

THE BILLIONAIRE
WHO SAW HER BEAUTY

Rebecca Winters

 *Cherish*™

Rebecca Winters
The Billionaire Who
Saw Her Beauty
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Аннотация

The beauty and the billionaireSocialite Alessandra Caracciolo has always lived in her glamorous twin's shadow. When the love of her life chose her sister, the betrayal convinced shy Alessandra no man would truly fall for her...Yet from the moment she meets Italian billionaire Rinieri Montanari, Alessandra feels an instant connection. And as she works alongside him, she discovers that beneath his playboy charm lies a deeply honourable heart. Alessandra dares to hope Rinieri is the first man to have eyes only for her—but can she be brave enough to believe in their love?

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The Montanari Marriages

Wedding bells ring for the Montanari family ...

by Mills & Boon Romance bestselling author

Rebecca Winters!

Brother and sister Valentina and Rinieri Montanari have never had time for love—in the Montanari family, work comes before *everything* else.

Yet when romance blossoms unexpectedly, will they both find themselves saying “**I** do”?

A hospital mix-up brings single mom Valentina a whole new family in *The Billionaire's Baby Swap*

Alessandra has always been overlooked in favor of her more glamorous twin. Dare she hope billionaire Rinieri is different? Find out in *The Billionaire Who Saw Her Beauty*

Let Rebecca Winters enchant you with this heartwarming and emotional duet!

The Billionaire Who Saw Her Beauty

Rebecca Winters



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REBECCA WINTERS lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. With canyons and high alpine meadows full of wild-flowers, she never runs out of places to explore. They, plus her favourite holiday spots in Europe, often end up as backgrounds for her romance novels, because writing is her passion, along with her family and church. Rebecca loves to hear from readers. If you wish to email her, please visit her website at www.cleanromances.com.

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This is for my super marvelous father, Dr John Z. Brown, Jr., who was adored by his many thousands of patients during his long career. I've praised him before in other books because he was the best!

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CHAPTER ONE

“SIGNOR MONTANARI?”

Rini was just getting in the limo. He looked around in the direction of one of the reporters who'd followed him outside the doors of the fourteenth-century Palazzo Colonna in Rome. Dozens of them had assembled to cover the European Congress of Businessmen.

“A moment of your time, per favore—one piece of news I can use for my lead story in La Repubblica?”

Why not?

“Since Italy imports almost all of its hydrocarbon demand, a doubling of domestic production would help the country reduce its energy bill. I'm planning to find them in Italy.”

“Where?”

“That's my secret for now.”

The reporter beamed for having been given a partial scoop. “Mille grazie, signor.”

He nodded and closed the door before his driver took him to

the heliport for the flight to his mountaintop villa in Positano, on the Amalfi Coast. Now that the two-day September conference covering the economic problems facing Europe was over, Rini was eager to explore his latest project. On Monday he'd be leaving for the coast of Southern Italy, but tonight he had other plans.

Once the helicopter landed on the pad behind his villa, he jumped down and found his housekeeper, Bianca, out by the pool watering the tubs of flowers. She looked up when she saw him.

"Welcome back."

"It's good to be home."

"How's your father?"

"Well as can be expected." Rini had flown to Naples after yesterday's session and spent the night with his papà, who seemed to be handling the loss of Rini's mother a little better these days. She'd been the heart of their home and Rini would always miss her happy, optimistic spirit.

"Was the conference beneficial?"

"I'm not sure beneficial is the right word. Chilling would be more accurate. Europe is in trouble economically, but I'd rather not think about that tonight."

"Do you want dinner?"

"I'd love one of your meals, but I'm meeting Guido tonight. It's his birthday." His best friend from childhood, the son of Leonides Rossano, who owned Rossano shipping lines, had texted him earlier in the day:

The parents are throwing a party for me on the yacht. Please say you can make it. I know you're at a conference, but I need your advice about something serious. By the time you arrive it will be breaking up so we can talk in private.

The message sounded serious, even for Guido, who clearly wasn't in a celebratory mood. He obviously had no plans for the weekend with a woman. His friend was as bad as Rini, who had no plans in that department, either. The two of them made quite a pair, but for entirely different reasons.

Guido was still looking for the right woman who hadn't come along yet. Rini didn't have the same problem. The right woman wasn't out there for him because she wouldn't want him when he had to tell her he was infertile. An old soccer injury he'd suffered in his youth had made it impossible for him to give any woman a child.

The pain of that realization had grown worse with every passing year, increasing his dissatisfaction with his own personal life. Whenever he did meet a woman he cared about, he held back, not allowing the relationship to develop into something deeper. It always came down to his fear she would reject him if she knew the truth.

He'd been denying his deep-seated needs for such a long time, he'd forgotten what real fulfillment was like. Since his sister Valentina—the mother of two children and now ecstatically married—had recently moved out of his villa, his unhappiness had deepened.

She'd lived with him through her whole pregnancy. He'd helped her with the baby when she'd first come home from the hospital. He'd loved every minute of it, but he'd carried a secret pain in his heart because he knew he'd never be able to be a birth father. When she'd married Giovanni and moved out, Rini felt the emptiness of the villa. It echoed the emptiness in his soul for what could never be.

Valentina's happiness, not to mention that of his younger brother, Carlo, who enjoyed a wonderful marriage and had a little girl, heightened his awareness that the key element in his life was missing. He envied his brother for being able to give his wife a child. Rini's doctor had told him he was a fool to let that prevent him from falling in love. "The right woman will be able to handle it," he'd reminded him.

Rini didn't believe it as he walked through the villa to his suite and stripped for a shower to get ready. After slipping into his black tuxedo, he reached for the wrapped gift he'd bought for the occasion. Once he'd said goodbye to Bianca, he left for the helicopter. The new hand-tied fishing fly he'd purchased for Guido was reputed to bring results. They often fished the mountain streams for trout. He thought his friend would be pleased.

Twenty minutes later he landed on board the Rossano luxury superyacht moored in the Bay of Naples, reminding him that not everyone was feeling the economic crunch. The yacht boasted seventeen staterooms and all the amenities of a five-star hotel,

including a swimming pool and dance floor.

Twilight had descended, lending magic to the spectacular surroundings of one of the most beautiful and photographed bays in the world, with Mount Vesuvius in the background. He told his pilot to come back later and jumped down as Guido strode over to him.

“I’ve been waiting for you. Saw you on the evening news. Impressive stuff. I was afraid you wouldn’t be able to make it. Thanks for coming.”

“As if I’d miss your birthday.” He pulled the small package out of his jacket and handed it to him. “Buon compleanno.”

They gave each other a hug, then walked into the salon-cum-bar for a drink. He opened his present and held up the lure. “Just what I need.”

“Good. Let’s go fishing next weekend. I’ll clear my schedule for next Saturday.” Rini had been working himself into the ground and needed a break.

“Perfect.” With a smile of satisfaction he put the present in his pocket. With dark blond hair, good-looking Guido could have his pick of any woman. The money behind his family name made him sought after and somewhat cynical, as he feared no woman saw him for himself. Guido was the best friend Rini could ever have had. He hoped the only son of Leonides Rossano would end up one day with a woman worthy enough to win his heart.

Rini’s name and wealth made him a target, too. Women came on to him, causing him to question if any of them loved him for

himself. Coupled with his problem of infertility, Rini imagined it was possible he'd end up a bachelor for good.

"Was it a nice party?"

"Different. One of the big fashion houses asked Father for permission to film a show on the yacht. You missed the whole thing."

"Sorry about that. The meeting in Rome went longer than anticipated."

Rini followed him down the steps to the deck, where he greeted his friend's parents and family, who made up some of Naples's most elite socialites and were beautifully dressed. Rini was well acquainted with many of them. An orchestra played music and the drinks were flowing.

They moved over to the area where a smorgasbord had been set up. By now he was hungry. After filling his plate, he joined his friend at one of the tables away from the others, where they could eat and talk alone.

"Your text said you wanted advice. What's going on with you?"

Guido started to say something when his father broke in on them. Two attractive women with long hair he hadn't seen before were with him. Rini exchanged a glance with his friend, who looked annoyed at the interruption. They both got to their feet.

"Dea Loti and Daphne Butelli, may I present my son Guido and his best friend, Rinieri Montanari."

"How do you do," Rini said, eyeing both of them.

“You missed their show, Rini,” the older man interjected.

“As I indicated earlier, I was unavoidably detained on business.”

“Well, you’re here now. They have to leave on the tender in a few minutes. Maybe you could give them a dance before they go?”

Guido’s father never stopped hoping his son would meet the woman he couldn’t live without. Rini knew his friend was upset at being railroaded, but agreed to the request. “It would be our pleasure.”

He gravitated toward the woman closest to him, who was dressed in purple. After walking her over to the dance floor, he drew her in his arms. “I’ve never been to a fashion show before. I’m sorry I missed it.”

“I doubt it’s the kind of thing the CEO of Montanari’s generally does on the weekend.” By now Guido was dancing with the other model.

“I understand it’s hard work. Did you have a chance to eat yet? We don’t have to dance if you’re hungry.”

“Thank you, but no. I don’t want anything. I have to watch my figure.”

“Well, your discipline definitely shows.”

She flashed him a beguiling smile. “Do you live in Naples?”

“No, but I work here.”

It surprised him when her hands slid up his chest and around his neck. “Daphne and I are going to be in Naples one more night

because of an afternoon show at the Grand Hotel Parker's, then we have another show in Rome. Perhaps we could get together tomorrow evening for dinner after the show?"

Her eyes stared up at him in unmistakable invitation.

"I'm afraid my plans are indefinite at the moment, but I've certainly enjoyed this dance with you."

She held her smile. "Well, if you straighten them out, call me around seven at the Grand Hotel Vesuvio, where I'm staying, and ask for Signorina Loti." In the next breath she planted a hungry kiss on his lips he hadn't been prepared for. Then she darted away.

Rini went back to the table to wait for Guido. In a few minutes his friend joined him. "Sorry my father did that to us." One eyebrow lifted. "After the kiss she gave you just now, are you going to see her again?"

"No." Her pushy style had put him off. "What about you?"

"Not interested. You know damn well Papà told her you're the most eligible bachelor in Italy, next to me, of course." He said it without mirth.

Rini shook his head.

Guido studied him. "Maybe she decided to try the direct approach to get beneath your armor."

"I'm afraid it didn't work."

An exasperated sigh escaped. "Papà doesn't know when to give up. In fact it's because of him I need to talk to you. I've made a decision to take a year off from the family business to invest in

something I really want to do. He won't like it, but I want your opinion. Come on. Let's get a drink in the bar."

Rini followed him, wondering what was on his friend's mind.

* * *

After a dive with colleagues that produced no new finds, twenty-eight-year-old Alessandra Caracciolo returned home late Monday afternoon. Bruno Tozzi had left his scuba gear in the cruiser with hers and would come by for it in a day or two. Instinct told her he'd done it on purpose so he'd have an excuse to see her again.

Since their last dive, when Bruno had buddied her, he'd made it no secret that he wanted to be with her all the time, but she didn't have romantic feelings for him. Though she dove with him and their friends for their work, that had to be the extent of their relationship. The next time they were together, she would make it clear she wasn't interested and never could be.

She tied the boat to the dock of her family's private pier. Garbed in flip-flops and a man's long-sleeved shirt that she'd thrown over her blue-and-white polka-dotted bikini, she headed for the Land Rover with her duffel bag.

Once in the car, she drove on sand past the helipad and around to the front of the castle. When she reached it, she would take a shower and wash her hair. Alessandra wore it neck-length because she spent so much time in the water. It dried fast and the natural curl made it easy to take care of.

As she pulled up near the main entrance, she saw a limo

parked in the courtyard, making her curious. All vehicles came across the causeway from the mainland at Metaponto, a port town of Basilicata, Italy. But after five o'clock, any visitors were escorted out by staff.

Their family's castle on the tiny island of Posso off the Ionian coast dated back to Queen Joanna of Naples, who ruled in 1343. Besides tourists from Bari and Taranto, who were allowed visits to the castle four hours a day on Tuesdays and Wednesdays with a guide, dignitaries from the world over called on her father, Count Onorato Caracciolo, asking favors because of his influence in the region.

Alessandra got out of the car and hurried inside past the tapestry of the queen hanging on the wall in the huge front foyer. She headed for the grand staircase, eager to make herself scarce until she'd cleaned up.

The moment she reached the first step, a deep male voice called to her. "Signorina?"

She whirled around to see a tall, incredibly gorgeous dark-haired man in a charcoal-colored business suit walking toward her, his dark brows furrowed. Still holding the duffel bag in one hand, Alessandra clutched the railing with the other.

He stared at her so strangely. "I thought I was hallucinating, but it is you. Since Saturday night you've cut your hair. I don't understand. How did you know I was coming here today? On the yacht you told me you had another show to do in Rome," he murmured.

The way his piercing black-brown eyes played over her face and figure, she knew he had a history with her identical twin, Dea. He was the most striking male Alessandra had ever seen in her life. She found herself envying her beautiful sister for having met him first and couldn't fault her taste. Men had never been able to resist her.

Alessandra cleared her throat. "I'm sorry, signor, but I'm not Dea."

Embarrassed to be caught looking so messy and disheveled after her diving trip, she ran up the steps without looking back. Her sister would never allow herself to be seen like this. All the way to the next floor she felt the man's penetrating eyes on her retreating back and bare legs, causing her to tremble.

Had her sister finally met the one she'd been looking for? Dea had always kept their family identity private. Because she was a model, she called herself Dea Loti so no one would know she was the daughter of Count Caracciolo. For her to divulge her secret to this man meant their relationship must have turned serious, otherwise he wouldn't have known where she lived.

No doubt she'd invited him to come. Did she want the family to meet him? But his scrutiny of Alessandra led her to believe he hadn't looked pleased to see her here. Maybe Dea hadn't told him she had a twin. Alessandra didn't know what to think.

If only she hadn't arrived back from her dive trip until tomorrow, this wouldn't have happened and she wouldn't be haunted by that man's image engraved on her mind. It shocked

her to realize that at long last there might be an important man in her sister's life. Alessandra knew her sister's quest had been to find the perfect man while she made the most of her modeling career. Their parents would be overjoyed.

Six years ago she and Dea had gone through a terrible experience involving a man, one Alessandra had hoped to marry. But when he met Dea, he fell for her and followed her to Rome. Their relationship didn't last, but the pain of betrayal had cut Alessandra like a knife and it had taken a long time to recover. Since the falling out with her sister, no man of importance had come into either of their lives.

In the last two years she'd tried to put the past behind her and get back the friendship they'd once shared. Dea came and went from home according to her hectic schedule and their family had enjoyed some good times. Evidently this past summer Dea had found romance after she'd gone back to Rome. Love on a yacht, no less... If that gorgeous man owned it, then he could keep her in the lifestyle she desired.

But for some reason Alessandra had been oddly upset by the encounter in the foyer, unable to understand why. Except that she really could... These days her own love life was nonexistent.

Once inside the bedroom, Alessandra plopped the duffel bag on the floor and got out of her clothes. Her mind was still on Dea, whom she hadn't seen for six weeks. Her sister had developed an interest in fashion and modeling at an early age and that hadn't changed.

Alessandra led a different life altogether. She couldn't remember when she didn't have an interest in the archaeology of this region of Italy. The island castle itself was built on an ancient archaeological site. Since college she'd been involved in several multidisciplinary studies in the field of archaeology within a Mediterranean perspective, with particular emphasis on Southern Italy.

Without being able to scuba dive, she could never have achieved her dream to do the necessary underwater work with friends she'd made among the archaeological staff at the University of Catania. Scuba diving wasn't for everyone. Dea couldn't understand her passion for it, but it didn't matter because their parents approved and supported both her and Dea in their individual endeavors.

After a shower and shampoo, she blow-dried her hair, then dressed in pleated tan pants and an ivory-colored linen blouse. With an application of coral frost lipstick, she left the room on khaki wedgies and went in search of her parents. They'd married for love and were very close. Unlike many couples, they did everything together whether it was for business or pleasure. Though Alessandra had never discussed it with Dea, their parents' happy marriage had been the ultimate role model for both sisters.

On the way to their apartment she saw Liona, the wiry housekeeper who'd come to work for them at eighteen and had been with them ever since. She was like another member of the

family and ran the large staff with precision.

"If you're looking for your mamma, she left for Taranto two days ago to help your aunt, who fell and broke her hip."

"Oh, no! Poor Fulvia."

"She'll be all right, but your mother will probably be gone for a few more days."

"I need to call them."

They started down the staircase together. "I'm glad you're back. You know how your father worries."

Liona was the one who worried about Alessandra. She thought scuba diving was dangerous. Alessandra gave her a hug. "It's good to see you. How's Alfredo?" Liona's cat had been sick.

"The vet says he's getting old and shouldn't go up and down stairs."

"I'll help carry him for you."

"Bless you. Did you have any luck on this last diving trip?"

"I wish."

"Oh, well. Another time. Are you hungry? I'll tell the cook."

"Please don't bother her. I'll find something to eat later. Thanks, Liona."

She hurried toward her father's office, wondering if the male visitor was still with him, then scoffed with impatience because the man was on her mind at all.

"Ciao, Papà."

"Alessandra!" Her grayish blond father stood up from his desk and hugged her. "You were gone too long this time."

“It was only a week.”

“We always miss you. Did you have a good time?”

“Yes, even if we didn’t find anything of significance.” She walked around to sit in one of the leather chairs facing his desk. “I’d much rather know about you and mom. Liona told me Zia Fulvia broke her hip and Mom went to Taranto to help her.”

He nodded. “Your aunt will make a full recovery. Your mother could be back tomorrow.”

“Oh, good. So tell me what else has been happening while I’ve been away.”

His brows lifted. “Something unexpected. I’m glad you’re back so we can talk. More than anyone else I want your input because you have a fine mind.”

“I got it from you and Mamma.” Her comment produced a chuckle. So maybe her assumption had been right. “It wouldn’t have anything to do with the man I saw in the foyer earlier this evening, would it?”

He cocked his head. “Actually it would. When did you see him?”

“I’d just come in the castle when he spoke to me.”

“Did he introduce himself to you?”

“No. It wasn’t like that. On my way up the staircase he mistook me for Dea before he headed for your office, that’s all.”

Her father nodded. “I guess I shouldn’t be surprised. Her face is everywhere.”

“Papà—” She smiled at him. “Are you pretending with me?”

“About what?”

“Was he here because of her?”

The count blinked. “Not that I know of.”

“Oh.” She needed to keep her thoughts to herself. “Who is he?”

He smiled. “If you didn’t live in your world of books and ancient underwater artifacts, you would have recognized him as the CEO of Italy’s most powerful engineering dynasty, Rinieri Montanari.”

She stirred in the chair. “Of course I recognize the Montanari name. Who wouldn’t?” It explained the man’s aura of authority.

Her father sat back and touched the tips of his fingers together. “His family has accumulated great wealth. He’s the brilliant one driving the company to new heights. A week ago he made an appointment to come and see me about a business proposition.”

“That sounds interesting.”

“I’ll give you a little background. Night before last he was on the news following the European Congress of Businessmen held in Rome. I saw the gleam in his eyes. He said he had secret plans to grow the economy. Today we talked and arranged for him to come back tomorrow to get into the details.”

He’d aroused her curiosity. “What is he after?”

“He’d like to drill for oil on our property.”

Alessandra shifted in the chair. “He and dozens of others who’ve wanted the same thing for the last half century,” she

muttered. "Since he knows it's not for sale, why is he coming back?"

"This man is different from all the others. He wants to lease the land."

Lease? "Are you considering letting him?"

"I'm thinking about it."

"Wow."

Her father eyed her curiously. "Why do you say that?"

"I thought our property was inviolate."

"Leasing isn't the same thing as selling."

"You're right."

"Alessandra, something's on your mind. Why did you ask if he was here because of Dea? Has your sister confided in you about him?"

"No, Papà. In fact I haven't spoken to her for almost two months."

"Hmm. If he'd met her before, he didn't mention anything about meeting her to me."

"Why would he if he didn't know anything about our family?"

"But what if he does know? It makes me wonder what came first, the chicken or the egg?"

"What do you mean?"

"He might have met Dea before he ever called me."

Alessandra was trying to understand what her father was getting at. "Why is this troubling you so much?"

"I'm your loving papà. My daughters were born princesses of

the Houses of Taranto and Caracciolo. Because of our family history, you know I've always wanted to protect you from unscrupulous men."

His explanation surprised her. "That sounds like medieval thinking. Papà, you don't honestly think the CEO of Montanari Engineering fits in that category?" That gorgeous man? The one she'd envied Dea for meeting first? Alessandra didn't want to believe it. Something about him had impressed her deeply.

"Though we don't use the titles anymore, there are some men who try to calculate the monetary worth of our family. There's nothing they would like more than to acquire your bank accounts and assets more than your love."

Alessandra frowned. "The man comes from his own family dynasty and doesn't need more."

"One would assume as much, but for some men one dynasty isn't enough." His gaze swerved to hers. "I don't want to think it. But if he has targeted Dea to marry her and eventually gain possession of our property, I don't like the thought of it."

She didn't like it, either. Not at all. "Personally I don't believe it." Alessandra didn't want to believe it. Not about that man. Whatever history her sister and Signor Montanari might have together, she didn't want to think about it. To be with a man like him...

Alessandra got to her feet. "Don't let it bother you, Papà. Have you had dinner yet?"

"No."

"I'll bring you something."

"Grazie, but I'm not hungry."

"I'm afraid I am. I haven't eaten since I got back. Excuse me while I grab a sandwich. If you want me, I'll be in the library."

Alessandra left the office and headed for the kitchen to find something to eat. Afterward she walked to the castle library on the main floor, the repository of their family history where she could be alone. Years earlier she'd turned one corner of it into her own office, complete with file cabinets and a state-of-the-art computer and printer, plus a large-screen television for viewing the many videos she'd compiled. This had been her inner sanctum for years.

She sat down at the desk and got back to work on the book she was writing about Queen Joanna. Just as she'd settled down to get busy, the phone rang. It was her father.

"Papà?"

"I just wanted to let you know I've got business in Metaponto. The pilot is flying me in a few minutes."

"Do you want company? I'll go with you."

"Not tonight, piccola." Her father's endearment for her. When Alessandra was born, she was the younger twin by three minutes and the name little one stuck. "I'm sure you're tired after your scuba-diving trip, so you get some sleep and we'll talk in the morning. I could be gone a couple of hours and will probably get back late tonight."

"All right."

While she got back to work she heard her father's helicopter fly away. She kept busy for another hour, then went upstairs to get ready for bed. But when she slid under the covers, she didn't fall asleep right away. Memories of the past with her sister filtered through her mind.

Though their personalities were entirely different, she and Dea had been as close as any two sisters until college, when Francesco had come into Alessandra's life. She'd fallen in love and they talked about getting married. But before they got engaged he met Dea, who was more confident than Alessandra and had already started her modeling career.

Her sister had a beauty and lovability that had drawn guys to her from her teens. By contrast, Alessandra felt rather dull and unexciting. Certainly she wasn't as attractive. But she'd always accepted those truths and never let them affect their friendship. Not until Francesco had laid eyes on Dea. From that moment everything changed. Alessandra felt herself lose him and there wasn't anything she could do about it.

He followed her sister to Rome and she never saw him again. Francesco sent Alessandra a letter explaining he couldn't help falling in love with Dea and hoped she wouldn't hate him too badly. As for Dea, Alessandra didn't see her for two months. When her sister came home, she told Alessandra she was sorry for what had happened. She explained that Francesco had done all the running, and she'd soon found out he was a loser. Alessandra was lucky to be out of the relationship.

The trauma of being betrayed by Francesco and her sister had completely floored her. It had taken a long time to work past the pain. Though they'd shared sisterly love in the past, from that time on they'd had a troubled relationship and two truths emerged. Alessandra didn't know if she could trust a man again and Dea would always be the beautiful one who usually got the best of Alessandra. People seemed to love her the most.

Alessandra had to live with the knowledge that she was known as the clever one, a scholar with a sense of adventure. She'd thought that by the age of twenty-eight she would have finally gotten past her jealousy of Dea's ability to attract men. But it wasn't true. Otherwise meeting Signor Montanari, who'd met Dea first, wouldn't have disturbed Alessandra so much.

If her father was right, what a sad irony that this man might be using Dea to get what he really wanted, making both sisters appear as poor judges of character. First the chef Alessandra had fallen for who couldn't remain faithful once he'd laid eyes on Dea. Now Signor Montanari, who looked like the embodiment of a woman's dreams. But what if her father learned this man had a secret agenda? The troubling thought kept her tossing and turning all night.

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