

"A fantastic story. It was really fun to feel like I was
behind the scenes with a famous chef!"
Today I'm Reading Book Reviews



Reaching for the Stars



JANICE HORTON

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Scottish celebrity chef Finn McDuff is media stalked and disillusioned after winning his third star and losing his third wife. He decides he's had enough of all the food campaigns, the TV cookery shows, the constant frenzy surrounding his private life and, after giving up all his accolades and closing down his restaurant, he disappears.

With the enfant terrible of the kitchen missing, two rival newspapers, having lost their media meal ticket, compete against each other to whip up further public curiosity in the missing chef. Love him or hate him, everyone is out looking for Chef McDuff. Who will find him first and whose side will you be on...?

Reaching for the Stars Details

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From Reader Review Reaching for the Stars for online ebook

Carol W says

Celebrity chef Finn McDuff is on the verge of meltdown. He has just been dumped by his third wife. He has lost a wife for each of the 3 Golden stars he has achieved as a top chef.

It all becomes to much for him when 2 rival journalists, Raine and Ross, begin delving into his private life and his past.

Finn, heads for the peace and quiet of rural Scotland in the hope that no-one can find him and he can take stock of his life, but a celeb chef cannot just disappear without being noticed. So begins a very public "hunt the chef" campaign.

Finn was an adorable, but flawed character. He was a gentleman to the end, but his record shows he is just rubbish at relationships. His 3 Golden Stars for being a great chef cost him 3 wives. I just had to feel sorry for him. He deserved another chance.

Raine and Ross were the double act in the story. Raine was torn between the big scoop and doing the right thing. Ross was just after that big scoop.

The storyline, set in Scotland, had me engaged right to the very end, with some very funny moments and some "I didn't see that coming" moments, too . All the characters were lovable, even Ross, in his own way.

I loved it!

Mandy Baggot says

Great read! I really enjoyed this book. Finn was a fantastic hero, good-looking, rough around the edges with a vulnerable side. The story flowed well and kept a good pace throughout. The only downside was there wasn't quite enough romance for me but the story was entertaining and I will definitely be reading the next Janice Horton novel!

Melanie Robertson-King says

Absolutely loved it! Janice's characters are lifelike and believable. She makes you care for them - even the ones you 'love to hate'.

The plot had plenty of twists and it left you guessing how it was going to turn out until the end.

A real page-turner!

Sue says

This was the first novel I had read by Janice Horton and having seen rave reviews of her previous novel 'Bagpipes & Bullshot' I was very much looking forward to reading 'Reaching for the Stars'.

I was drawn into the story from the first paragraph, no pussy footing around, Finn McDuff was brought to life immediately. I loved the fact that he wasn't perfect, that he had a bit of a bad boy reputation but at the same time underneath it all there was a different person to the one the press and public knew. He had issues, past and present, that he had to overcome and/or resolve. Not being the perfect hero really made Finn come to life and gave him that extra dimension.

Journalist Raine and her adversary Ross made for a great sparring team and even though Ross was working for a newspaper with few morals, you couldn't help like him in a pitying sort of way. Raine was great, sticking to her beliefs of fair representation and believing in McDuff when others doubted him.

Janice has a lovely style of writing, which flows along smoothly and makes for an easy, yet totally satisfying read.

Greymalkin says

This book was hard to get through. The writing was so all over the place, too many characters and too much scheming. I never connected with any of the characters so it made it hard to care about any of the shenanigans they got up to. Frankly they all seemed like a lot of awful people. I did like the depiction of how hard the restaurant world is and how additionally hard celebrity makes that life. That got the second star. But I don't think I'd ever re-read this book. It took me almost four months to finish it.

Rea Cobb says

After reading Janice Horton's book Bagpipes and Bullshot earlier in the year, which I thoroughly enjoyed with its descriptive writing and traditional feel to it I couldn't wait to see what this talented author had up her sleeve for her next novel Reaching for the Stars.

Plot

Scottish celebrity chef Finn McDuff is media stalked and disillusioned after winning his third star and losing his third wife. He decides he's had enough of all the food campaigns, the TV cookery shows, the constant frenzy surrounding his private life and, after giving up all his accolades and closing down his restaurant, he disappears.

With the enfant terrible of the kitchen missing, two rival newspapers, having lost their media meal ticket, compete against each other to whip up further public curiosity in the missing chef. Love him or hate him, everyone is out looking for Chef McDuff. Who will find him first and whose side will you be on...?

My opinion

I have to admit after reading the synopsis of Reaching for the Stars I was a little shocked as it sounded like a completely different read, I was a little nervous about reading this book because I really didn't want to be disappointed I was hoping that Janice Horton still worked her charm in this book.

I found the characters in this book compelling to read mainly because yet again Janice uses her descriptive writing skill in bringing the characters to life as you meet each one. I did find it a little hard to believe how young Raine was she came across a lot older than her early 20's but I loved both her and Finn's characters. For me the story came into its own when Finn disappears as this is where we see Janice Horton's writing at its best in this book. There was still the element of suspense in this book I couldn't predict the ending to it at all which was a nice little surprise.

I really enjoyed this book it did have a different feel to it I think it is because it felt more modernised compared to Bagpipes and Bullshot which has more of a traditional feel.

Jenny in Neverland says

I was sent this book for my January read for Loveahappyending magazine and I'm familiar with Janice's work and writing style from her three novellas in the How Do You Voodoo? trilogy and was excited to see her full potential in the first full-length novel of hers I've read. Reaching for the Stars is about celebrity chef, Finn McDuff, who has worked his whole life to achieve his three golden stars, build a reputation for himself and in the process, ruin his 3 marriages. He realises one day that life isn't just about being at the top, so he gives his three stars back and disappears. Raine Sanderson and Ross Campbell are journalists working head to head to get the latest and most exciting scoop on Finn McDuff, why he gave his stars back and where he disappeared too but only one of them can get it. Who will it be? The chase is on and Raine and Ross are doing everything in their power to come out on top. Who will find him first and who's side will you be on?

I was a bit on the fence with this book at first because it focuses on celebrity chef, Finn McDuff and the culinary world, which I know absolutely nothing about so I will admit that a lot of the terminology that was used at the beginning did go over the top of my head a bit but obviously that's not the authors fault, entirely my own. I'm all for learning about new things and this book definitely taught me a thing or two about the culinary environment and the Golden Stars. I very much enjoyed the insight into this elegant and sophisticated world but it was very mature and I can't see myself wanting to get involved with it in the future! Despite all of that however, I did very much enjoy this book and found myself getting reeled in to this world of lies, competition and rivalry.

Janice's words and sentences flow nicely, they did in the voodoo series and they do in this book and that's what makes her stories so easy to read and get stuck in to. During the first 50 pages or so, I wasn't entirely clear on who were the main characters we were supposed to be following but that may be because there was quite a few of them all being introduced. One of the characters that was introduced, Anna, seemed to have absolutely no place or relevance to the story but eventually over time you learn more about her past and realize how she fits in – which I liked. Our main character, Finn, I assumed from the first few pages was

going to be very unlikeable, rude and arrogant but I was completely wrong and ended up sympathizing massively with him. He turns out to be a great main character, rough around the edges but extremely vulnerable on the inside. Her main characters were all very lifelike and believable which is obviously one of the most important parts of any story. The aspect of the story that focuses on two journalists, Raine and Ross, fighting for the top stories on the missing chef I really enjoyed. You get a sense of how infuriating it must be for them, battling against each other for the latest scoop with their jobs and integrity at stake. I like the structure of the chapters as they alternate between Finn and the journalists. I like that you get to see both sides of what's going on and although everyone is going mad looking for Finn, it's somewhat amusing because we, as readers, know he's alright and I really enjoy reading books where certain characters are left in the dark. I'm not sure whether it was intended, but at one point in the story, Finn starts suffering from social anxiety disorder (SAD) due to all the speculation about him and Janice managed to write that part in very sensitively but informingly and with a subject as taboo as mental illness, it was reassuring to know that just because you're a celebrity, it doesn't mean you're immune to the effects of pressure, stress and anxiety.

There were 2 small things I picked up on, firstly some of the characters e.g. Finn's agent, Sam, weren't very well developed. It's understandable because Sam, for example, doesn't appear very often in the story but when he did it was a little flat as you don't really know anything about him other than his name and the fact he's Finn's agent. The main characters were all extremely well described and developed so I think it would have been slightly better if the secondary characters were too – to match up to the standards of the others. Secondly, I felt there was a little bit of an overuse of exclamation marks and during some dialogue, there were exclamation marks where a full-stop would have sufficed. The exclamation marks made it sound like a character was a bit too over-enthusiastic about what they were saying when they didn't really need to be.

Personally, I preferred reading Janice's Voodoo trilogy only because I think it was much more suited for my age, personality and tastes but that's not to say that Reaching For The Stars wasn't a well established, informative and exciting read – because it most definitely was, but I would definitely recommend it to mature adults and especially those interested in good food and cooking (as for me, I can just about make a pot noodle without burning it). Janice is a fluent writer with many talents up her sleeve and I think she has the ability to write to appeal to a very wide audience. Her stories always have an underlying message somewhere and this one teaches you that fame and fortune aren't necessarily the main ingredients you need to be happy and in Finn's case, they definitely weren't.

Find all my reviews here: www.jenninneverland.wordpress.com

Lindsay says

'Reaching for the Stars' tells the story of a celebrity chef, Finlay McDuff, who has achieved his dream restaurant rating of three 'Golden Stars', and has attained celebrity 'rock-god-chef' status in the eyes of the media and his many fans, but whose personal life has been anything but golden for a long time now. He has put his career before everything else: 'ambition had been his mistress.' Currently on his third failed marriage, and desperate not to lose this wife, Gina, without a fight, he decides to take drastic measures and make major changes to his life.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in Edinburgh, budding reporter Raine Sanderson is searching for a scoop that will clinch her dream job at 'The Thistle' newspaper, desperate to prove her skills to boss Veronica. Raine is up against the underhand tactics of rival Ross Campbell, who is just as desperate for a star reporter role, and he ends up at rival newspaper 'The City News'. When chef McDuff disappears, there is a media frenzy, with the

two papers trying to constantly outdo each other. Another strand to the story involves chef Anna James, currently working in Paris, who has a history with Finn, back when they were teenagers, and he worked for her chef father Gordon. Anna is returning to Edinburgh and looking to base her professional future there, and expecting this to involve Finn and his restaurant.

I really enjoyed the rivalry between reporter Raine and her competitor Ross, which builds well as the story progresses. Raine is a likeable character who stands by her principles and wants to give Finn a chance to set the record straight. Finn takes a step back from his life and is able to take time to learn where he has gone wrong in the past, being so career-driven, to discover what he really wants from life, and what needs to change in order for him to find some happiness. The novel gives a good insight into the way someone such as Finn can be hounded by the media to the detriment of any happy personal life. The author portrays a sympathetic, flawed man who has reached a point where something has to give, and he escapes to try and find a happier life. This is an entertaining and enjoyable story with a good mix of humour and intrigue. 3.5/5

Harriet Schultz says

Horton mixes up a fun recipe

Finn McDuff, Edinburgh chef extraordinaire, is at once charming and exasperating. After three wives divorce him, Finn begins to wonder if the hours and energy devoted to winning accolades have been worth the sacrifice of a personal life. When he is awarded a coveted third star, two young journalists compete for stories about the handsome, charismatic chef as a way to boost their paper's circulation and their own reputations. Horton describes the ongoing race for the story between Raine and Ross in a way that brought a smile of recognition to this former reporter's face.

Humor, pathos and romance bring the reader into Finn's world and what a world it is!

Jane says

As you know I have been out of action on the blog front lately due to other commitments therefore this review will be brief. I received my e-copy after winning a competition - Best Chick Lit's take over of Loveahappyending Lifestyle Magazine's twitter feed and Re-tweeting!

I am presuming that my copy was an advance or pre-publication as there were a lot of typographical errors. Noting the cover change I am hazarding a guess that these errors have since been amended. Due to my schedule it took me a lot longer to read this book than usual.

This is a new idea for me as I haven't come across much chick-lit starring chefs. I didn't find it particularly funny but I did start to enjoy the book as I got further into it. As stated in the synopsis above, we have an award winning chef who after achieving his third 'Golden Star' finds out his wife is leaving him. The marital breakdown spurs him into doing some serious thinking. He disappears much to the annoyance of the two rival reporters whose newspapers are both chasing for a story. Let's look at the characters, our leading man is Chef McDuff who is a decent person underneath his celebrity chef persona. We have two reporters, a fair-minded lass who wants to print the truth and the ambitious hack who wants to make his name and do whatever it takes to get his story in print. There are also plenty of other characters to help make the story. If I

were to choose a favourite character, it would be Raine the female reporter who is not the naive young lady that others are led to believe. Did I like the story? It didn't give me the wow factor but made a pleasant enough read at the end of the day. If you are looking for a light holiday read and you like Scotland, cooking and chick-lit then this may contain all the right ingredients.

Jude says

Right from the first page, this book had me hooked. Celebrity chef McDuff seemingly has it all, but faster than a soufflé can sink he loses it. His third wife has just walked out on him. That's a wife he's lost for each Golden Star. He is at the pinnacle of his career but willing to give up his coveted 3 stars to save his marriage.

Rival journalists, Raine and Ross, pursue poor Finn, each trying to out-scoop the other. Raine struggles to maintain her integrity, but Ross will do whatever it takes to get ahead. Then there is the fragile Anna, who has her own issues with Finn.

Finn is a real hero and I absolutely loved him. He reminded me of my favourite Scottish chef, the adorable Tom Kitchin. Finn is a gentleman and will go to enormous lengths not to let the people he cares about down. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and will be adding Ms Horton's other novels to my TBR list.

I loved this book and give it 5 out of 5. It made me smile and left me with that satisfying 'aaah' feeling at the end.

Heidi says

Celebrity chef Finn McDuff finds himself being awarded three Golden Stars but loses his third wife in the process. Once he establishes that his restaurant alone can't make him happy, he takes drastic measures by closing it down and going into hiding. Raine and Ross, two reporters working for rivaling newspapers, are desperately trying to find him to get the best story published. Will either succeed?

This is the first time, I've read a book by this author and it will certainly not be the last. What I liked most about the book was that all characters were brilliantly introduced step by step in the beginning by Janice. In a lot of books, I often find myself trying to catch up with all the characters being mentioned in the beginning but not with this one. Janice makes sure, that the reader is quite familiar with a character before introducing the next. I found this to be a very pleasant feature of the book.

In my opinion, the main character of the book Finn McDuff, was brilliantly portrayed. He reminded me ever so slightly of Gordon Ramsay :-). Although he is quite a difficult character, who is going through a lot of emotions, he was probably my most favourite character.

The only downside of the book: The constant talk of food made me extremely hungry :-).

I can definitely recommend this light-hearted and pleasant read!

Louise Graham says

Reaching for the Stars in the latest novel written by Author Janice Horton.

Finn McDuff had worked his whole life to be awarded his three Golden Stars, as a celebrity Chef, he was at the top of his game. Nothing was more important to him than the food he presented at the Passe. Sadly his three ex Wives could vouch for that! Ambition over love, Pride over marriage and ego over emotions – Three sins over three stars!

A sudden realisation brought Finn to his senses about what actual was important in life, the ‘Stars’ suddenly didn’t shine so bright for him any longer. Closing down his restaurant and giving up on his dreams, he disappears and sets off to try to get his life back.

Raine Sanderson and Ross Campbell are two very new and very keen journalist despite to get their hands on that dream job at The Thistle, only one can make it! Both with the same target in their sights, Chef McDuff. How far would they go to find where McDuff has gone and get that exclusive interview?

Will Finn be able to find the peace and happiness away from the celebrity life that he is so desperately looking for? Or will the past continue to haunt him? To what ends will the journalists go to get that story?

I was very excited to be receiving an advanced copy of Janice’s latest novel. As a huge fan of Bagpipes and Bullshot I had high expectations for Reaching for the Stars – and I’m so thrilled to say I wasn’t disappointed. Janice’s style that I loved so much in the first novel continues in this book. A wonderful plot and some extremely engaging characters all bundled together in a steamy Scottish kitchen!

When I started to read the story, I thought Chef McDuff would be a horrid character. I had in my mind someone between Marco Pierre White and Gordon Ramsey but as the story developed I really started to like and understand him. Janice has written a great ”will they won’t they find him” plot that kept you guessing right to the final pages which I really loved. Fabulous depth to Raine and Anna’s characters as well as McDuff and the whole book was so beautifully written which are all ingredients that make this the sort of book you can’t put down! What move can a reader ask for!

Thank you so much Janice for sending me a copy of this book – blooming marvellous!!

On 15th December there will be an exclusive Hiya! interview on my blog with Finn McDuff and Raine Sanderson!!

You can purchase Reaching for the Stars via amazon <http://tiny.cc/zflxd> find out more about Janice via the following!

Janice Blogs at: www.janicehortonwriter.blogspot.com
Janice is a www.loveahappyending.com author
Follow her on Twitter @JaniceHorton
Facebook Author Page: <http://tiny.cc/mller4>

Linn Halton says

Fun in the kitchen...

Chef Finn McDuff is an enigma. Whoever heard of a Chef handing BACK his hard-won 3 stars? Author Janice Horton has created another fun and entertaining read. It's one you will want to read in one go, because you'll be dying to find out how it ends! Reported Raine is on the case, it's BIG news - but is she ruled by her head, or her heart, when she's penning her 'honest'articles? How long can he hide away? Has all the hard-work been for nothing? Buy it and find out!

Jo Hughes says

I would like to thank Loveahappyending and Janice Horton for sending me a copy of this in exchange for a fair and honest review.

Finn McDuff seems to have the world at his feet, he has just achieved his ambition of 3 Golden Stars for his restaurant, his world comes crashing down around him when his wife decides to leave him.

Anna James returns to Edinburgh expecting to be sponsored by Chef McDuff, willing to put the past behind her in achieving her dreams.... But is Anna willing to forgive and forget. Finn lets Anna down by closing his restaurant and doing a disappearing act with the press on his tail.

Raine and Ross were competing for the same job until Raine beats him to an exclusive interview with Chef McDuff, now they are working for different newspapers, they are on his tail for the exclusive story surrounding his disappearance.

Janice gives you a clue to the corruption that was once the press over here, this is done in a way that makes you despise the press for their intrusion into celebrities lives.

As for Chef McDuff I couldn't help but like him, if not the typical book boyfriend, there was something sad about his story and I found myself warming to him and feeling sorry for his plight.

Anna was seeing her father through rose tinted glasses and blamed everything on Finn, I really wanted to give her a slap and tell her to wake up and smell the roses.

Raine I liked instantly she was trying to do her job with an honest integrity, even though she had to deal with her bosses demanding more and falling in love with Finn didn't help her.

Ross I really wanted to come unstuck and I laughed at the way he eventually did, a totally ingenious way of doing it from Janice.

In short the book was totally different from what I expected and would recommend it, it was a journey for so many of the characters that I found myself wanting to work out, with a great supporting cast.
