STAND-IN GROOM
Contemporary Inspirational Romance
by Kaye Dacus

Anne Hawthorne is a successful wedding and event planner in Bonneterre, a medium-sized city in central Louisiana. Although content with her work, she desires to be married, and each wedding she plans makes her more and more discontent. When her newest clients, George Laurence and Courtney Landry, come in for their initial consultation, Anne is struck not only by the age difference between them, but by strange idiosyncrasies in the way George treats Courtney.

A personal assistant for a wealthy man who wishes to keep his identity—and his engagement—private, Englishman George Laurence reluctantly steps in to play the role of groom. He is not a good actor but excels at event planning, and before long, he finds himself drawn to Anne Hawthorne, admiring her abilities—and her charm.

As she works with George Laurence, Anne becomes increasingly attracted to him—a problem since she believes she is planning his wedding. She prays God will remove her growing infatuation with the man, but with each encounter it grows rather than diminishes. Anne is afraid, not just of being hurt again as in her past, but of losing her business—who would hire a wedding planner who fell in love with a client?

George is torn between honoring the confidentiality contract he has signed and the need to live up to his Christian ethics and be honest with Anne. After a private interlude between the two of them, George appeals to his employer's local lawyer to have the confidentiality clause amended and is finally able to tell Anne he isn't the groom, that he isn't the one getting married.

After working through her initial anger at being lied to, Anne starts to slowly allow herself to open her heart to George's gentle courtship. She explains to George about her broken relationship in the past, and he promises he would never take advantage of her the way her ex-fiancé did, nor lie to her again.

When Anne learns the true identity of her client—her ex-fiancé turned mega-movie star—she initially blames George for lying to her, but quickly sees how wrong she is and begs his forgiveness. But she not only needs forgiveness from George—God has been prompting her for years to forgive her ex-fiancé, but until now, she never had a reason to. Now, before she can move forward in her relationship with George, she must confront her ex-fiancé, learn the truth of why he broke up with her three days before their wedding, and forgive him before his wedding.

By the time the wedding day arrives, Anne has fallen completely in love with George but is worried that he has never come out and said, "I love you." Therefore, when she overhears him on a phone call discussing his plan to marry Anne so he can quit his current job and still stay in the United States, Anne jumps to the wrong conclusion that he, like her ex-fiancé, was only using her to gain his own end.

When the truth is revealed, Anne must face her biggest fear to get George back and secure her own happy ending.