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## Her Italian Billionaire (The Billionaire Series Book 1)

*By Carol Grace*



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### Her Italian Billionaire (The Billionaire Series Book 1) By Carol Grace

Anne Marie Jackson has always dreamed of visiting Italy ever since she shared her first kiss with a dashing Italian exchange student in high school. Now, one divorce and one postcard from Giovanni later, Anne Marie follows her heart to Italy, where her former flame has promised to show her the sights. Giovanni is elusive but Marco Moretti, a mysterious, handsome Italian, seems to be everywhere. The persistent, irresistible Marco wants to find Giovanni as badly as she does so they team up to find him. And on the way they find something they didn't expect - love, Italian style.

#### About the Author

Carol Grace is the author of over 35 romance novels. In her former life she worked as a translator and an ESL teacher. She has traveled the world from Africa to Singapore for work and pleasure. Carol speaks French whenever she can, and sails the seas on cruise ships. When not on deck sipping tropical drinks and brainstorming ideas for her next novel, she gives writing classes. It's a tough job but somebody has to do it.

#### What do the critics say about Carol Grace?

"Carol Grace is best known for her humor, witty dialog, compelling characters and touching romance."

"Read one of Carol's books and you're transported to San Francisco Bay or a ranch in Montana or even faraway romantic Italy. Wherever you go, you'll find love in the air by choosing a Carol Grace novel."



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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"A delightfully light-hearted romance about finding love again." -- *Powell's Books*

"Anne Marie is a delightful lead protagonist and the mysterious Giovanni will turn a heart or two..." --  
*Harriet Klausner On Line Review May 2003*

#### About the Author

**Carol Grace** has written over twenty-five romance novels since 1989. Before that she worked in public TV doing promos for Julia Child (in French); then she sailed the world aboard the hospital ship Hope as a translator. Besides French, she has studied Spanish, Arabic, and Farsi, and she has taught in Iran and Algeria. After a lifetime of dreaming of Italy, listening to Italian opera, and watching movies like Roman Holiday, Carol was finally able to take a dream vacation on the spectacular Amalfi coast of Italy. Inspired by the warm, hospitable people, the luscious scenery and food, and the romantic atmosphere, she decided to set her next book, *That's Amore*, there. Carol lives on a mountain overlooking the Pacific Ocean with her husband, and she has a son in college and a daughter in law school.

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### Chapter One

She was lost. All the streets looked alike, and all the street signs were in a foreign language. Perspiration dripped down the side of Anne Marie Jackson's face as she pulled her new Samsonite suitcase through the back streets of Sorrento. Though it was early September, by ten o'clock the Italian sun was so hot her money belt was plastered to her waist. The guidebooks warned of petty theft; thieves were everywhere, they said, looking for innocent tourists. Tourists like her, dragging suitcases, weighed down with visas and passports and Italian phrase books and still unable to say more than a few words to anyone.

She heard footsteps behind her. With a swift glance over her shoulder, she noticed a man in a dark suit with a long loaf of bread under his arm. She made a quick turn down a narrow cobblestone street with laundry hanging from a line above, and prayed he wouldn't come after her. But he was right there behind her, slowing down when she slowed, speeding up when she sped up. Her heart pounded. Even if she knew the word for help, the street was empty -- who would hear her? He might take everything she had -- cash, traveler's checks, and credit cards.

After all, there would be no witnesses. No one to see him drag her body away, where it would lie in an alley for days until stray dogs gnawed at her bones. And who would ever find her and notify her family? Her family, which now consisted only of her eighteen-year-old son.

Two little boys in tattered T-shirts came around the corner, bouncing their ball off the cobblestones and casting curious glances in her direction. The man with the bread passed her by without a second glance. A man on his way home with bread, that was all. She was paranoid, that was all.

"*Buon giorno*," she said to the boys.

They stared. She hauled out her Italian phrase book to ask directions. She was not only lost, she was late. If

she didn't find the station soon, she'd miss the bus to the Amalfi Coast.

"*Dov'è il termino?*" she asked.

The boys burst into laughter at her accent, and she felt her face turn red. With a glance at her watch, she repeated the phrase, and they pointed back the way she'd come.

"Grazie." With her suitcase clattering behind her, she turned around and headed down the hill.

Ten minutes later, she had a sinking feeling she was no closer to the bus station than before. She felt like giving up, like sitting down on her suitcase and giving in to tears of frustration. Instead, she kept going. Block after block, street after street.

Suddenly, there it was -- the station! Swamped with relief, Anne Marie checked her watch. She'd missed the bus. When she went in to buy her ticket, she learned there would be another in an hour. Wonderful! She would still make it in time to meet Giovanni.

There was already a line outside, and she stood at the end of it. She didn't mind waiting; she was in Italy! If she could handle a ten-hour plane flight squished in a center seat between two Sumo wrestlers, followed by a second-class train ride from Rome to Sorrento, seated in the aisle on her suitcase while the train swayed and lurched, an hour in line under the sun was nothing.

She sniffed the air, laden with the scent of lemon blossoms. She had to remember everything to tell Evie, who'd insisted she make this trip, even when Anne Marie said she couldn't afford it.

"Borrow money against your retirement fund," she'd urged. "You must have at least six months of vacation accrued. Do you think the library will close without you? Do you think people will stop reading, stop dropping in to use the Internet, because you're not there?"

"No, but maybe I should just go to Oregon or Yosemite..."

"You've always wanted to go to Italy. Now go."

So she'd gone.

Though she wouldn't be here without her friend's encouragement, the person she had to thank most was Dan. Funny she could thank him for anything, after what he'd done to her, but she was no longer bitter about the divorce.

How could she be bitter about anything when she was in Sorrento, a gorgeous old town wedged between the mountains and the Mediterranean, where tourists had been coming for hundreds of years for the climate, the views, and the relaxed atmosphere of *dolce far niente*? The hills were dotted with lemon groves and olive trees. Her senses sang in the fragrant breeze that came up and cooled her face. She was here, she was really here. At last.

The guidebooks said to arrive early to land a seat on the right side of the bus, for one of the world's most spectacular drives along a winding road with views of the cliffs and the sea below. Looking at this line, she'd be lucky if she got a seat at all.

When the bus finally came, belching diesel fumes that clouded the air, Anne Marie wound up standing in the aisle, just as she feared. She stood between a solid German man with a mustache and a young Italian man who was listening to his Walkman. With her suitcase at her feet, her hand wrapped around the strap hanging

from the ceiling, she felt the bus lurch, and they were on their way.

The bus rumbled onto the coast highway and hugged the first curve, only inches from the cliff that dropped five hundred feet straight down to the sapphire-blue sea that sparkled below. She gasped and gripped the strap so tightly her knuckles turned white. She told herself no bus had ever gone over the side and crashed on the rocks before. But there was a first time for everything. She could just see the front page of the Oakville Times:

## **ANNE MARIE JACKSON'S VACATION ENDS IN DISASTER**

"Just like her marriage," the gossips would say.

## **EX-HUSBAND ON HONEYMOON WITH NEW WIFE**

The bus went around another bend. While others brought out their cameras and leaned out the windows taking pictures, Anne Marie was too terrified to look. Her heart pounded. She pictured the tires exploding; she imagined the expression on the driver's face changing from calm assurance to the terrified realization that the unthinkable had happened. Maybe it was his first trip on this road. Maybe he was still a trainee, unused to the curves and bends in the road.

Then the bus would go tumbling over and over until it crashed on the rocks below. She could almost hear the screams of her fellow passengers. Screams that would blend with the cries of the gulls, which would pick their bones clean as their bodies lay broken and bruised on the sand. Her own throat was too dry to scream, her palm was so sticky it stuck to the strap above her head.

Anne Marie turned her head, only to see that the bus was so close to an oncoming car they were certain to scrape sides. By some miracle, the driver avoided both going over the cliff and taking the paint off the Fiat. This kind of close call didn't happen just once but about twenty-five times during the next hour, always accompanied by honking horns and shaking fists. She resolutely stared straight ahead at the back of the bus driver's head, channeling her thoughts on something more pleasant. On Giovanni.

If he was surprised that she was finally coming to Italy to see him, he didn't say so in the brief note she'd received the day she was leaving. He'd just suggested they meet at a hotel in San Gervase today, which had caused her to change her plan of spending her first night in Rome.

If he was afraid she'd expect him to be her tour guide, the way he'd promised so long ago, he didn't have to worry. She had no such unrealistic expectations. She was a grown-up, divorced woman now, on her own. She'd gotten herself this far; she could get herself around Italy, too.

She didn't know if Giovanni remembered the way she'd clung to every word he said about Italy when he was an exchange student back in high school. He wouldn't know that she'd kept every postcard he'd sent afterward. Then his cards became fewer and farther between. And Anne Marie went off to college and got married.

But finally, she was here to do what he'd told her to do: let Italy soak into her skin like the sun. She wanted to see it all -- the canals in Venice, the Colosseum in Rome, Michelangelo's statue of David in Florence. But first she had a date to meet him. After fantasizing about Giovanni off and on for some twenty years, it was time to put the dreams to rest and get on with her life. But if by chance dreams did come true...well, it couldn't happen at a better time.

As they approached San Gervase, Anne Marie craned her neck to the right for a quick look out the window.

It was everything she'd imagined: a picture-perfect town squashed into a ravine with shops and whitewashed villas perched on the cliffs. Scarlet bougainvillea tumbled over balconies and climbed stone walls, and wild poppies covered the ground. There was a small sand beach below, and, best of all, there was the sea, sparkling in the sun, cool and inviting, impossibly blue.

Anne Marie stumbled off the bus, grateful to be on firm ground at last. She rolled her suitcase behind her down narrow, winding streets, delighting in the scent of jasmine and mint and lemons, of lemon candy and lemon granita.

On her way down the street, she accepted a free sample of *limoncello* in a small paper cup, the local lemon liqueur that was so strong it burned her throat. Her stomach was doing flip-flops at the thought of meeting Giovanni.

What if he didn't recognize her after all this time? What if she didn't recognize him? Maybe they'd just have coffee, and she'd give him the high school yearbook he'd left behind when he returned to Italy, and that would be it. She wasn't naive enough to think he'd throw his arms around her and confess he'd always been in love with her, that he'd never forgotten her and had been waiting for her all these years.

But if he did do that and say that, they'd go up to her hotel room overlooking the Mediterranean, and, with the air filled with the scents of wild herbs and flowering vines from the hillside below, and the sea breeze blowing in the window cooling their overheated bodies, he'd tell her that he'd never forgotten her, that he'd never been able to love anyone else.

He was so strong he'd literally sweep her off her feet. When they took their clothes off, she'd blush as he told her that for a forty-one-year-old woman she looked good -- no, great. He'd fondle her breasts that were still firm, caress her still-flat stomach, admire her hips that were generous but not too wide. And he...he'd look like the statue of David on the postcard he'd sent her long ago. Her skin tingled just thinking about it.

Her skin tingled, and perspiration trickled annoyingly between her breasts. Her long hair lay heavy and damp on the back of her neck. She had to get it cut, she suddenly resolved. Right now, even if she was late for their meeting. See? She was already beginning to adopt an Italian attitude: if she was late, he'd wait for her.

Miraculously, she came to a cool, dark shop with a sign on the door -- *Salone de Bellezza*. When she went inside, the smell of shampoo and hair spray hung in the air. A woman in a blue apron motioned for her to take a seat. Anne Marie nodded and, while she was waiting, thumbed through an old fashion magazine with a picture of a Sophia Loren look-alike. The model's hair was reddish brown, cut in layers that brushed her high cheekbones.

"Like that," she told the stylist, surrendering herself into the woman's hands.

And what hands they were. Anne Marie rested her head against the edge of the sink while those hands rubbed, massaged, sprayed hot water, then rinsed with cool water. She gave a shiver of pleasure as the hands worked in shampoo and conditioner and something else that exuded the essence of lavender and mint.

She forgot her worries about losing her husband and finding Giovanni. She forgot she was on a schedule and just let herself float away on a cloud of fragrance and sensual pleasure. She'd never known how sensitive her head was until this woman took charge, with her magic hands and potions.

Every bone in her body had turned to jelly; every remnant of the tension of the last twenty-four hours melted away. Anne Marie closed her eyes while the hands cut and shaped and blew her hair dry and then sprayed it.

*"Prego, signora."* The stylist lifted the smock off, and Anne Marie opened her eyes at last.

She blinked at her reflection in the mirror. Her hair was no longer dull brown with streaks of gray. It was the color of the hair in the magazine. It brushed against her cheekbones, making them look higher, giving her an exotic look she'd never had before. They'd misunderstood; she'd only wanted it cut! But it did look wonderful. The entire staff of three women appeared behind her, beaming at her reflection with pride. They murmured things like *"bella,"* and *"graziosa."* What could she say? She smiled and thanked them warmly.

She paid a ridiculously small amount for such a total transformation and walked out into the afternoon sunlight, feeling its heat on her bare neck. She felt naked; she'd had long hair forever. But she also felt lighter, and there was a bounce in her step as she headed for her hotel.

If only Evie could see her now! "You have the perfect excuse for skipping Dan's wedding," Evie had said. "You're no longer the pathetic ex-wife; you are a woman on a romantic tryst to meet her lover. Out of all the girls in our class who were in love with him, he chose you. He heard about the divorce. Now he wants you. He even sent you a ticket -- first class."

"Who's going to believe that?" Anne Marie scoffed, shaking her head.

"Okay," Evie conceded. "Business class."

So she'd borrowed the money, packed, and left. Truthfully, she would have gone steerage class on the first boat; she would have mortgaged the house. Anything to escape the wedding of the year, when Dan married his dental hygienist with the perfect teeth and the perfect size eight figure. Since the divorce was so "amicable," the whole town expected good old Anne Marie to show up with a smile on her face and a gift under her arm. Hah!

Instead, she was on her way to a rendezvous.

But what if Giovanni had changed? What if he weighed three hundred pounds? What if he brought a wife and five children to meet her? Or what if he was single and wanted to marry her so he could get a green card? What if he wore his shirt unbuttoned to the navel and had four gold chains around his neck? She'd find out very soon; it was almost two-thirty.

Anne Marie found a taxi on the main street, across from the small sandy beach with bright blue and white beach umbrellas. As the well-aged Fiat with an equally well-aged driver made its way up into the hills above the town, her ears popped and she felt dizzy.

Finally, they pulled into the circular driveway of the four-star Hotel Athena on the edge of the cliff. When she got out of the taxi, Anne Marie's knees buckled. Nerves? Altitude? The driver set her bag at the hotel's open glass doors. She held out a handful of euros, and he carefully picked out what she hoped was the right amount.

For a long moment after the taxi had pulled away, she stood alone in the quiet tiled driveway, taking slow, deep breaths until the world finally stopped spinning around.

There were no cars parked in the driveway. Through the open doors she peered into the cool, elegant lobby. There was no one there. No dashing Italian with a sexy grin. She reminded herself he was Italian and he'd be late.

Suddenly, she was aware she was *not* alone. The sensitive skin on the back of her neck felt as if someone had

brushed it with a feather; she felt someone's eyes on her. She whirled around.

There he was, leaning against the brick wall that separated the street from the driveway. Tall, lean, and muscular, he was wearing wrap-around sunglasses, black jeans, and a blue shirt. It was not unbuttoned to the navel. He wore no gold chains. He was taller than she remembered. Harder, older. Well, what did she expect? She hadn't seen him in more than twenty years.

She didn't realize she was holding her breath until she exhaled.

"Giovanni?" she said, walking slowly toward him.

He took off his sunglasses. There was a long silence. "No," he said.

His gaze locked with hers. Her bare arms were covered with goose bumps. Though the air was warm, a chill ran up her spine. Of course it wasn't Giovanni. This man's eyes were not black, they were a light brown or...green or something. She couldn't tell without getting closer, and something warned her about getting closer, even as she felt an odd pull toward him. His face was all angles, with enough character lines to be interesting and squint marks at the corners of his eyes that showed how much time he'd spent in the Mediterranean sun. She stood rooted to the spot, while doves nesting in the cliffs above swooped and twittered.

She had to say something or move or walk away. Anything to break this spell he'd cast over her. What must he think of her, standing there staring? An American woman desperately looking for an Italian lover to make her vacation fantasies come true? How could he know how she'd been looking forward to this moment for the past twenty-three years but that he wasn't the one she'd been waiting for?

Too bad, a little voice inside her said.

"Welcome to San Gervase," he said in Italian-accented English that made every word sound like a caress.

"Thank you," she managed. "Are you...?" He must be somebody, something. Chamber of Commerce? Bureau of Tourism?

"No," he said again.

Okay. It was time to stop staring. She gave him a brief smile, turned around, and tripped on a crack in the tile as she crossed the driveway. Flushed, she told herself she wasn't overly excited or nervous, just because a sexy Italian man had looked at her with interest and spoken to her. She'd been in this country for only a day and already knew Italian men were like that. It didn't mean anything.

She picked up her suitcase and looked over her shoulder before she carried it inside. Just one more look, to make sure he wasn't a figment of her overactive imagination.

The man was still standing there, draped against the brick wall as if he were part of the scenery. Like an extra in an Italian movie, the quintessential Italian stud, hired to give the place ambience or give tourists a photo opportunity.

Inside the lobby Anne Marie filled out the registration forms, handed over her passport, and asked the clerk if anyone had asked for her. He shook his head and summoned a boy to carry her bag up to her room for her. Before she followed to the elevator, she took one more peek out the front door. He was still there. She turned quickly, as if she hadn't seen him, but her heart was racing. He'd been staring at her.



At the door to her room, she gave the boy a tip. By the look on his face and his exuberant "*Grazie*," she must have given him too much.

She kicked off her sandals and opened the doors to the balcony...and her mouth fell open. There it was. Everything she'd dreamed of, everything she'd imagined. The bougainvillea tumbling over the hillside, the red roofs of the houses that clung precariously to the cliffs, the sun glinting on the dazzling blue-green sea below.

She gripped the edge of the railing and looked down at the turquoise swimming pool three stories directly beneath her, surrounded by seminaked bronzed bodies. She breathed in the perfumed air, felt the sea breeze on her face, the cool tiles under her bare feet.

As pleasant as the room was, with its whitewashed walls and spare, elegant furniture, she had to go downstairs. She had to be ready to greet Giovanni. She changed into a flowered cotton calf-length skirt and a black tank top Evie had assured her looked youthful but not desperately so and gave herself a critical look in the mirror. She was afraid Giovanni wouldn't recognize her, since she barely recognized herself.

There was no more time to dwell on her appearance. She went back to the lobby. He was an hour late, which was nothing by Giovanni time. He'd always been late for class, and the teachers just shook their heads. After all, he was Italian, he was Giovanni -- charming, easy, lovable, and their star soccer player. She glanced out the front entrance. The man was still there. Same pose, sunglasses back in place. Damn. What was he waiting for? Who was he waiting for? Whoever it was, it wasn't her.

She chose a comfortable rattan chair in the corner of the lobby, where she could see the entrance but not the man outside. That didn't stop her from thinking about him, from wondering what he was doing there and what color his eyes really were.

She opened a guidebook called *Archeological Sites of Italy* and tried to read about the places she planned to go. An hour later, she had read only one page. Her eyelids were heavy, closing against her will. It must be about midnight, California time. Every time the phone rang at the desk, her eyes flew open, and she looked up expectantly, but the clerk never looked her way. Another hour after that, she closed her guidebook with a loud snap. It was one thing to operate on Italian time; it was quite another to make her come all this way and not show up at all.

She yawned and stood up as the man who was not Giovanni sauntered into the lobby. Was that a coincidence, or had he been waiting for her? She wiped her damp palms against her skirt.

"You are waiting for someone, for this Giovanni?" he asked. It was uncanny how much like Giovanni he sounded.

"Yes, why?"

He flipped his cell phone closed and put it in his pocket. "He won't be coming today."

She stepped back, startled and annoyed. "How do you know?"

"It's obvious: it's now too late. But I'm a tour guide. I can show you around, wherever you want to go. It will be my pleasure."

"Thank you, but...just because he's late doesn't mean he isn't coming at all." Even if Giovanni didn't show up, she would manage on her own. She hadn't come all this way to be taken in by a tour guide, if that's really

what the man was. For all she knew, he was a gigolo. She blinked back tears of disappointment and fatigue.

His eyes widened at the sight of her tears. Automatically, he handed her a handkerchief from his pocket.

She took it automatically and wished she hadn't. "If Gio...my friend wasn't going to meet me, he would call me or leave a message. So, thank you for the offer, but I don't need a guide."

Giovanni would surely show up, at least to pick up his yearbook. In his note, he'd seemed pleased and touched that she was bringing it.

"What will you do now?" the man asked.

Anne Marie frowned. "Why do you want to know? What do you want?" Her voice rose, and she glanced pointedly at the clerk behind the desk, wondering if she should complain that she was being harassed. The desk clerk glanced up and then back down at his desk. He couldn't have been less interested. She took a deep breath and looked the stranger in the eye. "Who are you?" she asked.

"Marco," the man said. "Marco Moretti."

He glanced down at the book in her hand. "Are you interested in archeology?"

"Yes."

"Don't miss the Greek temples at Paestum."

"I won't." She didn't know how to end this awkward conversation. *Thank you* didn't seem quite appropriate. How about *good-bye*? *Arrivederci*? She understood *ciao* was too familiar unless an Italian said it first.

So she turned without saying anything and went to the desk to collect her key. The clerk handed it to her, along with a large, square white envelope. Where had that come from? No one had come through the lobby since she'd been there. She shot the clerk an inquisitive glance, but he gave her a blank look. She felt Marco Moretti's eyes on her back and slipped the envelope between the pages of her guidebook.

"Anna Maria?" Marco said.

She turned. The way he said her name sent shivers up her spine, reminding her of Italian lessons and the romantic sound of the overture to *La Bohème* she used to play over and over after Giovanni left and went back to Italy. But how did he know her name? Maybe from the hotel clerk?

"When you visit the ruins," he said, "you will surely need a guide. Someone who speaks English."

"I have a book," she said, and held it up. The envelope slipped out onto the polished marble floor. Before she could bend down, Marco had retrieved it and handed it to her with narrowed eyes. His fingers brushed hers, and she felt an electric shock zing through her body. She bit her lip to keep from gasping. He was so close she could see that his eyes were a light brown flecked with green.

She stepped back. She'd read somewhere that southern Europeans had a different concept of personal space, and this man surely did. He was too close. Much too close. Even in this cool lobby, she could feel the heat from his body. She stepped back again until she bumped into the front desk.

Marco was observing her as intently as she was him, and she felt like a rabbit cornered by a wolf. His gaze dropped to the envelope with her name scrawled on it, and she held it tightly, half afraid he might try to take

it from her. But why? What an odd thought.

"The book is not enough," he said. "If you decide to go to Paestum, and you must go if you have come this far, you will need someone to explain the story behind the history, the art, and the architecture. I know things that are not in the book."

*I'll bet you do.* He was definitely the kind of man mothers warned their daughters about. How many women had he given personal tours to?

She had an uncontrollable desire to test him. "Such as?"

He stared at her.

"You said you know things that are not in the book." She held it up. "What are they?"

He hesitated only a moment, his eyes gleaming. "Such as which are the real Greek paintings in the museum and which are the Roman copies. Unless one is an expert, one can't tell."

"And you are an expert?"

"In some things. I am Italian." He shrugged, as if that explained everything.

She didn't want this very attractive man shadowing her around the museum, leaning over her shoulder, his sexy voice in her ear, explaining the paintings. That's what Giovanni was going to do. That's what he'd promised to do, so long ago back in California.

She gave Marco a brief, polite smile. "I'm sure you're a wonderful guide."

A hint of a smile touched his lips. "Are you?" he asked.

She blushed. She was just trying to be polite.

"If I decide to hire a guide, I'll keep you in mind."

How was she going to get him *out* of her mind? He was attractive in a rugged way, with a warm, deep voice that made her skin tingle all over. He had an air of mystery about him that was partly worrisome and partly intriguing. If only Giovanni would walk in now, it would solve all her problems. This guy could very well be some kind of con man. Giovanni would say a few choice words in Italian, the kind in the chapter on Elementary Cursing, and the man would disappear as fast as he'd appeared.

"I'm not talking about money," he said, looking offended. "I would take you because I love the temples. I want to share what I know, and you and I have much in common."

"What is that?" she asked skeptically.

"A love of the ancient world. An interest in antiquity."

"Yes, well, Giovanni loves them, too, and I can't make any plans until I see him. He's the one who told me about the temples and the statues and...and..." And the music and the paintings and so much more.

"A shame he hasn't shown up. Do you know him well?"

"Yes, but it was a long time ago. He was an exchange student at my high school, the star of our soccer team," Anne Marie said. "And he made the honor roll. Everyone admired him."

"And the girls, did they all fall in love with him there?" he asked with a slight smile.

Anne Marie felt heat rush to her face again. "I suppose some did. He made the other boys seem so young and so immature."

"Did he," Marco said, his voice flat.

She nodded, then realized she'd said far more than she intended. Maybe it was because she'd been traveling alone with no one to talk to; suddenly, her brain and her mouth were working overtime. "Well, thanks," she said, and turned and headed for the stairs.

Instead of fading away out the door, Marco was right behind her, his footsteps practically on her heels. Her heart pounded. What did he want with her? The letter? Her money? Her forty-something body? Not likely. Whatever it was, she was not giving it to him. Not without a struggle.

At the top of the landing she whirled around and faced him head-on. "What do you want?" she demanded.

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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Errol Sawyer:**

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