The background of the entire cover is a romantic illustration. A shirtless man with dark hair, wearing brown breeches and black boots, is embracing a woman from behind. The woman has long, wavy brown hair and is wearing a vibrant red, off-the-shoulder gown with a full skirt. They are in a close embrace, looking at each other. The setting appears to be an elegant room with a large window in the background, through which light is streaming. The overall color palette is warm, with reds, browns, and soft blues.

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THREAD
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ROWENA WESTLAKE
HE CAME UPON THE
MIDNIGHT CLEAR
A CHRISTMAS ROMANCE



EXTRACT FROM

THE NEW BESTSELLER

Rowena Westlake was born in the West Country and trained as a chiropodist before setting her sight on higher things. Her early novels It Happened One Summer and Incident in Mayfair were both nominated for DHRA Book of the Year Awards and subsequently filed as made-for-video movies by
thrupiecevideo.

Rowena is the author of more than four books. She lives in the West Country with her two dogs and Stanislaus a portuguese goat.

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ROWENA WESTLAKE

He Came upon the Midnight
Clear



CHAPTER ONE

Larissa shifted listlessly on her red velveteen chair, glancing idly at the magazine now sprawled wantonly across the oak-veneered occasional table. “*If only*”, she mused inwardly, as though afraid even to voice her inner thoughts for fear they might solidify into something more concrete than their weight could bear. “*If only*”, her inner voice persisted; but *if* was a big word despite its mono vowel, single consonant and obvious syllabic brevity.

Last night Larissa had attended her friend Ivanka’s lavish engagement party at *The Gay Hussar*, Stringbonefellow’s new nightclub in Charminster. She had reluctantly accepted the invitation knowing that, being single, blonde and a 38FF, it would be she rather than the bride-to-be who would attract all the attention. And she would be unaccompanied too since Todd, her handsome chartered accountant boyfriend was out of town on a two-day all-expenses-paid Corporate Accounts Reconciliation Refresher Course. Of course she could dress more plainly to try to give Ivanka a chance at being the centre of attention, but there was little she could do to hide her smouldering eyes, sharply arresting nose, full luscious lips and fetching butterfly-shaped birthmark which even now nestled invitingly between the rounded orbs of her sensuous womanly cleavage.

She sighed once again in half remembrance. She had intended staying only as long as was polite and had issued a firm instruction to her susceptible girlish self that she would have only one drink. Two at most if *creme-de-menthe* was

on special offer before 7.30pm, but ... two had turned into three and before she knew it ...

She recalled now her tinkling, unwittingly seductive laughter as ... Lance ... yes that had been his name ... as Lance had flirted with her so outrageously. He had arrived with Petronella but shown little inclination to spend the evening with *her* and had wandered over to Larissa the moment he had noticed her sitting alone by the bar, her voluptuous decoletage beconing like the Eddystone lighthouse. She remembered now the cut of his suit; tight where it mattered, making clear his manly strength - currently in repose - but later Ah! later...

"What's tha doin on't todd?", he had asked, his broad northern accent matching the breadth of his manly chest, the dark curly hairs of which protruded from his figure-hugging Perre Cardin non-iron drip-dry stay-pressed© shirt. *"Tha's too gradly to be buyin' t'own Freezomint"*, he added teasingly as his hand slipped accidentally between her thighs. *"D'ye fancy t'shag?"* he had asked with northern directness but with such naive earnest that she couldn't possibly take offence.

"I haven't got the slightest clue what you are saying", Larissa replied *"are you from Poland?"* *"Nay lass"*, he retorted, *"actually I'm from Tunbridge Wells"* he went on in perfect 1950s BBC-approved received pronunciation.

Larissa threw back her head in laughter. She noticed the look of excited approval in Lance's eyes as they were drawn to her 38FF breasts now ricocheting up and down in sympathy

with the violent movement of her head.

“*You’re stunning*”, he opined, adding that he knew her boyfriend Todd was out of town on a two-day all-expenses-paid Corporate Accounts Reconciliation Refresher Course, since he’d overheard Petronella telling her PA on her latest rose gold Apple iPhone 7+ with 500 minutes talk-time, unlimited texts and 25gb of monthly data.

Things had moved swiftly from there, though whether responsibility for what happened rested with the *creme-de-menthes* or Lance’s devilish smile she could not say.

And now, through the fog of remembrance, it was coming back to her ... his tender kiss, his gentle stroking of her *mons pubis*, his fingers dextrously exploring the *al dente* hardness of her willing nipples, his strong wrist rhythmically probing her innermost secrets. Moistness ... passion ... love ...

But was this love? Stirring on her velveteen chair in the harsh light of day, she was no longer sure. And what of Todd? What of poor Todd, seeking only to improve his career prospects so that he could keep her in the style to which she had told him firmly she wished to become accustomed. Shame followed doubt as anguish followed shame and self-loathing followed anguish before disgust consumed her fragile heart still miraculously beating inside her magnificent 38FF chest.

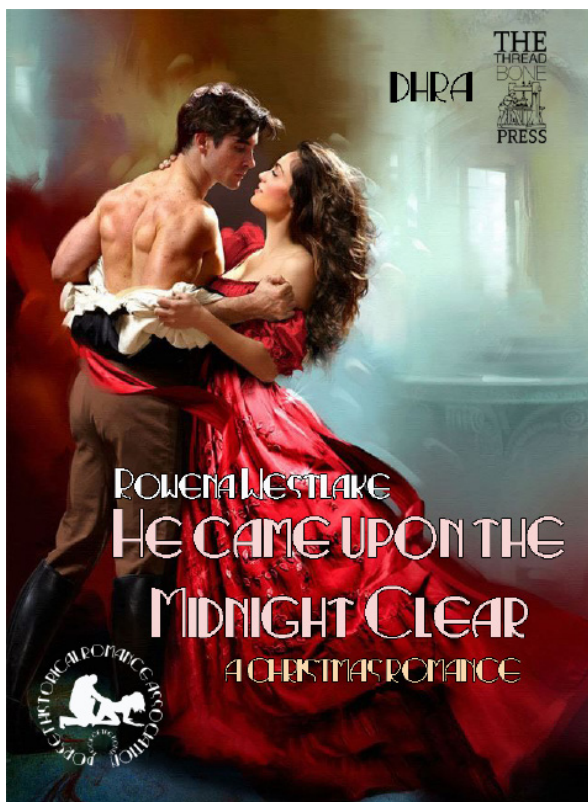
Should she tell Todd all or hide this guilty secret from the man she loved - yes truly loved. Only time would tell.

Her Samsung Galaxy Quad HD 5.4 inch 534 ppi S7 Edge vibrated in rhythm to her throbbing mini love muffin and she glanced at its accusing screen. It was Todd and he wanted to speak with her. Did he know? Or was he reminding her that he liked his bacon crispy on both sides...

Rowena adjusted the straps of her over-filled bra, wondering whether the Todd-shaped outline of her pubic hair needed trimming before he returned. She noticed it was nearly midnight and that outside the air was clear ...

“If only”, she repeated to herself ... *“if only ...”*

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