

# TO ROME WITH LOVE by Mandi Benet's Excerpt

Silvio pivoted to toss the tissue into the garbage, and then turned back. He stood rooted in place, watching her. Gaby shivered. Waited. Waited some more. She knew she should run but she couldn't move. She felt locked to that room. Locked to this man.

He stretched out his hand and stroked her cheek softly with his thumb. Goose bumps immediately broke out on her arms. He saw them and smiled, quirking an eyebrow at her in amusement. Her skin felt feverish now, and she could feel moisture settle between her breasts.

Silvio ran his knuckles along her jawline, gently caressing her skin, and then moved to her lips, lips she hadn't much thought about until now, until he touched them, until he made them burn. With one finger, he traced their outline, dipping in and out of the perfect Cupid's bow that crowned them, and then sweeping along the seam.

His own lips parted and he stared into her eyes. Was he asking for permission? She couldn't give it to him. Her mouth was as dry as a crouton and her brain wasn't working too well.

The air around them pulsed and thickened and Gaby stood as still as a hot summer noon, her heart slowing to thick, solid beats. The banked fire in his gaze sent electrical charges zipping through her, and she felt desire spring crazily within her. She didn't even like this guy, right? But she saw the lust in his eyes and wanted more. Maybe it was the heat, or too much Chianti the day before, or the fact that Rome exuded a widescreen romance impossible to resist, but only a thin slice of air separated them and, suddenly, she couldn't wait for Silvio to breach it. She could feel his breath warm on her temple, see his nostrils flare wide, feel him ready to pounce like a lion spotting a limp. She closed her eyes in readiness and before she knew it, he had bent toward her and crushed her mouth to his.