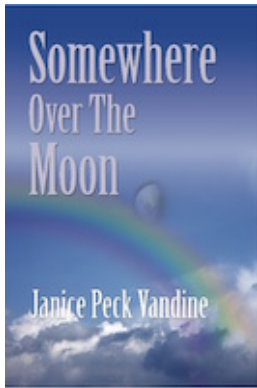




# Somewhere Over The Moon

Janice Peck Vandine



*Angela and her new husband have settled into the parsonage and a young, attractive girl is trying to develop a relationship with Noah. The girl attends her Young Adult Support Group, which finds Angela involved in a troublesome situation when Danika consumes Noah's attention. Life seems hectic for Angela as she manages her work at the Care Home and her involvement in the situations and difficulties of her new life as a pastor's wife.*

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**Janice Vandine**

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## CHAPTER ONE

Fog and drizzle were forming ice on the trees in the back yard outside the parsonage window. Tree branches hung precariously, many of them touching the ground.

Angela Bristol turned toward her new husband and handed him a steaming cup of coffee. "Hard to believe spring is just around the corner with the beautiful ice covered world God has provided for us this Sunday morning," Angela's voice came off a little too perky for such an early hour, especially on Sunday morning.

Noah had always been attracted to Angela's pale green eyes that tended to dream and he set his cup on the borrowed card table, and hugged her as he nuzzled her slightly disheveled blond hair with his nose. "Probably won't be many at the service today." Noah kissed her gently and grabbed his wool knitted hat off the top of the refrigerator.

"I have the most wonderful idea," she said enthusiastically. "Let's cancel church. No one will venture out into this ice storm anyway. We can move the two chairs by the front window to the front of the hearth and build a fire. Wouldn't it be great to spend the service time reading bible passages to each other?"

"If only one person makes it to church this morning, there *WILL* be a service. I assume that one person *WILL* be you," her husband said, holding his hand under her chin and looking into her eyes. Then, he picked up his cup, swallowed the last of his coffee, wiped his mouth with a napkin, and placed the cup next to his cereal bowl in the sink.

Angela sighed. Noah looked spiffy in his navy suit with the necktie that was the same color as his red hair. He brushed

his hair to the side with his hand and pulled the black cap tightly over his head, trying to cover his ears. "I'd better get outside and clear the walks. It's almost time for church."

"I don't think blue flannel pajamas would be appropriate dress for an organist to wear to church so I better head upstairs, check the boxes, and locate warmer duds," Angela said.

Noah kissed his wife on the forehead and reached into the pantry off the kitchen to retrieve his blue down parka. Sliding it on, he zipped it up, and dashed out into the misty fog that froze as soon as it hit anything.

Angela walked to the living room window, pulled back the Belgium lace curtains her mother had given them from the old house on Oak Street, a hand-me-down from her grandmother, and watched her husband shovel his way down their front walk. He tossed ice-crusting snow to both sides of the walkway until he reached the street, stopped, and slung the snow shovel over his shoulder. His feet slipped in every direction as he slid across the icy narrow street to repeat the same procedure in front of the church.

Angela trudged upstairs to the bedroom in search of some special attire that could withstand the frozen rain crystals and bitter winds. Her pink long johns had been folded and placed in her sock drawer. She put them on.

\* \* \* \*

Two weeks ago, the couple had moved from Angela's parents' house to the parsonage. With homebound parishioners to visit and scheduled meetings, Noah had been kept busy. The Community Care Home, where Angela was employed, had lost three nursing assistants during a downsizing and was short staffed. Angela volunteered to fill in when there was a need. This meant there hadn't been time to organize their personal

belongings, which had been stacked in boxes in the four corners of their bedroom.

Angela needed to come up with warm clothes and that meant she needed to find that carton. Her stepfather was an organized man and luckily, everything was labeled. Written in bold black letters on the third carton down was, "Angela's Winter Clothing." She hefted the two boxes off the top and set them on the floor. When she unfolded the flaps of the next box, her dark grey fleece slacks were laid neatly across the top. She took them out and slipped into them. Under the slacks was a white cashmere turtleneck she'd bought at a rummage sale near the college. This was perfect for the next layer. Further down, in the same box, she uncovered a bulky cable knit sweater Mrs. White, one of the original town residents, had knitted for her father when their family moved to Wilson Grove, over twenty-five years ago. It was extra large in size and perfect for maintaining one's body heat. Her father had worn this sweater every fall, winter and spring when he came to pick her up from her piano lessons. After his death, the family had gathered his clothing together for the Salvation Army. Angela was determined that sweater wasn't to go. She lifted it out of the box and gave it a hug. Today was the perfect opportunity to wear a sweater she'd treasured for the past five years.

A smile lit up her face as she wrestled it over the top of the other layers and tugged it down over her waist. Memories of her father rushed through her mind. She rubbed her hands over her chest.

It was time for church. As she left the bedroom, Angela glanced at her image in the large oval mirror on the dresser and snickered. She resembled a stuffed Teddy Bear.

\* \* \* \*

Angela approached the front door of the church, as an early morning jogger came up behind her. Frozen mist rhythmically poured from the girl's mouth. What was it about joggers? They ran in the coldest weather wearing the skimpiest outfits. Danika Drew, a blonde, with cornflower blue eyes and a figure to die for, grabbed Angie's shoulders and held on while she trembled with the cold. "I'm glad there's church. I need a place to warm up," the girl said between shivers. Danika had been a regular member of her Young Adult Support Group from the time Angela had taken it over, a week before her wedding. This girl's problems were plentiful and by the time she finished listing them, the hour-long meeting was over. This upset the other members.

Danika followed Angela through the door of the church as ice crystals shot from the sky in a slanted rush and pounded the backs of their heads. "I'm not sure the sanctuary will be that warm, Dani. This is a large building and hard to heat. You need to wear more clothes when you run," Angela suggested and scanned the empty pews. No one had made the trek to church through the hazardous weather.

"I need to talk, Angie," the girl announced. "Had another fight with my stepfather and now he's kicked me out of the house. I don't know what I'm going to do."

"Your step-father kicked you out? It's your mother's house. I'd think the decision should be up to her," Angela responded while she pushed the door closed against the wind.

"She's on his side," Danika responded and slipped off her wet sneakers and stowed them under the back corner of the pew. "The parsonage has three bedrooms. Can I move in with you and Noah?" the girl asked, batting her eyelashes at Angela.

"I don't think that's a good idea, but we'll talk about it later," Angela's voice faded to a whisper. Another attempt to address the situation had the words getting caught in her throat.



She reached for a bulletin. There weren't any. She looked down at her feet. She was wearing her white nursing shoes. They were soaked and splotted with melting ice. She stamped the water from them and marched down the center aisle and met up with Noah who was calmly walking in her direction. The candles on the altar were lit and he was looking for his organist, who wasn't hard to find since she and Danika were the only ones present in the church.

"Angie, what's wrong?" Noah asked, noticing the odd look on her face as he passed and continued walking toward the only member of the congregation for the day.

"Had a disturbing question from Danika. We'll talk about it later," Angela drew a shaky breath, coughed to ease her tension and headed for the church's organ.

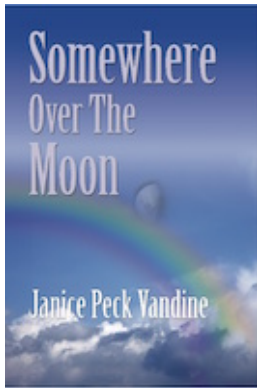
Noah noticed Danika shivering as she occupied the back pew. He walked in her direction. "I thought the problems with your parents had been solved. Are the three of you fighting again?"

"Things got worse," Danika broke into sobs as she draped wet socks over the back of the pew.

"Let me find something to warm you up. When you jog, you should wear more than that nylon outfit," he said and hurried down the aisle and through the doors to the vestry. Minutes later, he emerged carrying a fluffy pink crib blanket from the day care, rushed to the back of the church, and tossed it around Danika's shoulders. He pulled it tight and rubbed his hands up and down her arms to ease the chills. The wave of tenderness Noah showed toward Danika scared Angela and wouldn't allow her mind to focus on what she needed to do next. "It's a wonder you haven't frozen to death." Noah's voice echoed throughout the empty church. He gave her a loving squeeze, turned, and worked his way toward the altar.

At ten after ten, Angela played the first hymn that had been listed in the bulletin from the week before. Danika held both sides of the blanket tight in her hands and rested them on her chest. Then, in her bare feet, she padded softly down the red carpet of the center aisle and moved into the pew near the organ. Obviously, she'd warmed up. Her beautiful soprano voice was loud as it rang out into the church; it practically absorbed the sounds from the organ. Angela's stepfather, Tony, and her brother, Joey, had plans to form a choir. Angela made a mental note to suggest they ask Danika to join the group.

\* \* \* \*



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