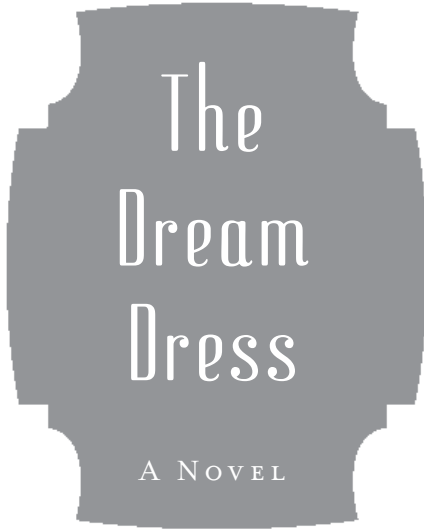


Weddings by Design, #3



JANICE
THOMPSON


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To Debbie Maddox, costume designer extraordinaire! For the hundreds of hours you've spent designing, pinning, tucking, altering, and sewing costumes so that I could see my characters come to life on the stage—thank you! The only “stitches” you've given me over the years are the ones in my side from all the laughter! Thanks so much for your encouragement with this book, girl.

And to my mama, the best seamstress I know!

In memory of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. The chapter titles in this fun-loving tale are all Fred and/or Ginger movies or songs.

I paused to look at the gowns in the front window, amazed at the professional display. To the right of the front door, two wedding gowns—one pure white silk and one satin crème—flanked a deep purple bridesmaid dress. In the window to the left of the door, Demetri’s pride and joy—a multifeathered number—took the place of honor, nestled between two, in my opinion, outdated flower girl dresses. The crystals on the bodice shimmered as a carefully placed light in the floor of the window, angled just so, hit it. Ah, the joy of showcasing. Demetri excelled at it. Not that he actually dressed the windows, of course. Lydia and Corinne, two of our salesclerks, usually took care of that. He’d taken to calling them the Dynamic Duo because of their high energy level.

Before walking inside, I happened to glance down and noticed that the hem of the satin crème needed to be adjusted. Should I mention it or let it go? To mention it would mean more work on my end. Still, as I stared through the crystal-clean glass at the beautifully presented gowns, I knew that I must. My conscience wouldn’t allow me to let it go. No designer in her right mind would allow such a travesty.

I entered the store to find my high-strung boss in one of his moods. In typical flamboyant style, the impeccably dressed, overly groomed Demetri waved his manicured hands in the air to get my attention. “Gabi, you’re late, and zis is not a good day to raise my blood pressure!” Angst always seemed to exaggerate his Russian accent, and this morning offered no exception to that rule.

“But I’m not late.” I glanced at my watch just to be sure. Yep. Ten till eight. “I’m not supposed to be in until eight o’clock, remember?” I slid my purse off my shoulder and shifted it to the other hand.

