The wind from the mountains went right through your bones, it was the worst winter Italy had ever seen, or so they said, and he suddenly longed for the torrid heat of the desert. He had reached Sicily in July, with the 45th Infantry, attached to Clark's Fifth Army, and after Sicily they had been in the battle of Naples in October. And the battle of Termoli after that, but for two months now they had crawled over rocks and through ditches toward Rome, hiding in barns when they found them, stealing what food they could, fighting the Germans every inch of the way, and bleeding over every inch they covered.

“Shit. . . .” His last match was drenched, and by then so was the butt that had been his only Christmas present. He was twenty-one years old, and when the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor he had been at Harvard. Harvard . . . the thought of it would have made him laugh if he hadn't been so bone tired.

Harvard . . . with its perfect life and its pristine Quad and its bright young faces so sure they would one day run the world. If they only knew . . . it was difficult to believe now that he had ever been a part of all that. He had worked so damn hard to get there. He was a “townie” from Somerville, and all his life he had dreamed of going to Harvard. His sister had laughed at him, all she had wanted was to marry one of the boys in her high school senior class, any of them would do, and she had certainly slept with enough of them to audition for the part. She was three years older than Sam and she had already been married and divorced by the time Sam finally got into Harvard, after working at every odd job he could for a year after finishing high school. Their parents had died when he was fifteen, in a car accident