

# Three Coins in the Trevi Fountain

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By  
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Erica couldn't believe her luck; this was her third day of an eight day trip to Rome, Italy. She'd won the airfare as part of a Hospital fundraiser back home in Morristown, New York. She bought the ticket along with the rest of her friends never thinking that she would win one of the prizes. Yet, when they called to tell her she had won a round trip airfare to Rome, she was stunned. There was only one hitch, the ticket had to be used by a specific date and none of her friends could get the time off. So here she was, all by herself in the city of love.

No matter, she was enjoying herself anyway. Before she arrived she worked with her Travel Agent to get a hotel right across for the Trevi Fountain. It was a charming three story walk up with the most authentic décor. Erica loved it. It was central to everything, the Spanish steps, the Pantheon, the Piazza Navona, the Coliseum. She had taken a walking tour her first day and gotten oriented to where everything was. After that it was simply a matter of settling into the rhythm of the streets. Early morning the store keepers open their doors and windows, swept the cobbles in from of their doors. The local arrived for morning cappuccino. She had read that true Italians never drank Cappuccino after 11:00 am. She was careful to do the same.

Sitting in the café beside her hotel she watched the comings and goings of the people around the Trevi Fountain. By ten o'clock the tourist started to arrive. By noon the streets were so full she couldn't see the fountain. Everyone who visited crowded up it to the edge to take their turn to throw a coin into the fountain. She watched as people backed up to the edge, turned around so their backs faced the fountain and threw a coin over their shoulder. It was the strangest thing Erica had ever seen. It was quite the ritual. She couldn't figure it out. Why on earth was everyone throwing the coins backward over their shoulder?

Finally, curiosity got the better of her and she asked her waitress when she delivered Erika's lunch.

“Excuse me. Can you tell me? Is there a reason everyone throws the coin over their shoulder like that?” Erika asked and pointed to the fountain.

“Si, Legend has it that if you throw a coin from your right hand over your left shoulder into the fountain, you will return to Rome.” The bright eyed girl explained.

“Is that so, I’ll have to give it a try” Said Erika.

“Oh, but that is not all.” The girl continued. “If you toss two coins you will find love, and if you toss three coins you will marry an Italian.” She threw her head back and laughed. “I do not know if that is true. I am not bold enough to try. And I am not looking for a husband. But you are alone and maybe it would be good for you to find an Italian lover. No?” She girl laughed and hustled away to clear the next table.

Erika sat still, taken aback by what the girl had said. An Italian lover? It had never occurred to her to fraternize with the locals in that way. Erika gave herself a shake and smiled, telling herself not to be silly. She was in Italy to see the sites, take in the culture, not to find a lover. How absurd.

Later that evening, around sunset, Erika emerged from her hotel to take a walk before bed. The street had a completely different feel this time of day. Most of the tourist had left. There were the odd stragglers who, like her, were staying in hotels in the area. The crowds had thinned out and the shops were closing their doors. Only the restaurants and Gelato stands were still open. The streets began to feel sleepy and still the water in the fountain still flowed. Lights had come on automatically at dusk making the fountain glow and the statues almost come to life as the lighting in the fountain streamed up from below each statue throw the water. It was a brilliant sight to see. Statues that looked like mere stone in the day took on a larger than life appearance in the glow of darkness. If Erika was the kind of

person given to imagination and fancy, she could almost see the statues come to life and dance through the water.

As she walked slowly around the fountain imagining the dance the statues might do if they could come to life, her toe kicked something that made a silver bell tickling sound. Erika looked down to see a coin on the cobbles just ahead of her. She bent down and picked it up. She placed it in the palm of her right hand and looked at it closely. It was very bright silver. Not at all like the change in her purse that she had been collecting over the last few days. This coin was thin and had the face of a man with a strong chin. It looked very old, the wording was faded and there was no date stamped around the edges like modern day coins.

While she stood quietly examining the coin, a voice spoke to her.

“I see you have found my coin.” A male voice said in her ear.

Erika jumped out of her skin. She whirled around to face a tall, dark good looking man whose chin was as sharp as the one on the coin. She took several steps back and clutching the coin tight in her hand. She pulled her fist close into her chest as if to protect it from a thief.

“Forgive me.” The man begged. “I really didn’t mean to frighten you. I was simply being playful. I saw you pick up the coin and thought I would play a little joke. I guess I’m not that funny.” He said with contrition. The man’s face was truly full of regret and he took a step toward Erika for every step she took in retreat, his hand outstretched as if to comfort her.

“You scared the life out of me.” Erika replied in a high frightened breathless voice. “Is this your coin? Do you want it back?” she asked, clutching the coin even tighter.

“No, no. It’s as I said, and little joke, a prank. I’m truly sorry.” He said and dropped his arm and standing tall like a soldier.

Erika as glad the coin wasn’t his and he wasn’t going to take it from her, she’d grown very possessive of it all of a sudden.

“Let me introduce myself, my name is Remus De Luca.” He said as he bowed from the waist down in a very formal, old fashioned manner.

“I live around here” He said as he waved his hand in the air in no particular direction. “And I like to walk the ancient streets in the evening. What, pray tell, young lady are you doing out this evening? Are you planning to toss your coin in the fountain?” He asked with a playful grin on his face.

Erika opened her hand and looked at the coin and then at the fountain. “I hadn’t thought about it.” She said. “I only just found it when you came along and startled me.” The idea of tossing a coin in the fountain started forming in her mind for the first time, and she warmed to it.

“They say, if you toss a coin in the fountain you will return to Rome. Do you want to return to Rome someday young lady?” Remus asked.

“Yes, of course I do.” Erika said. “I love it here, although, it would have been nice to have someone to share it with. There have been many times when I have turned to say something, make a comment or share a feeling, and realize that I am alone. I wish a friend could have come with me.” Erika blushed when she realized she was sharing her inner most feelings to a total stranger.

“Don’t be sad, mio amico, you are not meant to be alone.” Remus said with a wide understanding smile.

“I have an idea.” He said as he fished his hand into his pocket. “Why don’t you throw two coins in the fountain? Then you will return to Rome and you will find love. You will never be alone again.” He stated with a flourish and a slight stamp of one foot, making the suggestion final.

He handed Erika a second coin that looked identical to the one in her hand. It has just as old and bright silver with the same Roman figure head. “How odd to have two old coins show up in the same place” Erika thought. She stared at them, and the more she did the more the desire to toss the coins in the fountain became.

Remus gently took her by the shoulders, moved her towards the fountain, turned her around to face away from it, and then looked her in the eye.

“Close your eyes, whisper to the fountain your desire to return to Rome with your true love, then toss the coins, my dear, the fountain will do the rest.” Remus told her with fatherly love in his eyes.

For some reason, Erika believed him. There was something in the air, a shimmer around them that felt surreal and smelled of cotton candy. She felt light and warm and full of possibilities. Closing her eyes she took the coins in the right hand and tossed them in a perfect arc over her left shoulder and into the sparkling waters of the Trevi fountain. She heard the splash and the spell was broken. Opening her eyes, she was alone in the square. Remus was gone. She stood still for a moment then she shivered from head to toe. What just happened? Did she really just encounter a man in the square, or was it all a dream? Suddenly nervous Erika ran for her hotel. That night she dreamt of Gladiators and chariots, Roman Baths and feasts.

The next day Erika signed up to take a tour of the Coliseum. She had discovered early in the stay that guided tours were extremely helpful in learning the history and getting the best viewing of the

ancient ruins in Rome. She was looking forward to this tour and hoped that there would be some nice people in the group to share it with.

She arrived at the meeting point a few minutes ahead of schedule. She was not one to ever be late. The time gave her the chance to get used to her surroundings, get oriented so to speak. While she waited, the Tour Guide arrived and introduced himself. Then the others who had signed up for the tour arrived. At the appointed time and they all began to walk towards the entrance for the 'Skip the Line, Coliseum Tour.

"Is this the 10 o'clock tour?" a male voice said in her ear.

Erika jumped and spun around, scared to death. This was the second time in as many days that someone had done this to her. There standing in front of her was a young man, the spitting image of Remus, only younger. Erika couldn't speak, she just stopped and stared.

"Oh, sorry, didn't meant o scare you like that." He said.

"Hay, Wait up." He yelled to the Tour Guide who had turned to see what the commotion was about.

"Is this the 10 o'clock tour, I'm running a little late, sorry." He asked the Guide. Then turning to Erika, he said, "Come on, let's catch up, We don't want to miss anything." And he grabbed her hand and took off after the group.

Erika, having no choice, followed the young man, her hand in his feeling natural. When they caught up to the group, he let her hand go and she regretted it.

As the group moved through the Coliseum, people moved with the Guide, some walking faster to keep up or hear what the Guide was saying, some slow down to look at a artifact, everyone

constantly changing position. Erika noticed without trying that the young man was almost always by her side, or ahead of her. He spoke to her often making side comments and sly jokes making her laugh. He introduced himself as Luca from New Jersey, from a good Italian family who had sent him to Italy to learn about his roots. He was easy to talk to and smiled a lot.

She was drawn to him, but kept trying to keep her distance. His resemblance to Remus was uncanny. She found herself staring at him, and trying so hard not to. He even caught her doing it a couple of times. He just smiled and she blushed and looked away. Erika was embarrassed to admit to herself that there were things about Luca and she found very attractive. His height, his eyes, and that New Jersey accent were dreamy. He didn't slouch or swear and seemed genuinely interested in the history surrounding him. She had to stop looking at him.

The coincidence of last night's encounter with Remus and the coins, followed by this strange meeting, was creeping her out. Maybe it was best if she just kept to herself. She was imagining things and giving in to her imagination.

When the tour ended Erika tried to blend into the walls, and do a duck and run to avoid seeing Luca. She didn't understand what was going on but there was no way that the fountain just conquered up the love of her life over night. But her attempt to hide didn't work. He walked up behind her again.

"Hi, Erika right? Look, I was wondering, since you're on your own, and I'm on my own, that maybe you'd like to have lunch with me?" Luca asked in the most charming romantic invitation Erika had ever had in her entire life.

She really wanted to say yes, but the whole fountain – coin thing and instant attraction was freaking her out. She really didn't know what to say. So she hesitated.

Luca took her hesitation as a No, and he offered her an alternative.

“I get it. You don’t know me. I’m just some strange guy you just met in a crowd. For all you know I could be an Axe Murderer. Which, I assure you, I’m not. I got an idea.” He said, and he dug into his pocket. “This here is my lucky coin. My grandfather gave it to me, said it’s been in my family for generations.” He pulled a coin from his pocket and showed it to Erika. It was the exact same coin from last night.

The same silver smooth faced coin with the same Roman square jawed head in the middle. Erika’s eyes widened the second she saw the coin. She couldn’t believe it, it couldn’t be. She was shocked into silence and stood staring between the coin and Luca.

“I’ll toss the coin” He said. “Heads you go to lunch with me and tails, we go our separate ways. What do you say?” He asked looking in her eyes for some kind of acknowledgment that she would give him half a chance to spend more time with her.

Erika couldn’t believe what she was hearing. Would her fate really come down to the toss of a coin? Could this young man be the love of her life? Could Rome really be that magical to produce a fairy God father and a romance all in one night? Who knew? Yet, what did she have to lose? After all, it was only lunch? Or was it the rest of her life? She smiled and nodded.

Luca placed the coin on his thumb, and giving it a flick, sending it soaring into the air. It flipped and spun and as it came down he caught it in mid air in one hand and slapped it on the back of his other hand.

Before Luca even open his hand to reveal the result Erika knew the coin would be Heads Up. And so it was, Heads Up.

Without a word, Luca pocketed the coin, extended his elbow to Erika who gladly placed her hand on his arm and they began to walk and talk as if they had known each other forever.

