



## The Reluctant Wife

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WINNER of the RomCon Readers Crown 2013 Category/Series

Abby Taylor walked out on her irresistible husband three years ago. Now she has no choice but to return to Italy to ask him for a favor. To pay for her grandmother's heart operation she needs his money, but it comes with strings attached.

Conte Dante Lombardi has it all—an Italian villa, a successful family business, and a noble title. But he needs a child to carry on his legacy and time is running out. He also hopes to satisfy the desire Abby rouses in him.

As Abby uncovers why he's in such a hurry for a child, she falls in love with him again ... just as she realizes it might be impossible to keep her end of the deal.

## The Reluctant Wife Details

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Author : Bronwen Evans

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## From Reader Review The Reluctant Wife for online ebook

### Desere says

Hot, hot, hot read ladies! This was a wonderful contemporary romance from a brilliant author. The book had me entranced and completely mesmerized from start to finish.

The characters of Abby and Dante were both wonderful to read about. Abby the young woman that will risk it all to save the life of her grandmother, she will do what ever it takes, which in this book made her the go getter.

Dante the strong, charming and relentless but oh my so sexy man that will rather blackmail his wife back into his bed then ask her to come back to him.

Yes, I know it does sound a little like most modern contemporary romance books from today only this one had something that some modern romances miss, it had heat, intrigue, passion and a deep powerful underlining message. Some modern romances have just some of those elements but not always it all or even combined together so beautifully.

I loved how the author used the blackmail element combined with the loyalty to family into play to bring forth a story that will truly stay with me for a very long time.

The dialogue was passionate, emotional and powerful. The character of Dante was the perfect one in the sense that he was the kind that every woman loves to hate, yes ladies as much charm as the has he also has the arrogance of treating Abby no better than he would a servant. And Abby certainly is only there to preform a "service" in order to get what she wants.

I felt bad for poor Abby at times but at others I was also delighted for her in the subtle little hints the author drops to let me as reader know there is so much more the Dante and what lies beneath his wall of resistance to love.

The backdrop of Italy was perfect for this lovers reunited romance, not just because Italy is one of the definite cities of romance but because it just has all the perfect elements for the making of a excellent romance book, which believe me this certainly was.

And most of all it reminded me as reader that communication no matter how little is always important.

Brilliant work Bronwen, bring us more!

5/5 star review

"Returning to the man you love in spectacular style"

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### Love Butterfly says

This is the best book written by "Bronwen Evans".

At first I thought this book would be typical million dollar hero, who gets whatever he wants so I was

reluctant to read this book. I was looking for good temporary books and did not find any, so I started to read this story. I could not hold my tears, it just kept coming. The story of "the reluctant wife" is very beautiful and emotional.

The author brought an important issue in this book. These days so many young female are diagnose with endometriosis. And not everyone know how to handle that situation. I like to thank Miss Evans for writing such a beautiful story and also request to write more contemporary books in near future

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### **Kassiah says**

**3-1/2 stars** for me, but I rounded up.

The full review, including quotes and a giveaway, can be found on **Pretty Sassy Cool :)**

Abby was only nineteen years old when Italian Conte Dante Lombardi swept her off her feet. He made it very clear from the beginning of their whirlwind relationship that he wanted to have children right away. Lack of attention from Dante and too much pressure being a Contessa in a foreign place caused Abby to flee. Three years later, she's back. Her grandmother needs an operation, and Abby comes to Dante for the money.

He agrees to give it to her on the condition that she return to him as his wife and the mother of his future children. Dante's got secrets of his own. Abby's grown up since she met Dante, and feels like she can handle the terms of their relationship. She loved him before, but things she can turn that off, since she's going into this without blinders on.

Neither of them can deny the attraction they have to each other, but that hasn't changed since they met. One of the things that I really liked about this book was that *both* of them were at fault. Both of them lied. Both of them covered up things. Both of them came to their senses. I also loved that it was hot.

I loved that Dante expected more from her, and that it wasn't all his fault. I did not love some of the things their families said to them--it felt kind of fic-like and icky to me. Overall, this was a hot, fast read with substance that I wasn't expecting.

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### **Fiona Marsden says**

Yes another reunion story. Classic hot Italian husband blackmails English bride back into his bed. Dante is one of those alpha males afraid to show weakness yet that fear becomes his biggest weakness. His attitude was a key factor in the break down of his marriage three years ago.

Abby as a youthful bride lacked the maturity to cope with the demands of a male who insisted he did not do love but wanted a child immediately. After three years away she has grown up, but only her grandmothers ill health would force her to confront her husband for help.

This was a nicely done romance with good interactions between Abby and Dante as they work out many of the issues that caused problems the first time around along with new problems.

The crunch time was a really emotional point in the story guaranteed to have you hoping for the best. Both

Abby and Dante were engaging characters. The ending was very sweet and the sizzle was pretty warm.

The only thing that spoiled it for me was the on again off again doubt about Dante's fidelity while they were apart. He would say something that suggests he was, then something would happen to raise doubts.

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### **Melissa says**

The reluctant wife is a great contemporary romance which I would recommend to fans of Jennifer Probst Marriage to a Billionaire series.

This story jumps right to it which I liked - Abby got married real young with the perception of Prince Charming still fresh in her 19 year old mind. She was in love and starry eyed for her older handsome and incredibly rich Italian husband.

Dante however married for the business, his family heritage and the means of creating a son.

Shattered Abby runs from her marriage only to having to return 3 years later with a favor to ask... Money she needs it and fast to help with her grand mothers heart operation.

Dante being the cunning business man he is uses this as a means of black mailing her to staying and give him the son he so desperately wants.

I enjoyed every page of this book, from page one we are aware of the dynamic chemistry between these two estranged characters and it was very sexy!

I liked Abby she is an independent woman who will do whatever needs to be done. She's brave and a romantic I could really relate to her. (Plus she was English and the author mentions my home city, Liverpool! Thumbs up)

Although Dante comes across as cunning and cold in the beginning of the book we find he has his reasons. I loved him!! he learns a valuable lesson and in the end knows when to apologize..

This couple goes through a lot but I feel it only helped them grow and mature. I laughed, I cried and cheered for them. I ate up there endless banter and steaming chemistry that at points had my toes curling!

While the plot was easy to predict it didn't take away from the story, I wished it hadn't of took this couple 3 years to find there way. I hope we get to see these characters again..

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### **Emily says**

Abby Taylor needs money and the only person she knows that has it at his disposal is her estranged husband Conte Dante Lombardi. Abby left years ago when she realized the man she thought loved her didn't. Now though she is desperate to save her grandmother and Dante is a means to an end. Dante though wants to make a deal, she comes back to him as his wife and gives him the son he needs to continue to keep his company in his family. Can Abby take a second chance on Dante, knowing that it will inevitably break her heart or will something be different this time around?

Dante was a hard man to soften too initially but he warms to you gradually. I liked Abby she was feisty and

didn't mince words when it came to Dante. Had several twists I had not expected. Great read.

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### **Tia says**

This novel was very painful to read, due to the emotional content. I loved the heroine but I believe the hero was way too hard on her. She was only a child when they married, so young yet, only nineteen and he put pressures on her some thirty year olds couldn't quite handle.

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### **Katie\_la\_geek says**

For this review and more visit my blog

The Reluctant Wife has been compared to the Marriage to a Billionaire quite a lot and I can see why, they book have the same style and themes but despite a good effort The Reluctant Wife is not as good.

The storyline is ok but is a little over the top. The deal Abby makes with Dante is not one I can see a majority of woman agreeing to. Generally Abby was alright, but everyone kept talking about how much backbone she had and a lot of the time I struggled to see it.

Dante was at times infuriating and irrational. His thinking could be a little backwards and his treatment of Abby far from perfect. He was too arrogant and hypocritical for my taste but I can see the attraction, he was a little smouldery.

Despite my issues with this book I did quite enjoy reading it. It is a book I will not think about again but for the few hours it took to read I was entertained.

**The publisher provided me with a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review**

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### **My Book Addiction and More MBA says**

The Reluctant Wife is a sweet and relevant bargain marriage story. Abby married Dante for love. Dante married Abby for a baby. With the disparity in reasons, Abby fled the marriage only to return to save her Grandmother from dying. So, the bargain is struck: her grandmother has life saving surgery and Abby and Dante have a marriage and children. When other issues make for even more misunderstandings, Abby and Dante have to fight for their love and their marriage.

Abby and Dante are both well drawn characters though the secondary characters are a nowhere near as finely drawn. It is easy to empathize with them as they struggle through their journey.

The story is certainly never boring; there is always something getting in the way of their final happiness, though the epilogue is a lovely tribute to the final issue. All in all, this is a well-done contemporary category

romance that works on every level.

Heat Rating:Mild

RATING: 4

REVIEWED BY: Monique Neaves, My Book Addiction Reviews

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### **Debbie DiFiore says**

#### **Beach Scene ruined the story some spoilers maybe**

This book was going along time. I never really liked the hero though and it was the usual marriage reunion story where they were separated for three years but she needed his money for her grandmother's operation so she went and asked for some. His celibacy was unclear to me but she was definitely celibate. They both are still keeping secrets but he blackmails her into coming back and having his child before he loses his inheritance. On the beach right after you think they might have a chance he accuses her of something he says is unforgivable and is so horrid to her that it really ruined the book for me! And as a result something terrible happens and I am supposed to believe his redemption. Not me though. He is just mean and arrogant and even with the good epilogue I just disliked him still. If he really loved her, they wouldn't have ever been separated in the first place. He didn't even really try to get her back. And he never ever redeemed himself for that ever. It could have been a great book. Too bad he was the hero!

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### **Bree T says**

Abby Taylor met and married Conte Dante Lombardi in a whirlwind courtship but when the dust settled, she and her arrogant husband couldn't seem to find a happy medium. Dante was forever busy and absent from their lives and his pressure on her to have a child before she was ready put a terrible strain on the relationship. Three years ago, Abby walked out and hasn't looked back.

Now she must go to Dante and beg for his help – her grandmother needs an operation and has been placed on a public waiting list. As a private patient, she could be seen right away and have the surgery done by a top surgeon but that sort of thing would cost money – money that Abby does not have. She's forced to swallow her pride and go to her husband and beg him for help, knowing that he has more than enough money to help her out.

Dante has always had it all – he's wealthy, he's the head of the very successful family business and he enjoys all of the trappings that go along with that. He's also the first Lombardi to face divorce if he doesn't act fast and Abby walking back into his life to ask him for help gives him an opportunity. Dante needs an heir – if he doesn't get one soon, he stands to lose everything. When Abby begs him for help with her grandmother, he sees a way to make this arrangement mutually beneficial.

He will provide her with the money she needs for her grandmother to have her surgery done swiftly in a top hospital by a top surgeon if Abby will come back to him and provide him with the heir he so desperately needs.

Abby vows not to fall in love with her husband again, as that didn't end so well last time. But the longer she spends in his company and the more she unravels about why he needs this heir so desperately, the more it seems like she can't help herself.

I have to admit, this book turned out to be not really what I was expecting. I quite often like reconciliation story lines but this one made me feel a bit uncomfortable, because of the way in which Dante manipulates his estranged wife. Abby was 19 when they married and Dante is 10 years older than her. He's ready for a family, to begin having children and continuing the family legacy. Abby obviously is not, being barely out of high school and all and not actually having had time to live her life. This is something they argue about and when Dante discovers Abby is hiding something from him, it pretty much spells the end of the marriage and she walks out and returns to her grandmother in England and begins building a business. Three years later she is forced to turn to Dante, a very last resort, to help her pay for a serious operation her grandmother needs.

And Dante reacts to this by saying oh, of course I will help you save your grandmother's life. Here's the money you need, we shall draw up a payment schedule and off you go – no wait, he doesn't say that, because he is a douche. He agrees to give her the money if he'll give her a child (or several children, if the first one isn't a boy. Apparently we're still stuck in the 1800's where assets are entailed down the male line). If she doesn't stay and allow him to have his wicked way with her here, there, everywhere as many times as he likes, then no. He cannot help her and bye, bye Abby.

Seriously? I understand that Dante, as some sort of rich Italian count, his feelings were probably hurt when his wife left him and he's been simmering ever since, but I'm not sure dying relatives are the time for manipulative games in order to force another woman to bear your child. Abby is only 22, still quite young and let's face it, no one should ever be forced into being a parent. Having carried and given birth to two children, it's no picnic, and I had both easy pregnancies and easy deliveries. But there's lots that can happen or go wrong and it's a toll on your body. I don't believe children should be used in that way, and it made it very difficult to like Dante, even with his reasons.

I admire Abby for gritting her teeth and agreeing to his proposal in order to save her grandmother, because it's a big thing to have to agree to. I'd be the type of person to say screw you and walk out and would probably end up suffering for my stubbornness but there's no way I could go back to someone who was willing to use me in such a way, no matter what his secret motivations might have been. And then later on in the book, he finds out something about Abby that may actually mean they cannot have a child and his reaction to it is simply awful. She's been given bad news and she's young and devastated about it. She wants time to think about what she needs to do and the steps she needs to take and he treats her abominably.

I saw glimpses of good in this one but it was overshadowed by the distasteful way in which Dante manipulated Abby which smacks of 80s overly Alpha males who bully heroines. I've noticed that this author does write historical romances and I'd be interested to try one of those as I think a male like Dante might've been more easy to read in a historical setting.

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### **Jessica (My Not So Vacant Shelf) says**

View more of my review and others at my blog: [www.mynotsovacantshelf.blogspot.com](http://www.mynotsovacantshelf.blogspot.com)

At first I had mixed feelings about this novel. However, I was certain of one thing...Dante is a jerk, but a

sexy jerk non-the-less. I liked the scenario that Abby and Dante find themselves in, and that neither of them are willing to admit their feelings (Abby was before she left, but Dante never could). Now, what got me was that Dante was 29 and Abby was 19 when they married. That freaked me out. Which, I also guess is why I understood why Abby left. She freaked out because Dante was ready for more...he was ready for a family. I'm not 100% sure how I feel about that yet because that is a ten year age gap and Abby was barely an adult when she married, barely even an adult when she comes back. But, I could put that aside and focus on the story. I also could somewhat understand why Dante distanced himself emotionally as well...although I think his reason was just stupid considering he's a Catholic and family man. The reason why he distanced himself (his father dying young and his mother being devastated) and being a catholic and loyal family man didn't really seem to be characteristics that would fit together, so I wasn't really feeling that part. However, the romance between them was hot...hot...HOT. There are many moments that made me smile, made my toes curl, and even made me giggle. That's right giggle. And then there were many serious moments and I found that the ending to this novel really fit it wasn't the standard fairy-tale, but a fairy-tale non-the-less. A modern day fairy-tale I guess. Bronwen Evans' novel is a easy reading sizzling romance that will pull on your heart strings.

Good:

Abby—dedicated to her family and an independent woman who made a name for herself.

Dante—Cocky, loyal, and determined. Love the combination.

Bad:

Some things about the characters didn't really seem to fit together.

Overall (Writing style, story line, and general):

Overall the story was an easy read. I never had to re-read something and found that I could really get into the novel. I loved the feisty characters and loved the way the book ended.

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## **Crazy for Books (Stephanie) says**

NetGalley free read...

It wasn't terrible, but it wasn't good. I can say I didn't hate reading it. But it felt incomplete in a way, a bit jumbled. Example is when Abby first goes to the Villa in order to ask Dante for the money for her grandmother. She internally says she will guard her heart against him. Of course before she even sees him she starts to waver. She's immediately jealous when she finally does see him only to have him wrapped around a woman, who turns out to be his best friend and a lesbian. But I digress.

Soon after this initial meeting and Dantes negotiation attempts, she goes from, "I can do this for my grandmother," to "I can make him love me." Where's the hardship? How can she be so blind that a man who would pick her out of all the women he could have, because as she says, he commands attention just walking down the street, that he doesn't care for her.

I don't get the back and forth. First she says he has to give her time, then less than a day later, she's sleeping with him. Then he's trying to give her space but this is when she's all in love again. I just couldn't keep up with their inner workings.

The author also seems to jump around without explanation. It's not terrible, there's just no break in the book like a line or something to show that we are on to a new topic. Example is where they talk about going on a honeymoon, the next line they are there. There are other times this happens.

I also wasn't happy with Dante's response to Abby's medical issues. I knew right away from reading the description of the book that she would have issue conceiving. I think it should be more of a surprise. But that being said, he conned her into staying married to him without knowing his medical history and that he could potentially get sick and die at an early age. The fact that Abby wanted to wait until after her procedure should have been taken into consideration. But I guess being an Alpha, macho, Italian man precluded him from having a conscience. It was okay for him to keep secrets and not her. And to be that young and hear that news has to be devastating. But he couldn't think about that until it was too late.

Not terrible, just not for me.

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### **Maura says**

Bumped down to a 3 on the re-read. For some reason, Dante's hypocrisy really hit me this time around. Yes, he claims later that he was really just lashing out in anger, rather than being mad at Abby, but his blackmail behavior was pretty despicable in light of his actual comments to her. He claims that she lied about something that could affect the rest of their lives and that it was unforgivable. But now I see that his "lies" about his health and potential death would most definitely AFFECT Abby, as she'd be the one left alone with the son that he wanted. Actually, it's unfortunately that she didn't find out he blackmailed her into a pregnancy fully believing he was at death's door - that's pretty shitty behavior - and he had the gall to yell at her for her omission? I wish she'd had the knowledge and the backbone to throw that back in his face.

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Abby and Dante married when she was only 19 and she learned quickly that it wasn't for love...at least not on his part. Realizing that all he wants is a child and certainly not her love and that he'll never love her back, she leaves him for 3 years. She's driven back to him when her grandmother needs surgery and she needs his money. And he takes the chance to blackmail her into giving him the child he still desperately wants. But he's absolutely clear that there will be no love and that if she engages her heart again, she will get hurt. Abby is more mature this time around and ready to fight for what she wants. When she realizes it's Dante she wants, she takes charge and throws his rules out the window. But she learns something about herself that could ruin her chances at happiness with him.

I have to say, I appreciated the hell out of how proactive this heroine was, rather than reactive. Unafraid to tell Dante where to stick it, she frequently confronted him with his cowardice and cruelty. I'm not sure I would have acted the way she did in her situation, but I appreciate her strength... she even had Dante lamenting on how she refused to be bitter or upset about being blackmailed into his bed. On the downside, we didn't get much of an apology for how he treated her the first time around, but we do get to see Dante suffer a bit. Dante I'm not so sure I liked. He was so over-reactive and quick to jump to conclusions...I just couldn't figure why. I also really liked that both characters were celibate during their separation...or at least that's what was alluded to (view spoiler) I haven't read any of this author's historicals, but I liked the way she writes and I'm probably going to look for more.

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### **TashNz says**

For me this is the perfect story. Second Chance stories are in my top three genre's, but they have to be well written, powerfully emotive and as a reader I have to want the characters to have their second chance and to

me The Reluctant wife ticked off everything on my list - plus more!

The Reluctant Wife introduces us to Abby when she's pulling up to the gate of her Husband's home, the home she left three years prior, needing his help. Seeing an opportunity that will suit all parties Dante promises to assist her, under some conditions of her own. Knowing she has no choice Abby moves back home.

That's when the spellbinding magic starts flowing and I disappeared into Dante's and Abby's world, completely forgetting I was curled up in a comfy couch at my local coffee shop reading The Reluctant Wife. As the reader I followed Dante and Abby down the rocky road of second chances, I shared their personal demons with them and I hoped and hoped they would get their second chance together, even when things looked dim and impossible.

I love that Abby was strong, stood up for herself and also wore her heart on her sleeve. My heart broke for her for what she was going thru in terms of her own personal situation. I loved that Dante clearly loved Abby, he was quite the alpha hero. He had his own personal situation too which was just as worrying and as important as Abby's.

And ah yes! The heat was scorching the pages as hot as the Australian sun I experienced last week!

How delighted I was to discover at the end Bronwen is a Kiwi, I love love love to see Kiwi's do so well in the big wide world, all the best with success for this story. I'll be googling you in Amazon for more :)

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