



One Night, One Baby (The Italian Husbands Book 24)

By Kate Hardy

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A few weeks later, Jane is still struggling to forget gorgeous Mitch—and their unforgettably sexy night together. Then she discovers she's pregnant....

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- Sales Rank: #89009 in eBooks
- Published on: 2008-08-01
- Released on: 2008-08-01
- Format: Kindle eBook



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Editorial Review

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Perfect.

Absolutely *perfect*.

He was leaning against the stone pillar outside the office block, with his head tipped back slightly and his hands clasped just above his head, looking broodingly out onto the river Thames. His right knee was bent and his foot was flat against the wall. His dark, slightly curly hair looked as if he'd been running his fingers through it. And with that white shirt and dark suit trousers—no tie, no jacket, and the top button of his shirt undone—he looked tall, dark, handsome...and dangerous.

Exactly what Jane was looking for.

So why was she hanging back? Why wasn't she marching up to him and...?

'Because you're a wimp,' she told herself ruefully.

Charlie, her housemate, would've done it. Kissed him, then smiled and wished him a nice day before sauntering off. Then again, Charlie had *panache*. She could have got away with it. Jane knew she couldn't.

It was a daft idea anyway. Whoever walked up to a tall, dark, handsome man—a complete stranger—and kissed him?

All the same, he *was* gorgeous.

On impulse, she took her mobile phone from her bag; OK, so she wasn't brave enough to kiss him, but she'd take a photo.

Show her housemates the man who really fitted her fantasy—the one she wished she'd been brave enough to kiss. The camera zoom wasn't quite good enough, so she casually strolled closer. Close enough to get him right in the frame.

And just as she pressed the button to take the picture he glanced her way and saw what she was doing.

'Hey!'

Oh, no. Oh, no, no, no.

She backed away, but not fast enough, and the fingers of his right hand whipped down to encircle her wrist, hard as steel, trapping her where she stood. 'What's all this about?'

'Nothing.'

'You just took my photograph!'

This was so embarrassing. It would be good if the earth could open up and swallow her.

Preferably if time rewound first and she was swallowed up the very second before she'd taken that first step towards him. But, given that time travel wasn't possible, now would do very nicely.

He stared at her. He had the most beautiful greeny-grey eyes she'd ever seen, but right at that moment there wasn't a hint of softness or sweetness in them. 'Well?' he asked.

She shook her head. 'Look, I apologise.'

This was so *not* how it was meant to have happened.

'Would you mind letting me go, now?' She twisted her wrist in his grasp.

'Go...?' Then his gaze dropped to her wrist. 'You still haven't explained what that was all about.'

'I'm sorry. It was an impulse. A stupid impulse.' She switched the phone off and stuffed it back into her handbag. 'And right now I would very much like to go and hide behind that huge potted palm over there before anyone else stares at me,' she added, the last words uttered through gritted teeth.

To her surprise, he actually smiled.

It transformed his whole face. Turned him from the Heathcliff type into someone much more accessible. She was glad he was still holding onto her wrist, because she didn't think her legs were going to hold her up for much longer. The tall, dark, handsome and brooding stranger had morphed into someone who was knee-bucklingly beautiful.

Not to mention way, way out of her league.

'I have a better idea,' he said. 'Coffee.'

'Coffee?' she repeated, nonplussed. Had she just missed something?

'I have a feeling that this is going to be a long story. And it'd be much more civilised to hear it over coffee.'

'But—' she frowned, puzzled '—weren't you taking a break from a meeting or something? At least, that's what it looked like.'

'It was an excruciatingly boring meeting.' He lifted one shoulder in the most elegant shrug she'd ever seen. 'My agent can deal with it for me.'

Agent? Was he famous, then? Or very important?

Of all the men outside all the buildings in all the world, she had to pick *this* one to photograph.

'Um—don't you need your jacket?'

'I wasn't wearing one in the first place.' He strode off, giving her no choice but to match her pace to his. 'But if it makes you feel better, I'll call Harry.'

'Harry?'

'My agent. Actually, you're right. It's only polite to let them know I'm not going back. Excuse me a moment.' He took a small, slim mobile phone from his pocket with his free hand and speed-dialled a number.

'Harry? Yes. No. Sorry.' He did at least sound genuinely contrite. 'Call you later, OK? Yes. Thanks.'

And by the time he'd slid the phone back into his pocket, they were in a café. Standing by the counter, ready to order.

'Espresso? Cappuccino?' he asked her.

'Skinny latte, please.'

'Make that two, please,' he said to the barista with a smile.

She coughed and looked pointedly at his fingers.

He inclined his head slightly and freed her wrist, paid for the coffees before she even had a chance to offer to buy them or at least pay her share, and then shepherded her over to a table overlooking the river.

'So. First things first. Your name?' he asked.

'Jane.'

'Jane what?'

'Redmond.'

He inclined his head in acknowledgement, but didn't extend his hand. 'Mitch Holland.'

Mitch. Short for Mitchell, perhaps? Though that wasn't a particularly English name, and his accent was most definitely English. Slightly on the posh side.

He took a sip of coffee and leaned back in his chair. 'So what was that all about?'

'I'm sorry. It was just...' She sighed. 'Thank you for the latte, Mr Holland.'

'Mitch,' he corrected. Then looked at her. Waiting for her answer.

Clearly he wasn't going to let her off. She'd have to explain. 'All right.' She turned the mug of coffee round and round in her hands. 'This is going to sound...' she blew out a breath '...ridiculous. Childish. *Stupid*.'

'Tell me anyway.'

'I'm twenty-five today.'

'Happy birthday. And?'

God, he was relentless. The type who'd never let anything go.

'I...' She squirmed. Even saying it made her feel whiny. Which just wasn't her. So she let the words go out in a rush. 'Nobody remembered. My parents, my brother, my house-mates—even my colleagues at work.' Then she lifted her chin and stared him straight in the eye. Just so he knew she wasn't whining. 'I'd already booked today as a holiday. Which left me with two choices: have a pity party and mope around the house, feeling sorry for myself, or spend the day doing things I've always wanted to do and never got round to doing. So I chose to enjoy my day.'

'Doing things you've always wanted to do.'

She could feel her skin heating. 'Things most women have done by the age of twenty-five.' And since she could guess what he was thinking, she threw the words at him. 'If you must know, top of the list was kissing a tall, dark, handsome stranger. But I was too chicken and took your photo instead.'

The corner of his mouth quirked. 'You were going to kiss me?'

She glared at him. Talk about maximum humiliation.

'Interesting.'

Before she realised his intentions, he'd pulled her onto his lap, slid one hand across the nape of her neck, and then his mouth was moving against hers. Teasing her. Tasting her. Tiny, nibbling kisses along her lower lip that incited her to open her mouth and let him deepen the kiss.

When she did, the tip of his tongue slid against hers. Probing softly, skilfully. Telling her he wanted her. Showing her how much she wanted him.

London faded. The noise in the café—people chattering, the clatter of cups against saucers, the thudding bass from someone's earphones—just vanished. No sound. No light, because her eyes were firmly closed. And her remaining senses were focused entirely on Mitch: the feel of his mouth against hers. The light, citrussy scent of whatever shower gel he'd used that morning. The taste of his mouth, coffee mingled with pure male.

It wasn't until the kiss ended that she realised his other hand was flat against her back, holding her close, and her own hands were tangled in his hair. Soft, sexy, rumpled hair.

Oh, hell.

She didn't *do* things like this.

She'd never, ever been kissed so thoroughly that she'd actually forgotten where she was.

And by a complete stranger, to boot.

'Happy birthday,' he said again, this time his tone much sweeter.

'Thank you. I think.' She levered herself off his lap and reclaimed her chair. And her dignity. Though she had a nasty feeling that her T-shirt was doing nothing to hide the erect state of her nipples.

'So that's what you're going to do today? Go around kissing strangers?'

There was definite amusement on his face now. Even though she knew he'd seen and it was too late, she folded her arms to hide her body's arousal. 'No. It was just one little thing on a list.' Empty bravado, and she'd just bet he knew it. After all, she'd already been stupid enough to tell him it was top of her list.

'So what else is on your list?'

She shrugged. 'A few things.' Things a man like Mitch Holland wouldn't be interested in.

Ten minutes ago, Mitch had had no idea that Jane Redmond even existed.

And now he'd kissed her. Properly. In public. Enough to be aroused.

Mad.

Really, he should just shut up. Drink his coffee, to be polite, and then say he needed to get back to his meeting.

Ha. Who was he trying to kid? He'd bought the coffee. He didn't have to be polite. He could walk out any time he chose.

The fact he didn't want to do that worried him.

The fact he wanted to know more about Jane Redmond worried him even more.

Relationships weren't even under the 'any other business' section of his agenda, let alone anywhere higher up. So why wasn't his mouth working on the same plans as the rest of his head? Why was it asking her, 'Such as?'

She frowned. 'Why do you want to know?'

His mouth was *really* on a roll. 'Seeing as I was involved with the first item.' A kiss. A kiss, he realised with shock, that he wanted to repeat. 'And things are often more fun when you do them with someone else.'

'Are you inviting yourself along?'

Absolutely not. No, no, and thrice no.

'Yes.'

She looked at him. 'No way would you do the things I want to do.'

This was his get-out. This was where he sa...

Users Review

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