

The Italian's Defiant Mistress

The story behind the story...

The Italian's Defiant Mistress started out, as most books obviously do, as a solitary first chapter. However, the thing that made this one slightly different was that when it was written, that was all it was ever intended to be...

In July 2004, as a diversion from the demands of life at home with small children, I joined a writers' group which had just been started up by Penny Jordan, best-selling Mills & Boon author, at her home in the small town where I live. Every month ten or so of us used to get together for a drink and to talk about our writing dreams and crises, and at some point that autumn over a glass of red wine I confessed that, since the age of 14 when I first sent away for the Mills & Boon writers guidelines, I had always dreamed of writing romance. In January 2005 Penny challenged me to stop dreaming and start writing-- and she gave me one month to write one chapter.

January marks the start of the 'fashion week' season and at the time the newspapers and magazines were full of pictures of haughty, inscrutable women striding down catwalks in bizarre outfits. I've always felt there's something singularly un-sexy about those beautiful creatures with their angular, androgynous bodies and unsmiling faces, and this irony formed the starting point of the chapter I wrote. I wanted to explore what it would feel like to be a real girl-- one with curves and glasses and a plus-sized inferiority complex-- amongst those other-wordly beings, and I guess I also wanted to show that as women it is our flaws which make us attractive and interesting. That's certainly what hits Raphael as he first sets eyes on Eve...

I wrote the chapter and sent it to Penny. She liked it enough to show it to her editor in Richmond, who asked to see more. At that stage there was no more, but inspired by their encouragement I sat down and started to type.

Eighteen months, one house move, a couple of changes of direction and three sets of revisions later, Eve and Raphael finally had their story. And on September 20th 2006 I got my happy ending too, when I got the call from Richmond. They wanted to buy the book-- and call it The Italian's Defiant Mistress.

Extract from the book

They had reached a vast, wide-open square, surrounded by colonnaded buildings. As they made their way across it Eve suddenly realized why it seemed familiar. Familiar, and yet powerfully, breath-takingly unexpected in its scale and beauty. She stopped.

'Saint Mark's Square,' she breathed in awe.

Raphael turned round and saw her standing still, lost in wonder in the middle of the square. She was herself again: sweet, fresh-faced, all traces of the sophisticated beauty that had so unnerved him scrubbed away. His heart twisted painfully inside him.

'Something wrong?'

'No. I hadn't realized where we were, that's all.'

'Piazza San Marco. Home of the most expensive cappuccino in the world,' he said scornfully.

'It's amazing.'

'It certainly is. Amazing that tourists continue to fall for it.'

The sky had darkened slightly, lending a strange yellowish quality to the afternoon light. The heat was stifling now, and from out in the lagoon there was a distant rumble of thunder that made the crowds of people scattered around the square begin to disperse in search of shelter. Only Eve and Raphael did not move.

It was as if all the energy of the building storm was concentrated in the air that crackled between them. Eve's eyes flashed with fury.

'Of course, I wouldn't expect you to find it in the slightest bit impressive or beautiful. You're completely above all that, aren't you Raphael?

'Beauty?' he said softly. 'No. When it comes to real beauty I'm as much a fool as anyone else.' He took a step towards her, his face dangerously still apart from a muscle twitching in his jaw. 'What I can't stand is when it's cheapened and flaunted for the masses.'

She gave a little gasp as the viciousness of his words stung her.

'You bastard. You throw the Lázaro millions around like some sadistic fairy godmother, trying to turn me into Cinderella just so I won't show you up at this bloody ceremony, and then you complain when you don't like the results! Well, I'm afraid you just made a really bad investment. I'm not one of your glossy, glamorous, gorgeous women, and I never will be!'

The first fat drops of rain were beginning to fall from the livid sky. His face was pale in the unearthly light, but he gave a short, humourless laugh and dragged his hands through his hair.

'Benedetto Gesu, you just don't seem to get it, do you? I don't want you to be one of my 'glossy glamorous women', for God's sake!'

She looked at him as if he'd just hit her, then with an agonized sob turned to run away. He grabbed her wrist and pulled her back just as a monumental flash of lightning cracked the sky.

'You don't want me? Then stop playing games with me and leave me alone!' she screamed. 'If you don't want me just bloody let me go!'

'No!' the word came from him in a jagged cry. 'I don't want you to be turned into one of those women because you're perfect the way you are! Jesus, Eve, you're—'

But he didn't finish because somehow his lips had found hers and he was kissing her as if his life depended on it. The warm rain mingled with the tears on her face and tasted of salt and earth and something pure and indefinable that was the essence of Eve and he drank it in like a man who has been without water for days.

A crash of thunder echoed around the ancient walls of the square, and suddenly the rain was falling harder. Breaking off the kiss he cupped her face in his hands and gazed at her in agony. Standing there in the pouring rain with her thin chemise clinging wetly to her body she was like an orphan of the storm. With a thick groan of anguish he realized that after she had tried on the dress she hadn't

bothered to put her bra back on, and the glorious fullness of her breasts was as clearly visible through the transparent cotton as if she had been wearing nothing at all.

Suddenly he knew that he wanted her more than he'd ever wanted anything in his entire life.

From the book *The Italian's Defiant Mistress* by India Grey
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Reviews

India Grey pens a delightful, fun novel with *THE ITALIAN'S DEFIANT MISTRESS*. For her first published work, Grey does an outstanding job!

THE ITALIAN'S DEFIANT MISTRESS is an uncomplicated, easy read. The characters are sympathetic and easy to relate to. The plot is fun and fast. I look forward to reading Grey's next novel.

Bottom line: grab a cool drink of iced tea, curl up and enjoy!

(Romance Reader at Heart)

(Cataromance 4.5 stars)

In her debut novel for Mills and Boon Modern Romance, *The Italian's Defiant Mistress*, India Grey delivers a spellbinding tale of passion, romance and glamour tinged with delicious humour which will have you laughing out loud!

Eve Middlemiss is more at home researching Renaissance poetry than she is smouldering and pouting on a runway and mixing in Italian high society, but she knows that it is only in Florence that she can find out the truth about what happened to her twin sister Ellie and what is her tenuous connection to the enigmatic Italian multimillionaire Raphael di Lazaro, heir to the Lazaro Fashion House.

Eve knows that Raphael is a man whom she shouldn't trust, but she finds herself unable – and unwilling – to resist the ruthlessly gorgeous Raphael who seduces her under glorious Italian skies. But Ellie is never from her thoughts and Eve is determined to find out what really happened to her – even though she knows that it could break her heart and ruin her chance of happiness with Raphael.

But is Raphael really as bad as Eve has painted him? Or is he the answer to all of her problems?

The Italian's Defiant Mistress is a phenomenal debut novel written by a fantastic new writer whose name will soon be on every romance reader's must-buy list! India Grey is an amazingly talented storyteller who has written a captivating romantic novel that is sexy, funny, moving, dramatic and totally engrossing. Her characters leap off the pages and I adored Eve, who is a heroine women everywhere will relate to and sympathize with and I couldn't resist swooning over Raphael, who was absolutely divine.

India Grey is a fresh and powerful new voice in romantic fiction and I hope that *The Italian's Defiant Mistress* is the first of many wonderful books for Mills and Boon Modern Romance.

Romantic Times – 4 stars

Posing as a fashion journalist, Eve Middlemiss comes to Italy to find out what happened to her twin sister, Ellie, who died of a heroin overdose. The only clue she has is the name of Raphael Di Lazaro, one of the heirs to the Lazaro fashion empire. Eve intends to expose him, but the first time they see each other, something clicks between them. Raphael distrusts journalists, and Eve distrusts him, but the two can't keep away from each other, and this sexy man's hardened heart begins to melt in the presence of this smart and feisty lady. But what will happen when their secrets are publicly revealed? India Grey's *The Italian's Defiant Mistress* (4) is an emotion-filled story about two people transformed by love and surrounded by the beauty of Italy. Who could resist that?