

Renaissance Woman Excerpt

Patrick grabbed Renee's hand. "They've spotted us! Come on, we'll try to lose them in the crowd." He pushed her straight into the crush of people.

Renee glanced back to see if the men were still following. All she could see were the throngs of revelers closing in around them. Brightly colored robes and sequined masks swirled before her eyes like a huge glittering monster. A multitude of foreign voices roared in her ears, but the languages all melded together into a collage. The sights and sounds transported her to another time.

He guided her toward the calle leading from the piazza. The high platform shoes she wore, wonderful at keeping the hem of a woman's voluminous gown from becoming soiled, were a detriment to one being chased by thieves. She kicked off both shoes and ran barefooted, the rough ground biting at her tender feet.

Renee's head began to clear as Patrick dragged her into the shadows of what must have been the narrowest alleyway in the world. Her heart raced, and she neared collapse. Strangely, the soles of her feet stung as if she'd been running on rough ground barefooted.

Patrick moved in against the wall and pulled her in behind him. Frightened beyond words, she pressed closer to him. The muscles in his back tensed at her touch. Those men could still be close by, but she felt safer now, protected by this man she hardly knew.