

FRENCH KISS by Gloria J. Goldsmith

EXCERPT

When they passed by the usual turn over the Tiber River, realization struck. I am on the wrong bus! I needed to get off at the next stop. Stepping down with at least a dozen others, I immediately unfolded a massive map of Rome.

Apparently, there is nothing more inviting to a friendly group of Italian men and women than an attractive, young American tourist who is lost. They all talked at once and pointed in different directions, and even began arguing with one another. I smiled, turning in circles, trying to comprehend Italian questions. Luckily, one of them was a very tall, handsome, dark-haired man who spoke to me in English. Fluent American English.

“Where are you trying to go, eh?”

“Le Auberge de la...I mean, uh...the youth hostel.” The Italians crowded around me, asking him, “What did she say? Where is she going?” He smiled and nodded, reassuring them that he spoke English and could take care of it. The group then all smiled and nodded to me. Some ladies patted my arm, saying reassuringly, “Antonio è un bravo ragazzo, ti aiuterà.” Antonio is a good boy. He will help you. They pointed at the handsome unmarried man as they spoke. Smiling and waving, they turned and began walking in their different directions.

I really didn’t mind at all when this handsome, thirty-something ragazzo said, “I’ll walk you over and make sure you get to the hostel.”

“But weren’t you heading in the opposite direction?”

“It’s all right. It will give me a chance to practice my English.” Lifting my chin up to see him, I was impressed. He was breathtaking, not just tall; he was American-football-player large and had dark green eyes and dark hair, with a bit of curl.

“Your English sounds perfect to me.” I smiled, delighted to meet an actual Italian male with whom I could speak.

“Thank you. I lived in California, even during an earthquake. That was...pretty exciting for me. I had never been in one before.”

“I imagine so. I have never experienced one either. But then, I am from Michigan.”

“Michigan? Ah, the one with the big lakes.”

Nodding, I held up my right palm, pointing to a spot, and said, “I live about here.”

He laughed and held up his booted foot and playfully said, “And I live about here!” With a zing of laughter, our world sped toward cozy. An instant intimacy was sparked by the jest. We both leaned in, arms sometimes touching as we walked. Talking about my traveling, I felt his eyes flash on my lips as I drank in his dark, handsome features.

He is tall, six-three, I’d say. A big man, not unlike Luke in stature. Beautiful dark hair, fashionably cut, the kind I’d like to run my fingers through. Thick eyebrows, dark green eyes, handsome, and very male. Oh, my God. Look at those big hands—and feet! OOooo, you know what they say! I bet he has a matching appendage! He is gorgeous.