

# NO MORE SECRETS by Joanne Guidoccio

## Excerpt

Tupperware in all the pastel shades. Head-to-toe clothing and accessories in the same hues. Who does that? Bellastrega shook her head at the avalanche of plastic that accompanied Velia Russo into the kitchen. She was already on her third trip back from the car, puffing and panting as she placed her food gifts on the kitchen table. Bellastrega could feel her jaw clenching at the thought of all those white devils—heavy sauces and creams and pounds of sugar—contaminating the kitchen.

Velia held one finger. “One more trip,” and then she was gone.

Bellastrega turned her attention back to the hearty vegetable stew that had been simmering on the stove. She sighed contentedly as she breathed in the aroma of the rosemary and Italian seasonings. Angelica’s favorite. As she glanced at the appetizing array of vegetables, she mentally calculated how long it would take to finish cooking. Everything was on schedule, and dinner would be on the table at six o’clock. Why had Velia decided to arrive three hours early?

From the start, Bellastrega had her misgivings about this all-girls weekend. She had listened while Angelica lovingly described each niece and shared her concerns regarding their unhappy lives. At first, Bellastrega had humored her, not realizing Angelica was intending to help her nieces get back on track. Her duty as aunt, she had explained.

Bellastrega had formed her own judgments regarding the three younger women. Usually right on target, Bellastrega had been surprised when this particular incarnation of Velia Russo arrived, laden with her food gifts. From Angelica’s descriptions, Bellastrega had expected a younger version of her mother, Rosetta, a heavy-set hausfrau and gossip, not this glamour-puss who could pass for a younger Martha Stewart. But first impressions could be deceiving.

“Help. I need your help.” The whiny voice interrupted Bellastrega’s thoughts. Sighing, she lowered the heat and made her way to the living room.

Bellastrega resisted the urge to laugh as she took in the comical sight before her. To save herself another trip, Velia had decided to lug in a large Pullman using her left hand, carry a pastry box in her right hand, and use her teeth to hold on to her purse.

All this for a weekend get-together? What would she have packed for a longer trip? Bellastrega forced a smile as she took the pastry box from Velia.