

*Weddings* BY *Bella*

BOOK TWO

SWINGING ON  
A STAR

A NOVEL

JANICE THOMPSON



a division of Baker Publishing Group  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

© 2010 by Janice Thompson

Published by Revell  
a division of Baker Publishing Group  
P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287  
www.revellbooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Thompson, Janice A.

Swinging on a star : a novel / Janice Thompson.

p. cm. — (Weddings by Bella ; bk. 2)

ISBN 978-0-8007-3343-8 (pbk.)

1. Single women—Fiction. 2. Weddings—Planning—Fiction. I. Title.

PS3620.H6824S85 2010

813'.6—dc22

2009030560

Scripture used in this book, whether quoted or paraphrased by the characters, is taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

Published in association with MacGregor Literary Agency.

10 11 12 13 14 15 16      7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# 1

## High Hopes

If Aunt Rosa hadn't landed that gig on the Food Network, I probably wouldn't have ended up on the national news. And if their pesky camera crew hadn't shown up at our house on one of the most important days of my life, I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have been hauled off to the Galveston County jail. Unlike my brother Armando, I'd never aspired to get arrested or have my face plastered across the television screen on the evening news. But thanks to Aunt Rosa's homemade garlic bread, I found myself facing both of these things . . . and in exactly that order.

When the call came last Tuesday from the powers that be at the Food Network, the entire Rossi family went into a tailspin. Aunt Rosa's recipe had been chosen from among thousands to be featured in an upcoming episode titled *Italian Chefs from Coast to Coast*. This was a great honor, of course, but the timing couldn't have been worse. After all, I was right in the middle of coordinating my first-ever medieval-themed

## *Swinging on a Star*

---

wedding at Club Wed, our family's wedding facility. I was up to my earlobes in castles and moats. Who had the time—or patience—for television crews?

I pointed out my concerns to my mother just a week and a half before the big day as she prepared to leave for the opera house. She'd only just started applying her makeup, a process that usually took a good hour or more, so I knew I had plenty of time. Pacing around her oversized bathroom, I spoke my mind.

“Mama, you know what I'm up against. This wedding is so important. Everything has to be perfect. The bride has had this one planned out since she was a little girl, and the best man is coming all the way from California. It's a huge deal, and if I can manage to pull it off, it'll be a great promotion for Club Wed.”

“You've coordinated weddings before, Bella,” Mama said with a wave of her hand. “What's so different about this one?”

“It's a *themed* wedding, Mama. Medieval. I've never done one of those before, so I'm nervous.”

“You worry too much, honey.” She squirted lotion into her hand and then smeared it on her face, working it into every pore. “Remember how you fretted over the country-western themed wedding, and it came off without a hitch?”

“You call Uncle Laz's parrot stealing a toupee from one of our guests ‘without a hitch’?” I sighed, not even trying to hide my frustration. “And what about the part where our caterer's eyebrows got burned off while he was barbecuing the beans?” After a pause, I added, “Besides, I'm not *trying* to worry, but there's so much to think about. I'm transforming the whole gazebo area into a medieval wonderland. The

bridesmaids and groomsmen are wearing Renaissance costumes and dressing up as ladies-in-waiting and knights in shining armor. Doesn't that sound awesome?"

"Of course."

"We're even having horses and trumpeters and a court jester—the whole thing. And Laz, Jenna, and Nick are serving authentic foods from the Middle Ages. I've put a ton of work into this. It's a really big deal."

My mama's perfectly sculpted eyebrows arched, and I could sense a lecture coming on. I'd gotten pretty good at reading her thinly plucked eyebrows. "Well, I hate to burst your bubble," she said, "but Aunt Rosa's debut on national television is a pretty big deal too. I'm surprised you're not more excited for her." As she pulled her dark hair back in a cloth headband, the tiny wrinkles around her eyes lifted. With rehearsed flair, she reached for a bottle of liquid foundation and gave it a good shake.

"I am excited for her," I said. "But, you realize the camera crew is set to arrive the day before the wedding, right? This is going to be a fiasco of major proportions!" Surely she could see my point. After all, we would be smack-dab in the middle of the wedding rehearsal at that time, and I didn't want any disruptions. If the street happened to be filled with Food Network trucks and the like, it would, at the very least, spoil the ambience. My clients had paid good money to have this wedding come off without a hitch. I couldn't let them down.

"I, for one, think it's perfect." My mother poured a dollop of foundation into her open palm. "It's a great way to promote the family business *and* give Rosa the attention she needs." Mama jabbed her slender, beautifully manicured index finger into the goey liquid, then began to place dots

## *Swinging on a Star*

---

of the flesh-colored stuff all over her face. Soon my polka-dotted mother turned my way. “I think you’re missing a great opportunity here, Bella. Think about it.”

“I guess I’m just not seeing it.” I closed the lid on the toilet and sat down, feeling defeated. “It’s going to be a huge distraction—a great way to draw attention *away* from the wedding facility. I’m afraid that’s what’s going to happen, not the other way around.”

“Don’t be silly. And remember, this isn’t about you, Bella Bambina,” she chastened me. “This is about your aunt. She’s worked all her life for a moment like this. We can’t rob her of this chance to shine like the star she is.”

“No, of course not,” I said. “It’s just that . . .” I sighed, unsure of what to say next.

In the next room, Guido—the parrot my uncle had adopted from his mob friend Sal—began to sing “Amazing Grace.” I’d grown accustomed to his morning ritual, but it was starting to get a little old. Or maybe my patience was just wearing thin. Living in a house with so many relatives could do that to a person, particularly when there was so much work to be done. Still, I needed the grace that Guido was singing about—and I needed it now.

A rap at the bathroom door caught my attention. Aunt Rosa stuck her head inside and flashed a shy smile when I looked her way. She wore her hair pulled up in a loose bun. Her housedress was the same one she’d worn a hundred times before over the past several years. So was the apron, which was covered in flour. Unlike Mama, Rosa didn’t believe in wasting money on new things. Or makeup. Unless she had a man to impress, of course. Lately I’d begun to suspect she’d found one. I’d caught her wearing lipstick on at least three occasions.

“Bella, there’s someone at the front door for you.” My aunt brushed her palms against her apron. “He says he’s with the Stages Set Design Company.”

“Ah.” The guy we’d hired to turn the gazebo area into a castle and moat for the big day. The bride’s father had instructed me to spare no expense, and I wasn’t taking his words lightly. The construction of the castle would cost over ten grand. Oh, but how glorious it would look! I could almost picture it now . . . minus the Food Network trucks in the background, of course. The upcoming medieval evening would draw a whole new clientele to the wedding facility. I hoped.

I looked at my Aunt Rosa—standing there with her face still beaming from the news about her television opportunity—and immediately felt shame and remorse for voicing any complaints. If anyone deserved this, she did.

*Lord, I’m sorry. I’m letting my worries about this wedding spoil my aunt’s once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Forgive me?*

As he whispered a gentle “Of course,” I reached to hug Rosa, who flashed an embarrassed smile. “We’re so proud of you, Rosa,” I whispered in her ear. “If anyone deserves a chance to strut her stuff, it’s you. You’re the best cook in the world.”

“Thank you.” She giggled like a schoolgirl. “But I can still hardly believe they picked *me!* This is the most exciting thing that’s happened to me since I got off the plane from Napoli. I’m going to be on my favorite channel of all—the Food Network.” She reached for her St. Christopher medal and began to praise all of the saints at once. I couldn’t help but smile as her chorus ushered heavenward in lyrical Italian.

In the meantime, I slipped past her and down the stairs. My aunt had a cooking career to build. Me? I’d better get busy building a castle.