



That's Amore!

Swept away by an Italian charmer

By Mary McCarthy

HECAME INTO MY LIFE FIVE YEARS AGO—MY LOVELY Roman. I live in Ireland and was visiting my son, Dara, who works in the Vatican. It was a sun-kissed, balmy evening in October and, after visiting the Piazza Navona, the Colosseum and the Trevi Fountain, I was in love with the eternal city. At that first meeting, I thought B was cute and friendly, if somewhat forward. He made tentative amorous advances, but I dismissed them as typical of his type. My son later told me that B had taken a big shine to me. I was flattered, but uninterested; I wasn't looking for a relationship, certainly not a long-distance one. Admittedly, he seemed amiable and affectionate, but I reminded myself that he was Italian—ergo, he liked women, and flirting was second nature to him.

Although he was born in Rome, B's ancestors were originally from Belgium, and many had been in law enforcement. Thoughts of Poirot and "his little grey cells" sprang to mind, but believe me, there was no similarity between this guy and the inimitable David Suchet. Whatever B's background, on that fateful evening in Trastevere I had no idea what an important role he would eventually play in my life.

A year passed. He came to Dublin, initially moving in with friends in Deansgrange. I saw him from time to time, and we spent the odd weekend together. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, he wormed his way into my heart.

At my age, a time of supposed maturity and wisdom, I do realize that physical allure shouldn't matter, but I have to say that this particular Italian is very handsome! Dark, slender

and elegant, he has alert brown eyes that light up every time he sees me. He always looks smart and well groomed, and often sports a colorful cravat — sartorially stylish, unmistakably European chic.

It's a bonus that he's extremely intelligent. He didn't have much English when he first settled here, but now he understands everything. Best of all, he has emotional intelligence, a quality not always evident in the male species, in my experience. Sensitive to my moods, he knows when I'm worried or anxious or upset. He's also a great listener, which I find refreshing. Never critical, and tolerant of all my little foibles, he has taught me the reality of unconditional love.

B moved in with me three years ago, and I couldn't imagine living without him now. Of course, he's not perfect: He's untidy and leaves his belongings around the house for me to pick up, but after rearing a son, I'm used to that. Though we both love pasta, he's a true carnivore and has to eat meat every day; he devours things that would nauseate me. He lacks patience when I take too long getting ready to go out. A more irksome flaw is that he's a bit possessive and needy, and doesn't like to be separated from me for very long. (I'm also convinced he can mind-read — he just glanced over at me as though he'd guessed what I was writing.) Naturally exuberant, he tends to be loud at times, and I'm sure the neighbors don't enjoy the disturbance, but as yet, they haven't complained. I know some wonder what I see in him.

I'm quite surprised myself at how smitten I've become, as the idea of a long-term commitment didn't appeal to me and I'd lived on my own for a considerable time before his arrival.

He's loyal and sincere, excellent qualities in a male.

Sharing my home with him now is an unexpected joy. B is highly sociable and, although wary of strangers, he always gives my friends a warm welcome. He entertains them when they visit and has charmed them all, making them smile with his winning ways. He has an endearing habit of tilting his head to one side when considering what's being said.

We lead a simple life together. He loves the great outdoors — walking in the park, strolling on the beach, exploring the forests. I've never had so much exercise! He likes hunting, too, but as an animal lover, I've forbidden that, explaining that what is instinctive to him is abhorrent to me. Mad about the water, he swims in all types of weather. He oozes health and vitality, but has learned to accept my lazy moments, and snuggles up beside me on the couch when I'm watching television or catching up on Facebook.

My lovely Italian has totally improved my life. He's loyal and sincere, excellent qualities in a male. He's very protective, which makes me feel safe. Through him, I've made a whole new set of friends. When I go out without him, he's there at home eagerly awaiting my return, always glad to see me. I've never experienced such devotion.

Benni, my beautiful Belgian Sheepdog, is indeed my ideal housemate. [ⓑ]

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